

AG AND FARMLAND PROTECTION BOARD MEETING
February 4, 2009
County Court House
Canton, New York

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 p.m.

a. Roll Call and Determination of Quorum

The following members were present:

Members present: Robert Andrews, Clive Chambers, David Fisher, Jon Greenwood, Dan Martin, Jane Powers, Allyn Tubbs and Keith Zimmerman. **Members absent:** Kevin Bresett, Dan Girard and Steve McKnight. **Staff present:** None. **Others present:** Betsy Hodge, Dawn Howard, Mendy Martin and Robert Wilson.

b. Welcome of New Members

Bob introduced two new members and had other members introduce themselves.

c. Adoption of the Agenda

The agenda was adopted by consensus

- d. Approval of the June 26, 2008 Meeting Minutes**
- e. Approval of the September 25, 2008 Meeting Minutes**
- f. Approval of the November 6, 2008 Meeting Minutes**

Approval of minutes for:

- June 26th – (Greenwood moved / Martin second) with unanimous concurrence
- Sept 25th – (Greenwood moved / Powers second) with unanimous concurrence
- November 6th – (Tubbs moved / Martin second) with unanimous concurrence

II. Guest Speaker

Blake Putman, Cornell University – Tri-County Recycling Ag Plastics Project

Blake Putman is the three county coordinator for the ag plastic separation project. She described the current markets and the potential by-products of process by plastic type and passed around production samples.

She described best management practices and an information sheet being developed and described the baling process to improve density. She noted that there are some potential energy conversion markets being tested on the west coast.

Powers asked if by-products are always rigid products. Putman said she has only seen rigid plastics but if a soft product (like bedding mats) could be suggested – perhaps some development work could take place.

Putman noted that she is coordinating the process out of Cornell University.

She asked if anyone had experience saving plastics. Fisher noted that labor expense of management is potentially significant. Greenwood noted that the baler feeder design is an impediment to processing.

Putman noted that DEC is holding some funds to expand the program and to put more balers out there. Two more demonstration projects this Spring will be in DePeyster, Canton and Waddington/Chipman area on both April 3rd and April 6th. Zimmerman will ask Don Peck about a potential location in Gouverneur – perhaps at fairgrounds site.

Martin asked about what “dry” means. Putman is asking for as dry as possible but management as you go is typically “cleaner.” Fisher noted that if you want larger volumes from big farms, the baler design would need to be changed. Putman said they are also looking for some kind of environmental label recognition and/or incentive from manufacturers financially to help with branding and encouraging the recycled products.

III. Business Items

- a. Schedule 2009 Quarterly Meeting Calendar
Recommend meeting during the 2nd half of June for the annual 30-Day Ag District Review
Current meeting conflicts: 2nd, 3rd or 4th Thursdays, and 3rd Wednesdays of each month

Bob was looking for a typically good day of the month – Bob Wilson noted that our legislative rep cannot attend any meetings regardless of date – Girard has attended only 40 % of the meetings – Wilson indicated that he feels this is disrespectful.

First Thursdays of the month will be the day of meetings. Check on the validity of utilizing a conference call to do agricultural district amendments if needed . **Next formal meeting will be June 4th** .

Discussion of Ag Assessment/Valuation and then annual renewal ensued. Greenwood recommended that we suggest to the State that the annual renewal be on a simplified form. Long form perhaps on initial enrollment and renewal by a substantially less complex process with no more than one page per farm.

Greenwood made a motion that the annual renewal form be on a single form per farm operation (Fisher second) – unanimously supported.

IV. Reports

- a. Update on 2009 Agriculture Initiatives and the North Country Regional Foods Initiative – B. Buchanan & B. Hodge

Betsy Hodge reported on behalf of Brent Buchanan. She handed out materials for the North County Regional Food Initiative (two handouts). She noted that with respect to CFWU – there has been continuing contact with a vegetable farmer in Pennsylvania looking to potentially relocate.

Ag directory – Cooperative Extension looking to work with Chamber of Commerce and will look to improve farm show locally unless a more viable alternative is developed.

