

**ST. LAWRENCE COUNTY  
AGRICULTURAL AND FARMLAND PROTECTION BOARD**

Public Safety Complex, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, 48 Court Street

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**MEETING MINUTES**

Thursday, February 4, 2021

Zoom Meeting ID: 930 3835 7007

Passcode: 735914

**I. Call to Order**

**A. Members present:** P. Ames, R. Andrews, L. Denesha, M. Finen, D. Fisher, B. Green, J. Greenwood, S. McKnight, J. Pfothenauer, R. Sapp and J. TeRiele. **Members absent:** None. **Staff present:** M. Larson. **Others present:** Raeanne Dulanski, St. Lawrence County Soil and Water Conservation District and Glenn Bullock, USDA Farm Service Agency.

**Roll Call and Determination of a Quorum.** Andrews called the meeting to order. Larson did a roll call for attendance; a quorum was established as all members of the Board were present.

**B. Adoption of the Agenda.** Larson suggested the agenda be updated to include an update from the FSA. The modified meeting agenda was unanimously adopted (Pfothenauer/Ames).

**C. Approval of the Minutes.** The December 3, 2020 meeting minutes were unanimously adopted (Fisher/ Sapp).

**II. New Business**

**A. Planning Office Comments to Notice of Proposed Stipulations for North Side Energy Center.** Larson reviewed the Planning Office's comments and suggestions to the applicant's proposed stipulations for the application review process, and identified which comments were incorporated by the applicant. Pfothenauer said the applicant is anticipated to file an application with the Public Service Commission on or around February 10<sup>th</sup>, and said the County is examining whether to pursue intervenor funds.

**B. Summary of National Grid Presentation to County Planning Board.** Larson said Ombudsman Casey Kirkpatrick from National Grid delivered a presentation at the County Planning Board's January 14<sup>th</sup> meeting. Larson reviewed highlights from Kirkpatrick's presentation, including the phases of financial investment by solar developers when applying for an interconnection to the electrical grid. Green asked whether or not a lot of solar projects would proceed this coming year. Pfothenauer said he recently followed up with OMNI about

proposed solar development projects in Edwards and Gouverneur. The developer informed Pfothenhauer that the interconnect costs for the Edwards project was cost prohibitive; no update was received on the proposed projects in Gouverneur.

### **III. Old Business**

A. None.

### **IV. Reports**

**A. Board of Legislators.** Denesha said to date, there have been 5,000 positive COVID cases and 90 deaths in St. Lawrence County. Denesha said the good news is that the number of cases per day is declining, and the vaccination roll out is going well. Denesha said the County exceeded its projected 2020 sales tax revenue by \$4.5 million, with \$1.5 million of that coming from online sales.

**B. Farm Service Agency.** Bullock said two rounds of stimulus and CFAP funds were distributed, and the agency anticipates administering a third round of funding. Bullock said approximately \$50 million was distributed and invested in St. Lawrence County. The FSA is seeing a huge sign up in the Dairy Margin Coverage program. When asked by Andrews about the decline in dairy operations over the last year, Bullock said they know that 15 to 18 farms are no longer in operation, most were small scale with operators who reached retirement age.

**C. Cornell Cooperative Extension.** Ames said most programming delivered by CCE staff is virtual, and anticipates the practice will continue for the foreseeable future. Ames reviewed highlights from his report which was emailed to members of the Board.

**D. Farm Bureau.** Fisher said the Bureau is working with the Governor's Office to add agricultural workers and food producers to the 1b group that is eligible for vaccinations, which will be reexamined by the State as more vaccination units are made available. Fisher said a listening tour is scheduled by State Senator Hinchey as the new Chair of the Senate's Ag Committee. Ames said Cooperative Extension recently traveled to Albany and met with Assemblyman Jones and discussed continued funding for the Agricultural Development Program. Denesha said he has a good working relationship with Jones and said the County Board of Legislators could include funding for ADP as a legislative agenda item.

**E. Industrial Development Agency.** No report.

**F. Real Property.** Green said agricultural exemptions are being renewed through March 1<sup>st</sup>, and requests for soils maps by the Soil and Water Conservation District are due by February 15<sup>th</sup>. Green said his department continues to work in the office at 50% staffing capacity.

**G. Soil and Water Conservation District.** Dulanski said USDA's office building continues to operate in Phase 1 with no more than 10 people in the building. Dulanski said their annual tree sale is coming up, and some species have already sold out. Dulanski said their Forester is working to slow the spread of the Emerald Ash Borer, and that a chainsaw safety course with Cooperative Extension is scheduled for May.

## **VI. Other Items**

- A. Correspondence.** Larson reviewed recent correspondence from the Department of Agriculture and Markets regarding the siting of solar arrays in Agricultural Districts 1 and 2.
- B. Announcements.** Larson announced upcoming webinars regarding the spotted lanternfly on February 9<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>, and a February 10<sup>th</sup> webinar by the Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust on farmland conservation. Pfothenauer said the County is partnering with the Development Authority of the North Country to survey residents about broadband access, which will begin on February 19<sup>th</sup> and run through the end of April. Denesha said it was ironic that a broadband survey would be conducted online. Pfothenauer said an online survey is the easiest and quickest way to obtain resident input. A suggestion was made to forward the broadband survey announcement to BOCES Superintendent Tom Burns to forward to area school districts.
- C. Next Meeting Date.** Larson said the next Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board meeting will be held virtually on Thursday, April 1, 2021 at 6:00 pm. Larson reminded members of the Board that the April 1<sup>st</sup> meeting includes a review of this year's requested additions to Agricultural Districts 1 and 2 with a recommendation to the County Board of Legislators on the requested additions.

## **VII. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned by consensus at 7:22 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

*Matilda Larson*