

**ST. LAWRENCE COUNTY**  
**AGRICULTURAL AND FARMLAND PROTECTION BOARD**  
48 Court St. Canton, New York 13617-1169  
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**MEETING MINUTES**

Thursday, October 3, 2024, 6:00 PM  
Second Floor Conference Room, Human Service Center  
80 State Highway 310, Canton, NY 13617

**I. Call to Order**

**A. Roll Call and Determination of a Quorum.** Andrews called the meeting to order at 6:09 pm.

**Members present:** R. Andrews, (*Chair*); M. Bowdish; L. Denesha, (*BOL Liaison*); M. Finen; J. Greenwood; S. McKnight; J. Pfothenauer, (*Planning Office*); J. TeRiele.

**Absent:** K. Gugin (*CCE*); D. Fisher; B. Green, (*Real Property*).

A quorum was established.

**Staff present:** S. Joseph *Planner II*; **Others present:** P. Kelly, *IDA*.

**B. Adoption of the Agenda.** Motion to adopt agenda (McKnight / TeRiele) Agenda was adopted

**C. Approval of the Minutes.** (TeRiele / Finen) The October 3, 2024 meeting minutes was accepted

**II. New Business:**

**A. Ag Census 2022 overview:** Review 2022 Ag Census Data (see attached slides)

- i. Some feedback: While the number of farms might be decreasing the farms are getting bigger. This is most likely true, but there is still a loss of 50k acres from 2017
- ii. Question regarding the Amish Farm representation in Census Data. Not clear, but they try to account for non-answers with estimations. Will reach out to CCE and Ag and Markets
- iii. Potential collaboration with CCE and SWCD dig into these numbers more
- iv. Demo on where to access the data

**B. Update on larger solar projects:**

- i. Rich Road has been approved and moving forward
  - (1) 240 MW 1500 acres with battery storage will tie into large transmission lines
  - (2) Proposed sheep grazing
- ii. Moss Ridge 60 MW. Not actually approved yet, but it is in the ORES system 400 acre
- iii. Two Rivers 200 MW. Massena and Brasher. Boralex project.
  - (1) Plan to submit application Dec 2024 with commercial operation 2027
  - (2) Within their slides they engaged with Agricultural Co-Utilization with thought on space at end of rows for equipment to turn around
  - (3) Less Prime Ag soil being consumed
- iv. Gateway: 180 MW Massena Brasher and Norfolk.
- v. Over 1000 MW from these large projects and smaller 40 solar projects reviewed by County Planning Board. 35 out of the 40 projects either have been built or under construction.
- vi. Article 10 has been replaced with 94C which has been replaced with Article 8. Anything over 25 MW goes through state approval process Office of Renewable Energy Siting ORES
- vii. Question and discussion on National Grid upgrades. Rate increases. Discussion on lease values comparing north country with other parts of NY.

### **III. Old Business:**

- A. Ag Districts:** Still in process compiling report.
- B. Biodigesters:** Discussion on status of digesters in the County.

### **IV. Reports**

- A. J. TiRele:** Chopping corn
- B. M. Bowdish:** Finishing up mum sales this week, anything left will go to auction
- C. S. McKnight:** Sees a “Go Solar” car driving around the county.
- D. J. Greenwood:** Seeing an uptick in interest in land in mail for solar development. Rumor Waddington Lisbon line being contacted
- E. M. Finen:** A lot of fall festivals. Running low on Maple products. Didn’t have a good maple season this past winter.
- F. R. Andrews:** Many dairy operations have gone into freezer meat and hay silage market. Demand for freezer beef seems really strong. County needs more slaughter houses.
- G. L. Densha BOL:**

- (1) Passed Resolution with Renewed contract with JJ Keller and Associates for entry level driver certification program. This goes back to 2022, having a difficult time with hiring people with CDL's to work for the County Highway Department. 28 employees have successful completed the course with 22 still with the County.
- (2) Passed two resolutions for Highway Department for emergency repairs resulting from Hurricane Debby totaling \$775,000. Just tip of iceberg, have road that have temporarily been repaired, but need more permanent repairs. Reached threshold and approved for FEMA aid, but may not see that for several years.
- (3) Press conference with sheriffs from our County, Franklin County, Jefferson County, Clinton County, State Senator Stec, State Senator Gray, State Assemblyman Blankenbush talk about the Northern Border. Fort Covington have cameras recording illegal border crossings in the Swanton Sector. Encounters were in the range of 1200 per year, but now up to 12,000 encounters.
- (4) Solar arrays: Where ever you stand within 10 mins you can go to where there is a solar facility. Resolution urging solar developers not to use our prime agricultural soils had little effect. State has a lot more protections for wildlife than tillable land. Landowners are free to do what they will with their land. Concerns that the County will be known as the solar county instead of agricultural. Expressed concerns with potential wind development in Nova Scotia.

#### **H. IDA:**

- (1) Collaboration with CCE on USDA Rural Business Development Grant to provide CDL training funding for farm and agribusinesses, combined with ARPA funding trained 10 individuals from farms around the County. Part of the reason was because onerous to send far away for training.
- (2) Biodigester inquiries
- (3) ARPA funding 20 awards totaling \$220,000 for agribusiness related projects around the County.
- (4) USDA Farm to School Proposal.
- (5) Outreach to dairy processing firms. Empire State Development prospecting and site visit fact finding.
- (6) 11<sup>th</sup> annual Manufacturing Day Oct 17 school visit to local manufacturing plants.
- (7) Hosting St. Lawrence Leadership Institute for local community leaders. 6 month course 4-6 pm once a week. Has good reviews.
- (8) Payment in lieu of taxes (PILOTs). Work with solar developers to arrange standard PILOTs and standardized documentation. Discussion on PILOTs and tax rules

#### **I. Planning:**

- (1) Local Government Conference Oct 15
- (2) Hurricane Debby Flooding relief application
- (3) Disbursing money for ARPA 2 million water and wastewater infrastructure for municipalities
- (4) Collaboration with highway department with grant for bridge work. Bridge NY program and Northern Border Regional Commission.
- (5) Solar Development mapping tool update
- (6) Grassy Grove Solar was on prime ag land, shrunk and moved it to preserve some of the prime soil.

(7) Massena water district expanded with no additional laterals so will only serve existing houses

**J. M. Finen:** Mentioned testing well water after flooding. Reports of coliform contamination as result of flooding.

**K. SWCD:**

(1) New manager Alivia Bleu

(2) 11 construction projects

(3) Cover crops 350 acres eligible, some acres available

(4) County forester working on identifying hazardous trees along right of ways. Developing forest management plan for carbon credits

(5) NYSSW meeting. NYSAM increasing Tier 4 money for construction projects for water quality by 20%

(6) USDA funding, water quality project will be offered at 100% cost share.

**V. Other Items**

**A. Correspondence.** Messena water district expanded in ag district mentioned earlier

2. **Adjourn.** The meeting adjourned at 7:47 pm (TeRiele / Finen).

Respectfully submitted,

*Samuel Joseph*