

ST. LAWRENCE COUNTY PLANNING BOARD

APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

January 14, 2010

County Courthouse, 48 Court Street, Room 226 A and B, Canton

I. Initial Business

- A. **Roll Call and Determination of a Quorum.** Welch called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. **Members present:** K. Bellor, D. Duff, M. Gazin, T. Jenison, R. Matthews, J. Miller, D. Mullaney, W. Palmer and D. Welch. **Members Absent:** K. Bisonette, S. Burns, W. Dashnaw, W. Davis, J. Furnia, and L. Mattice. **Staff present:** M. Larson, J. Montan and J. Pfothenauer.
- B. **Action on the Agenda.** The meeting agenda was unanimously approved (Matthews/Mullaney).
- C. **Action on Meeting Minutes.** Mullaney noted the second page to the County Planning Board's response to the Walton project in the Town of Gouverneur was missing. Pfothenauer explained it was inadvertently omitted from the meeting packet. The December 10, 2009 meeting minutes were unanimously approved (Jenison/Matthews).

II. Public Comment No public comments were made.

- III. **Presentation on Grass Pelleting** Jon Montan distributed a plastic Ziploc bag containing goldenrod grass pellets that were made by EnviroEnergy in Unadilla, and reviewed the creation and the goals of a local working group that is trying to establish the manufacturing of grass pellets in St. Lawrence County. Montan noted the primary resource necessary for pellets is low-quality hay, and the maximum benefit from manufacturing grass pellets would come from using the product locally. Montan explained while low-quality hay is abundant in St. Lawrence County, it is a finite resource, and net energy is lost when additional processes are added to the manufacturing/transportation cycle of the product.

Montan reviewed the various pelleting operations the group visited in New York state and Pennsylvania, and explained how pellets are manufactured and used at these locations. When asked about the characteristics of goldenrod pellets, Montan explained goldenrod is easy to grow, the manufactured pellet is hard and dense, has a high BTU, emits low chlorine, and produces low ash. Switchgrass pellets, on the other hand, require a binder, crumble easily, and it takes time and effort to establish the crop. Montan compared the boiler system at the Benton, PA Area School District to the boiler at the Edwards-Knox School, then reviewed the components and disadvantages of mobile pelleters.

Montan reviewed the next steps for the working group, and said without any research and development funds, it is currently relying on the private market to buy into the project. Possible interest has been expressed by Poulin Grain, and he will be meeting with them this coming week. When asked by Gazin about the BTU content of grass pellets, Montan explained it is slightly less than wood pellets. Montan added the purchase price for hay from farmers to manufacture goldenrod pellets is \$60, and the final product sells for approximately \$225 per ton. Matthews replied \$60 for a bale of crummy hay would constitute a gold mine for farmers.

Miller asked for a comparison of the volume of ash that's generated by the different pellets. Montan replied ash from wood pellets is 3%, grass is 8%, and coal is 20%, and said the ash is not considered problematic or toxic for disposal. Jenison asked how the ash should be disposed since it is not accepted at landfills. Montan said landfills typically won't accept ash because it constitutes a fire hazard, and said it could be spread across a lawn, but can affect the pH level of the soil. Matthews said his pellet stove generates about a ½ bushel of ash from 1 ton of pellets. Montan confirmed for Duff that some or most pellet stoves will burn pellets that are made from different materials. Montan offered to provide a list of vendors who sell stoves that can burn grass pellets.

Montan confirmed for Gazin that the Edwards-Knox boiler was funded through a grant rather than investing in a conventional boiler that uses natural gas or oil. Montan also confirmed for Zimmerman that pellet furnaces are also available as residential heating systems, not just as a cosmetic heating source. Palmer asked if the purchase price for pellet stoves make them cost prohibitive. Montan said a federal tax credit is available to make them more affordable, and also noted that because oil is a finite resource, the country will be forced to transition to another fuel source. No other heating source will be as convenient as oil, and investments will be required to accommodate a transition in fuel sources. Welch asked about the possibility of transporting chopped hay rather than in its final form as a pellet. Montan replied it would pose transportation difficulties, could constitute as a fire hazard, and the dust could be explosive. Duff asked who in the western world has adapted well to this fuel source. Montan replied Austria, Germany, and western Canada. Montan added that most places utilize wood pellets first, but as the availability of waste wood declines and its price increases, users often switch to other pellet types.

Montan offered to email interested members about their upcoming activities, and said the next meeting date for the group is January 26th at Cooperative Extension.

IV. Projects Reviews

A. Projects returned for local action under MOU.

Canton (T): James Akins, Site Plan and Special Use Permit for Bed and Breakfast.
Mullaney noted a typo for "bed and breakfast."

Pierrepont (T): Moratorium on wind energy facilities. At Welch's request, Pfothenhauer explained the Town is considering a text amendment to its existing code to regulate wind turbines, and a moratorium will be in place for 12 months.

Hammond (T): Moratorium on Local Law No. 1 regarding wind energy facilities. Zimmerman announced receiving a moratorium that will last for 6 months to revisit the provisions of their recently passed law.

Ogdensburg (C): Map Amendment/Zone Change from Business (B) to Medium Density Residential (MDR) from 505 to 611 Canton Street. Larson provided an overview of the project, described its location in the aerial maps, and an applicant's previous request for a use variance. Larson explained the previous use variance request was returned for local action, and it was denied by the local planning board. Larson said the city is proposing the amendment to make the existing non-conforming residences in this location a permitted use.

B. Full Reviews.

There were no full review projects for the Board to take action on.

V. Reports

A. Executive Committee. Welch said the Executive Committee met on December 29th to set tonight's meeting agenda.

B. Board of Legislators. Burns was not present to deliver a report.

C. Staff Report. Mullaney asked when the working committee with the County's Environmental Management Council would reconvene to revise the model wind law. Pfothenhauer said a date has not been set, and will likely meet after Community Development Block Grant applications are submitted to the state on April 23rd. Duff said he recently read a legal notice by the Air Force of changes to the use of air space by jets from Burlington over the Adirondack Park. Larson announced the remaining focus group meetings sponsored by the Ag and Farmland Protection board to update the County's 2001 Ag Development Plan. Zimmerman reviewed the Office's present workload and said every department is under a microscope due to the County's present fiscal situation, and the Planning Board should expect substantial changes to the County's existing organization of services.

D. Election of Officers. The Board unanimously agreed to reappoint the existing Planning Board officers to another term of service (Matthews/Duff).

E. Annual Retreat. Matthews, Mullaney and Miller said they were pleased with the presentations at the January retreat. A comment was made that the agenda was too ambitious. A suggestion was made for Larson to deliver a presentation about the Agricultural Districts program during the March regular meeting. When Duff asked if the retreat was worth doing, Matthews replied the event should be held annually.

VI. Other Items

A. Correspondence. None reported.

B. Next Meeting Dates. The Executive Committee will meet on Thursday, January 28th at 4:00 pm in the Planning Office Conference Room. The Full Board will meet on Thursday, February 11th at 7:00 pm in Room 226 of the County Courthouse in Canton.

VII. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned by consensus.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dawn Mullaney
Secretary

Minutes prepared by M. Larson

P:\PLANNING\CPB\MINUTES\2010\CPB Mins 01.14.10.doc