Look to move updates to Cooperative Extension website to make updating simpler. Potential new website design at county could allow for off-site development. Andrews noted that this resource needs to be updated. This is a work program project for this year.

Andrews noted that we need better information about what services are being offered by the Amish.

Betsy described the Ag Careers program efforts – she conducted her “pizza party” in Canton for 8th graders and will do that every 8 weeks now in Canton. She just did a mailing to school and there is heightened interest in science programs in particular. She will be doing an afterschool program in Ogdensburg and she hopes it is an entrée into the school system by day. She likes doing 8th graders as they are just looking at high school classes.

She shared a comment that the USDA has issued a needs study for ag and it would be nice to get a color copy out to school counselors. Betsy will be speaking to all principals at a BOCES wide meeting – so this will be a nice point of contact with all the districts and schools at one.

Clive noted that in 2007 – several staffers restarted maple production on the farm. The Cooperative Extension Farm will be open both weekend and Ag Commissioner Hooker will be coming to tap a tree on March 28th at the cooperative extension farm. It is combined with a 4-H youth program.

- b. **Update from SWCD – D. Howard**

Dawn Howard spoke about the press release for the soil survey. Still don't have it. She will track this down. SWCD still has about 500 copies of the report.

Dawn also reported on DEC CAFO Draft permit hearing. The meeting was held in Lowville a few weeks ago. EPA has changed SPDES permit process and will allow self reporting and now there is a public hearing process – but in New York, the state will not allow self-certification. Large CAFOs will still be required to prepare nutrient management plans but will be either available on-line or subject to FOIL requests. It is expected to be implemented by the end of June.

Dawn met with assessors and Jane today to speak about ag assessments. Jane has a ‘Cheat Sheet’ for farmers. Jane needs to review it before it is distributed if the data sheet is more than 2 years old. What is or is not allowed under Real Property Law. Fisher moved to have Jane update the sheet (second by Tubbs) and approved unanimously.

Dawn reported on the New York State deficit reduction act for 08-09. Non-point pollution program cut by 1/3 and that pays for CAFO plans. Soil and Water not harmed in budget adjustments.

Lastly, she reported that work has begun on new farm safety program. Sent notice to all the schools.

c. **Board of Legislators Report – D. Girard**

Zimmerman reported on behalf of Girard on the Board action on the firewood transport emergency regulation. Wilson thought that this board should issue a “state of agriculture report” to the BOL. Wilson noted that it is the largest economic engine of the County. How can the Board affect legislation that impacts on local producers without this basis of knowledge?

20-30 minute annual briefing to the BOL would really help. Need to update annually. Need to get this on a legislative agenda. Clive spoke to this issue and noted that Nichols was the last real ag guy on the BOL. Greenwood and Fisher talked about a farm tour. Fisher noted virtually the whole board has changed since the last one. Wilson reiterated his recommendation to tap into the expertise of the Ag Board to generate an assessment report.

He recommended looking into such issues as:

- Taxes paid in aggregate
- Tax abatement programs and exemptions
- Land in use
- Employment
- Trends in production and prices
- Changing demographics and potential impact on farming

Greenwood moved to have the AFPB to work with Farm Bureau – Soil and Water – Cooperative Extension to put together a farm tour (Tubbs second)

Data sets – form a sub-committee to pull data together.

Wilson volunteered to work on this. Blake Putman offered to help by discussing how this was done by Coop. Ext. in Clinton County. Bob Andrews and David Fisher and Allyn Tubbs will work on this subcommittee as well.

Chairman was asked to speak to the BOL Chair about who will represent the BOL at the AFPB meetings.

V. Other Items

a. Selection of Board Chair and Vice-Chair for a two-year term

Voting on Officers – two year terms – Greenwood nominated Andrews and Powers (Fisher second) – unanimous endorsement.

b. Attendance at Meetings

Attendance at meetings – Kevin Bresett looks forward to returning once the cold weather passes.

c. SARE Grant Update

Zimmerman reported that we expect to hear in March regarding the success of the application.

Adjournment at 9:40 by consensus.