

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

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

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DRAFT MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, December 5, 2019

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

I. Call to Order

A. Members present: R. Andrews, D. Fisher, B. Green, R. Sapp, J. TeRiele, J. Pfothner and A. Tubbs. **Members absent:** P. Ames, L. Denesha, J. Greenwood and S. McKnight. **Staff present:** M. Larson. **Others present:** Patrick Kelly, St. Lawrence County Industrial Development Agency, and Drs. Philip Neisser and Hiren Bhavsar from SUNY Canton.

Roll Call and Determination of a Quorum. A quorum was present. Andrews called the meeting to order at 7:31 pm, welcomed Dr. Neisser and Bhavsar to tonight's meeting, and asked all those present to please introduce themselves.

B. Adoption of the Agenda. The meeting agenda was unanimously adopted by consensus.

C. Approval of the Minutes. The October 3, 2019 meeting minutes were unanimously adopted (TeRiele/Fisher).

II. New Business

A. Ag Curriculum Offerings at SUNY Canton. Neisser and Bhavsar distributed copies of SUNY Canton's Agribusiness Management curriculum to those present. Neisser and Bhavsar explained they have been in their positions for the last 18 months and have worked with Art Garno from SUNY Canton's workforce development center (CREST). Neisser announced the campus is hosting a hemp expo on April 3rd to help potential producers understand the risk and benefits of entering into hemp production. Neisser said presenters include growers, processors, staff from the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets, and Cornell Cooperative Extension staff. Fisher said the industry needs more processors than producers, and the challenge is distributing the crop to market. Members of the board concurred that harvesting, processing, distribution and sales are the biggest challenges to hemp production. Tubbs added there are not enough labs to test THC potency levels every 30 days, which can't exceed 2% or the crop must be destroyed.

Andrews recommended the campus host panel discussions or workshops on hops and barley production, but Sapp and Fisher said those crops also face the same challenges of processing, distribution and marketing.

Pfotenhauer asked if Neisser and Bhavsar could speak about their agribusiness program. Neisser and Bhavsar explained the program is intended to train and educate students who are already connected to a farming operation. The program was originally approved in 2017, and enrollment is currently in the single digits. Sapp recommended the curriculum include course offerings on manufacturing and processing, and offer more applied learning. Kelly asked about the program's linkages with advanced degrees at other SUNY schools, including the MBA program at SUNY Morrisville, and the MBA program at Clarkson. Green suggested offerings for a two-year degree, or microcredentials for students to receive a certificate.

A discussion ensued about the campus' CDL training program which costs \$5,500 for seven weeks of evening classes and training; eight to nine students are currently enrolled for CDL-A certification. Green said bus drivers require a P (passenger) endorsement. Kelly said the campus was most responsive in developing the CDL training program which consists of 20 hours of classroom time on Tuesdays and Thursdays for seven weeks. Fisher said microcredential certificates will be the most attractive to farm operators and their employees. Members of the board thanked Neisser and Bhavsar for tonight's presentation.

III. Old Business

- A. Cultivating Careers in Agriculture Field Trip.** Larson summarized the number of attendees who participated in the field trip, and locations the students visited. Andrews asked if the board could review a summary of the participant survey. Larson said she would follow up with Patty Gilbert at the Ag Academy.

IV. Reports

- A. Board of Legislators.** Pfotenhauer said 2019 sales tax revenue is higher than the County originally projected. A current issue at the moment is the availability of a temporary bridge on the Jones Road for a seasonal, recreational use in Hopkinton in light of a permanent closure of the Emeryville Road bridge in Fowler. A comment was also made that the County's 2020 tentative budget passed unanimously. Pfotenhauer said the office is currently in transition with Zimmerman's recent retirement and Henophy on extended medical leave which has reduced staffing from six to four persons.
- B. Cornell Cooperative Extension.** Sapp said CCE held its annual meeting in October. Sapp also said he accompanied Ames to the Director's annual meeting at Cornell, and said the county's Extension program is the most advanced program in the state.
- C. Industrial Development Agency.** Kelly said a covered ag business in Massena was awarded low cost power and can proceed with financing. North American Forest Group received funds from the Northern Border Regional Commission to acquire processing

equipment. Kelly also discussed partnerships with SUNY Canton for workforce readiness training, and said the agency is working with Fobare Fruits to distribute its apples to government agency markets. Kelly said the IDA is working with St. Lawrence River shoreline communities and businesses to satisfy the local match requirement for REDI monies. Kelly also said the agency is working with the City of Ogdensburg on a Restore NY award for the Newell Building.

- D. Real Property.** Green said the office is continuing its annual cycle of preparing town and county tax bills, and listed the names of persons who were appointed as assessors for the towns of Madrid, Pierrepont, Colton and Clare. Green said property owners with at least 15 lots can now sign up to receive their tax bills via email.

Green said his office received three letters from solar developers to begin the 60-day notice for local jurisdictions to request a payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT) for a solar array. Larson said she would email Green the parcel IDs of properties reviewed by the County Planning Board for proposed solar arrays. Both Green and Kelly explained PILOTs versus exemptions for the first 15 years for an array, which requires buy-in from affected taxing jurisdictions. Kelly said pilot payments range from \$1,500 to \$5,000 per megawatt, and the first \$4,000 per megawatt is split among the affected jurisdictions. A comment was made that the default is a 15-year tax exemption for arrays.

- E. Soil and Water Conservation District.** Andrews said Dulanski will return to the office full time in February. Andrews said the County Forester recently became a certified arborist, and the presence of EAB in the county has expanded from two miles to six miles from the St. Lawrence River shoreline. Andrews also said SWCD staff are pursuing AEM Coordinator certification, and the District's organizational meeting will be on January 9th. Andrews noted there are few Soil and Water Conservation Districts that have partnerships with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

VI. Other Items

A. Announcements. None.

B. Correspondence. None.

C. Next Meeting Date. The next meeting for the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board is Thursday, February 6, 2020 at 7:30 pm in the 2nd floor conference room of the County Public Safety Complex in Canton.

VII. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 9:50 pm (TeRiele/Pfotenhauer).

Respectfully submitted,

Matilda Larson

