

ST. LAWRENCE COUNTY
AGRICULTURAL AND FARMLAND PROTECTION BOARD

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APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, August 5, 2010, 7:30 PM
County Courthouse, Room 226, 48 Court Street, Canton, New York

I. Call to Order

- (a). **Roll Call and Determination of a Quorum.** Powers called the meeting to order at 7:34 PM. Members present: Clive Chambers, David Coffey, David Fisher, Jon Greenwood, Dawn Howard (alternate for Bob Andrews), Steve McKnight, Jane Powers. **Members absent:** Bob Andrews, Dan Girard, Dan Martin, Allyn Tubbs and Keith Zimmerman. **Staff present:** Brent Buchanan and Matilda Larson.
- (b). **Adoption of the Agenda.** Powers recommended the agenda be amended to discuss the 2010 Ag District Review under “Old Business,” and include the 2011 property assessment schedule under “Other Items.” The modified meeting agenda was unanimously adopted (Greenwood/McKnight).
- (c). **Approval of the Minutes.** The June 3, 2010 meeting minutes were unanimously approved (Fisher/Greenwood).

II. Old Business

- (a). **2010 Ag District Review.** Larson reviewed recent events concerning the annual Ag District review since the Ag Board’s last meeting in June. Larson explained two families attended the July 7th public hearing concerning the Ag District review process: Michael Hewlett and his parents who are requesting to add their parcel to Ag District 2 in the Town of Massena, and James Farbotnik and his family who reside next door to the Hewletts. Larson said Mr. Farbotnik expressed opposition to adding Mr. Hewlett’s property to Ag District 2, and restated Mr. Farbotnik’s allegations concerning the manure spreading practices by Jacque Breault, a farmer who leases the land from the Hewletts. Larson explained Mr. Farbotnik attended the County Legislator’s Full Board meeting on August 2nd and reiterated his opposition during the public comment period. Larson said she did not attend the Board of Legislator’s meeting, but is aware Mr. Farbotnik has the attention of the County Board. Larson expressed concern the County Legislators may opt to exclude Mr. Hewlett’s parcel from Ag District 2 based on Mr. Farbotnik’s opposition. Larson explained she is scheduled to deliver this year’s Ag District Report to the County

Board on Monday, August 9th, and Dawn Howard will be in attendance to comment on the allegations concerning the farmer's manure spreading practices. Howard said Legislator Morrill will formally recognize her to speak on the issue at the meeting. Howard explained the dispute and chain of events between the Farbotniks and Hewletts concerning manure spreading practices and allegations of water contamination, and said she will present her findings to the County Board. Fisher and Greenwood asked if they should attend the meeting to lend their support for including Mr. Hewlett's land to the Ag District. Larson said she would defer to members of the Ag Board on that. Greenwood, Fisher and Powers indicated they would attend the meeting.

A discussion ensued whether the County Board will take action on the Ag District Review at the August meeting. Larson clarified the report is being presented for discussion, and the Board will take action at their September meeting. Greenwood added the County Legislators must carry a motion at the August meeting in order to take action in September. A recommendation was made for the Hewletts to contact County Legislator Grow and ask that he formally recognize them at Monday's meeting. The Board unanimously affirmed its recommendation to the Board of Legislators to add all 29 requested parcels to Agricultural Districts 1 and 2 (Chambers/Howard).

III. Reports

- (a). **August 20, 2010 Ag Tour.** Larson distributed copies of a tour locator map, a description of both businesses, and reviewed the tour agenda with members of the board. Larson also reviewed the invitation distribution list, and reminded members the last day to register to attend is August 13th. Powers, Fisher, Greenwood, and Buchanan said they would attend. Coffey said he would check his schedule at work to see if he could attend. Larson said she forwarded the proposed route and timetable to Canton Central Schools for the bus charter, and is waiting to hear from them. Chambers explained the receipt should be forwarded for payment to Cooperative Extension, and noted Cooperative Extension wasn't identified as a sponsoring agency for the event. Larson explained that since Cooperative Extension was not implementing projects on behalf of the Ag Board this year, Planning staff was coordinating the event, and understood the Farm Bureau would cover the transportation expenses. Both Chambers and Greenwood explained the receipt for the bus charter should be forwarded to Cooperative Extension for payment as the Farm Bureau cannot directly reimburse the County.

Fisher recommended creating a handout that identified how organic farm operations fulfilled a niche in the farming industry, but would not be able to solely address the global food demand. Fisher provided Larson with a copy of an article concerning emissions from large farm operations, and recommended reading a recent article concerning a nutritionist's visit to the Colorado feed lot. Fisher recommended Larson contact Martin to see if he will be attending, as both tour venues may be of interest to him. Powers recommended emailing the tour invitation to County Department heads.

- (b). **Focus Group Meeting Synopsis.** Larson explained since the Ag Board's last meeting in June, she grouped similar issues raised by focus group participants into distinct categories. Larson reviewed and elaborated on the top five categories based on total vote count, then reviewed the top five categories based on weaknesses and opportunities. Larson explained the examination of priorities according to weaknesses and opportunities was based on the County's ability to influence an issue using local resources. Following her presentation, Larson stated her intent to distribute the report to the media and to the Board of Legislators before the August 20th Ag Tour. Members of the Board suggested delivering a presentation to the County Board in February after newly elected legislators take office. Chambers asked if and how the Ag Board and other farming related organizations will use this information to establish a framework for future projects and objectives.
- (c). **Northeast SARE Ag Plastics Recycling Grant.** Buchanan distributed a written update on the grant; he identified new participating farms, and upcoming collection dates.
- (d). **Board of Legislators.** Larson said Girard contacted her and stated his intention to resign from the Ag Board in order to support a proposal to create a Local Development Corporation that focuses farm-related business development.
- (e). **Soil and Water Conservation District.** Howard said the ag plastics baler, and the no-till grain drill will be at the county fair in Gouverneur for demonstrations. The DEC is holding a free pesticide collection at the Potsdam DOT Office on US Highway 11 on October 19th. As for the SUNY Canton methane digester, the land for the project has been transferred to the consultant who will be installing the equipment. The SWCD is implementing a \$600,000 construction grant on two farms (a concrete manure pit on one, and a concrete barnyard on the other), and anticipate receiving a \$227,000 grant to construct concrete barnyards on two farms next year. The office received an increase of funds (from \$40,000 to \$60,000) to prepare nutrient management plans for next year. Howard said the Farm Safety Day Camp is now coordinated by Cooperative Extension, and more than 500 5th graders participated in this year's event. Howard also reported that in response to the Ag Board's memo concerning the growing nuisance bear population in St. Lawrence County, the Region 6 Fish and Wildlife Management Board unanimously passed a resolution to open all of Region 6 to bear hunting.

IV. Other Items

- (a). **2011 Town Assessment Schedule.** Powers distributed a list of municipalities in the County that will undergo assessments in 2011. Powers also announced she will be retiring as the Director of the County Real Property office, and November will be her last meeting as a member of this board.

- (b). **Correspondence.** Larson said the office received a memo from Chenango County Farmland Protection Board offering to exchange ideas to protect and promote the farmland in New York State. Members of the board agreed to Larson's suggestion of mailing a copy of the 2010 SWOT Synopsis and information about the August Ag Tour.
- (c). **Next Meeting.** The next Ag and Farmland Protection Board meeting will be on Thursday, November 4, 2010 at 7:30 pm in Room 226 of the County Courthouse in Canton.

Members of the board suggested the agenda include setting the 2011 meeting dates, and moving the August meeting date to another month as it conflicts with the County fair.

V. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned by consensus at 9:02 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Matilda Larson