

## Rivendell backlash

Farmers and property owners on both sides of the Rivendell Winery relocation fence, argued that the town should or should not support a resolution brought to them by some residents to request that the Ulster County Farmland Protection Board deny a request by Bob Ransom and Susan Wine (owners of Rivendell) to have their four-acre parcel considered as part of the county's agricultural district.

Dan Guenther, who has created three farms in the past ten years and worked to assist in the creation of many more farms, said that "it takes a lot to get me away from the field. My wife can do it, but it is rare that a town board meeting could pull me away."

However, Guenther believed that the "proposed shift of the Rivendell Winery from Gardiner to New Paltz was important enough for me to come here tonight."

He added: "As someone who has farmed for the past 15 years, I know what a farm is and what a farm isn't. What's being proposed is commercial. It is not a farm and that is the last place in this town where we need something commercial."

Dave Porter, of the **Association for Intelligent Rural Management (AFFIRM)**, said that the town, by writing this resolution was "not deciding one way or the other about the fate of the winery" but was, in his estimation, "retaining home rule" and keeping the power to decide "what is an appropriate agricultural use and what is not."

Everette Payne, another local farmer, defended the proposed Rivendell move.

"There is nothing worse than distorting the facts to support an argument," he said. "I've known the Ransom brothers for a long time and 20 years ago they did plant grapes at their winery in Gardiner and lost the entire crop to a frost. This is an agri-business, agri-tourism and just because you want to build your McMansions doesn't mean you have the right to shut a farmer out of business."

The board, according to Hokanson, will discuss this matter at one of their two special meetings this week.

"I don't know what the rest of the board plans on doing, but I believe that every property owner has a right to apply for the county's farmland protection and they have very strict requirements as to which properties can be classified as agriculture. I don't know what those requirements are and I do not think that the town should be making those decisions when there is a knowledgeable agency that is charged with accepting or denying agricultural applications."