

# Brookhaven Town Councilman Dan Panico Announces Changes to the Town's Farmland Bill of Rights

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## ***New Amendments Provide More Options for Farmers: Wineries, Breweries, Distilleries & Cideries Permitted on Farmland***

**Farmingville, NY** – Brookhaven Town Councilman Dan Panico has announced that the Town Board recently approved amendments to Town Code Chapter 85 as it relates to the Farmland Bill of Rights, which will provide current and future farmers the ability to make wine, beer, cider and spirits, using ingredients grown on their farms. The board unanimously approved these amendments at a February 4th Public Hearing.

During the hearing, Councilman Panico said, "the additions to the current Farmland Bill of Rights have been a long time coming. We have worked closely with members of the Town's Agriculture Advisory Board to determine ways that will help strengthen and preserve the farming industry in Brookhaven Town. By allowing the production of wine, beer, ciders and spirits, we open up another avenue for farmers to showcase the area's agricultural assets and continue the important tradition of cultivating the land."

"The new amendments are vital to the future of the agriculture industry in Brookhaven Town," said Supervisor Ed Romaine. "Wineries are major attractions on the East End that have boosted the local economy and helped many farming families continue doing business. I look forward to working with Councilman Panico and the farmers to accomplish the same for Brookhaven.

The Town's aggressive approach has been successful in helping to preserve approximately 40 percent of the 4,000 acres of farmland that currently exist in Brookhaven Town. The Farmland Bill of Rights has been an important tool in preservation efforts and was established to protect "bona fide agricultural production" in the Town and to recognize the "vital" importance of farming to the Town's "character, environment and economy, as well as preserving an historically important industry."

The code now permits a Farm Brewery, Farm Winery, Farm Distillery and Farm Cidery, all of which would include a production facility for each use. In addition, the code also provides for a Tasting Room, which would be permitted an accessory use, for retail purposes.

Councilman Panico stressed during the hearing that in order to move forward with any of the new uses, a minimum of 5 contiguous acres must be devoted to agriculture. He also noted that the code has safeguards in place to protect the interests of neighbors.

Jessica Anson, Public Policy Director for the Long Island Farm Bureau, voiced support for the revised legislation during the hearing. "This legislation is a major step in helping agriculture to survive," said Anson. "We support these changes...they are critical to help agriculture remain economically viable for farming families. This legislation allows for farmers to capitalize on the local interest in craft beverages."

"The proposed amendments have been thoughtfully considered by the Town's Agricultural Advisory Board," said Herb Strobel, a member of the board. "They balance the needs of agriculture within the context of planning issues that affect the broader community."

"I look forward to the day that we can enjoy a glass of wine, beer or cider made at a Brookhaven farm," said Panico.

**Division of Public Information \* Office of the Supervisor**

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