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MEDIA ADVISORY

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CACDA Helps Town with PDR Grants

**Cazenovia, NY** – For the past several months Cazenovia Area Community Development Association, Inc. (CACDA) has been working with the Town of Cazenovia to pursue Purchase of Development Rights grant funding.

Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) programs can help ensure that the high quality soils located in the Cazenovia area are maintained for agricultural purposes, and that the intrinsic rural scenery and character are protected.

PDR, which is also known as purchase of agricultural conservation easements, is a voluntary technique to protect agricultural land. It helps active farmland owners, who are willing to permanently save their land for agricultural uses, by paying them for property development rights.

Generally, a landowner holds many different rights regarding their property, such as rights to water resources, timber harvesting or developing parcels in a manner consistent with local ordinances. A portion, or all, of these rights can be sold or transferred to another person.

Utilizing a PDR program, landowners can sell just the development rights for their property. Farmers in New York State are generally offered the difference between the fair market value and the restricted value of their land. This allows the land to remain on the tax rolls with its taxable value based on the remaining rights.

Last year CACDA formulated a long term goal of helping to develop a strategy that would protect local farmland and agriculture. An Agriculture & Farmland Protection Committee met in the fall to discuss priorities then conducted a familiarization tour of farm properties in December.

In early March of 2006, several local farmers expressed interest in pursuing the PDR grants offered through the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets. A representative for the American Farmland Trust (AFT) met with CACDA's Agriculture & Farmland Protection Committee, and other interested individuals, to discuss various techniques and tools for preserving viable agricultural land.

CACDA and the Town of Cazenovia co-hosted a public informational workshop on farmland protection in April that drew more than 50 attendees. Speakers included Judy Wright (AFT) and Nancy Hourigan, a farmer from Onondaga County who has received NYS grants for Purchase of Development Rights.

CACDA subsequently worked with Town officials to develop a pre-application and selection process that utilized NYS criteria, thus maximizing the potential to receive grant funding. Examples of pertinent criteria for eligible farms are: soil quality; susceptibility to development pressure; proximity to other protected farms or open spaces; ability to serve as a buffer for significant natural resources; succession plans; investment in the farm; and landowner commitment.

All applications for PDR funding must be submitted to the state by a county or municipality that has an approved Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan, or other documentation that demonstrates its commitment to preserving viable farm properties. Madison County's plan was approved in 2005.

CACDA facilitated the process to ensure that the Town of Cazenovia was eligible to apply for PDR

grants. Each qualified municipality, or applicant, can include up to three farm properties in a single application per funding round.

Three farms were chosen by the Town to participate in the application for the current grant round that was originally due on 30 June 2006. The date was subsequently extended to accommodate difficulties presented by the recent flooding throughout the state.

In addition to maps and other materials provided by Madison County Planning Department, Cazenovia Preservation Foundation and the Madison County Farmland Protection Board also provided assistance in completing requirements for the application.

Cazenovia Preservation Foundation (CPF) agreed to assist in the implementation of the PDR program if any of the farm properties are selected for funding. Specifically, CPF has agreed to negotiate any required conservation easements with the state, as well as hold, monitor and enforce the easements. As an historic preservation organization and land trust, CPF is legally qualified to perform this function, and in fact, already holds easements on four farms in Cazenovia. Jana McDonald, a CPF board member and Chair of the Legal Committee, was instrumental in preparing the paperwork necessary for the project.

Barbara Henderson, Executive Director of CACDA, and Kristi Andersen, Town Councilor, met with the Madison County Farmland Protection Board in June to obtain their support and request an official letter to forward to NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets. The letter was required as a part of the application.

Kristi Andersen worked with individual farm owners to complete their applications and to pull everything together for the Town. She believes that, "Protecting farming and farmlands is a critical task for Cazenovia; it is important for our economy and for maintaining the rural character of our community. There are a number of avenues we as a Town can use for this all-important work.