

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

Public Safety Complex, 2nd Floor, 49 ½ Court Street
Canton, New York 13617-1169

Tel: (315) 379-2292 • Fax: (315) 379-2252 • farming.stlawco.org

DRAFT MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, April 4, 2019

2nd Floor Conference Room, Public Safety Complex, 49 ½ Court Street, Canton

I. Call to Order

A. Members present: P. Ames, R. Andrews, L. Denesha, B. Green, J. Greenwood, S. McKnight, R. Sapp, J. TeRiele, and J. Pfothenauer. **Members absent:** D. Fisher and A. Tubbs. **Others present:** R. Dulanski, St. Lawrence County Soil and Water Conservation District; Dan Huntley, dairy operator based in Pierrepont; P. Kelly, St. Lawrence County IDA; and JJ Schell, Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust. **Staff present:** M. Larson and K. Zimmerman.

Roll Call and Determination of a Quorum. A quorum was present. Andrews called the meeting to order at 7:31 pm. Andrews welcomed all those present and asked everyone to please introduce themselves.

B. Adoption of the Agenda. Kelly said he would need to depart early and asked that the order of the agenda be rearranged so that he could deliver the IDA report before New Business. The modified meeting agenda was unanimously adopted by consensus.

C. Approval of the Minutes. The February 7, 2019 meeting minutes were unanimously adopted (Greenwood/Ames).

II. Reports

A. Industrial Development Agency. Kelly distributed samples of Skyr and provided an update about the North Lawrence dairy plant and the distribution of its products. Andrews asked about the plant's production volume; Kelly said he didn't know. Kelly also talked about a baby milk formula manufacturer based in Kingston and its interest in seeking access to the American market.

III. New Business

A. Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust Conservation Easement Program. JJ Schell introduced himself and talked about his professional experience working in agriculture. Schell reviewed the organization's involvement in acquiring conservation easements around the perimeter of Ft Drum, and the Trust's current involvement in acquiring and monitoring easements through the State Department of Agriculture and Markets. Schell provided an overview of the Dairy Transition Farmland Protection Initiative and said eligibility includes receiving support from a county farmland protection board and local municipal board. When a project is eligible to proceed, Schell explained a conservation easement is designed with the property owner for approval by the Department of Ag and Markets, and the property is subject to an appraisal before and after the conservation easement is recorded on the land. Schell explained 87.5% of the difference between these two values is allocated to the property owner. The remaining balance covers the delivery and administration of the program, and also goes toward the Trust's stewardship fund to monitor easements. Schell also provided an overview of the State's regular round of the State farmland preservation program and said it's funded on a biannual basis.

Huntley provided an overview of his 600-acre dairy operation in Pierrepont and discussed residential development that's occurred in the vicinity of the farm over the last 15 years. Huntley said only two dairy farms remain in Pierrepont. Huntley said the current equipment at his farm is obsolete and participation in the program would allow his son who will assume ownership of the business to invest funds from the program into new robotic technology.

Greenwood asked Schell what land qualifies for easements, and whether it applies to forestland. Schell said under Ag and Markets, forest tracts are not eligible; the land must be tillable and arable lands. Schell explained land owners can omit lands from participating in the project as the submission is prepared. Schell also explained farmers can delineate locations as rural enterprise areas, and said renewable energy systems may be installed on the property but are subject to a maximum percentage of the total acreage. Schell said the appraisal process takes six to nine months, and the entire process to prepare the submission and its approval by Ag and Markets is 18 to 24 months. TeRiele noted the process is similar to a program in Lake Champlain 15 years ago. Andrews asked about the appraisal process. Schell said the Trust relies on appraisers who understand the intent of farmland conservation easements. When asked by Greenwood, Schell said impervious surface areas are limited to 10% to 12% of total area. Schell explained the submission includes a soils maps, aerial imagery and a site plan. McKnight asked if the benefit is enhanced by making the easement more restrictive. Schell said the benefit is based on how the easement is written to allow continued farmland production.

Andrews asked the Board to entertain a motion to adopt a resolution to support the project. The Board unanimously voted to approve a resolution supporting Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust's Dairy Transition Farmland Protection Initiative Application for Daniel and Christine Huntley (Pfotenhauer/Ames). Larson said she would email a copy of the resolution and a letter of support to Schell.

B. 2019 Annual Ag District Review. Larson delivered an overview of this year's request to add one parcel to Ag District 1, and two parcels to Ag District 2. Members of the Board expressed concern whether the 5.8 acre, narrow parcel with shallow depth to bedrock in Hammond could reasonably accommodate a livestock operation at that location. The Board unanimously voted to recommend the County Board of Legislators add two parcels to Ag District 2, but not the parcel to Ag District 1 (Greenwood/Green). Larson said a public hearing would be held to accept comment on the recommendation, and afterwards the recommendation would be presented to the County Board of Legislators.

IV. Old Business

A. County Ag Spill Response Plan. Zimmerman said the preparation of an agricultural spill response plan has been assigned to the Deputy Emergency Management Director.

B. Farm Credit East Ag Enhancement Funding Application. Larson and Ames highlighted the proposed field trip for 9th and 10th grade students to visit a variety of farm and agribusinesses and overnight at Camp Overlook in Franklin County. Andrews suggested County Legislators be invited to visit sites that are listed on the field trip agenda.

V. Reports (continued)

B. Board of Legislators. Denesha said CHIPS funding in 2019 will remain the same, but extreme weather funding was zeroed out, which means \$540,000 will be allocated by the State to County Highway. Denesha said Aid and Incentives for Municipalities (AIM) funding was kept intact in the State budget, but offset through a reduction in county aid from online sales tax revenue. Denesha said trailers have been delivered at County transfer stations to accept disposed mattresses which will then be transported to Rochester. Denesha also said the Board passed a resolution extending a contract with Auctions International for the County's annual auction of foreclosed properties as they have had success in reaching a larger audience.

C. Cornell Cooperative Extension. Ames said Cooperative Extension has ended a busy program year; horticulturalist Paul Hetzler recently filled a workshop with 60 persons in attendance at BOCES' conference room. Staff completed manure application trainings, and they are transitioning to farm visits and research projects. Ames handed out a flier announcing upcoming Farm Transition seminars, and said he is pleased with staff efforts in program delivery. Ames said it's been a significant learning year with the Farm to School food program which processed 10,000 pounds of produce for 21 school districts who participated and requested up to 33,000 pounds of produce. Ames said he anticipates processing for the next school year will occur four times per week, and intends to reapply for another round of funding to address the program's refrigeration and transportation needs.

Ames said funding for BOCES' Ag Academy was reduced from \$200,000 to \$125,000. The program currently instructs 11 students with an additional three students in the registration process, and the program will be left as is with two instructors, and said the program will

need to find ways to sustain itself. Ames said Cooperative Extension was invited to reapply for \$94,000 of USDA RBEG funding to support the local food initiative.

D. Real Property. Green said tentative rolls will be printed for 32 communities, and assessors will be available next month to meet with property owners. The office recently completed board review training, and is printing tax maps for each town. Green also said local assessors are up for reappointment in the fall, and there are current assessor vacancies in Colton and Pierrepont.

E. Soil and Water Conservation District. Dulanski said their board met last week and the County Forester and summer intern will conduct an ash hazard tree assessment along County roads. Dulanski said seven new EAB sites are confirmed in the County, and communities and property owners should begin budgeting for treatment and remediation. Dulanski discussed the Slow Ash Mortality (SLAM) Project which involves 10-15 trees that are girdled within a one-mile radius of infested trees that are felled into three-foot segments to slow the infestation process down. Dulanski also discussed the North Atlantic Aquatic Assessment; the availability of ten \$500 grants to fund school projects that promote conservation; continued support of the County's Septic Repair and Replacement Program; the preparation and submission of CAFO waste storage applications; and preparations for the Envirothon.

VI. Other Items

B. Announcements. Pfothauer said the County recently issued an RFP for the establishment of solar arrays on former landfills.

C. Correspondence. None.

D. Next Meeting Date. The next meeting for the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board is Thursday, October 3, 2019 at 7:30 pm in the 2nd floor conference room of the County Public Safety Complex in Canton.

VII. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 9:33 pm (Greenwood/McKnight).

Respectfully submitted,

Matilda Larson