

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

48 Court St. Canton, New York 13617-1169

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DRAFT MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, February 6th, 2025, 6:00 PM

Second Floor Conference Room, Human Service Center

80 State Highway 310, Canton, NY 13617

I. Call to Order

A. Roll Call and Determination of a Quorum. Chair called the meeting to order at 6:09 pm.

Members present: R. Andrews, (*Chair*); M. Bowdish; L. Denesha, (*BOL Liaison*); B. Green, (*Real Property*); J. Greenwood; K. Gugin, (*CCE*); J. Pfotenhauer, (*Planning Office*); J. TeRiele. **Absent:** D. Fisher; S. McKnight. A quorum was established.

Staff present: S. Joseph *Planner II*; **Others present:** A. Bleau, *SWCD*; B. Ashfeld, *IDA*;

B. Adoption of the Agenda. Motion to adopt agenda (Pfotenhauer / Denesha) Agenda was adopted

C. Approval of the Minutes. Motion to approve October 3rd, 2024 meeting minutes (TeRiele / Denesha) Meeting minutes approved .

II. New Business

A. Adoption of 2025 meeting calendar: (TeRiele / Denesha) Passed

B. Ag Tour: Discussion on Ag Tour and brainstorm on possible locations. Motion to have the planning office plan agenda for Agricultural Tour. (Denesha / Green) Passed

C. Presentation on NYS Comptrollers Report: Staff reviewed report by NYS Comptroller *A Profile of Agriculture in New York State*. The report reviews current status on acreage, number of farms, and current trends. Overall New York State is losing both number of farms and acres in farmland at a faster rate than surrounding States. Report can be found here: <https://www.osc.ny.gov/files/reports/pdf/profile-of-agriculture-in-nys.pdf>

D. Status on Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI): Staff presented on current status of HPAI. No known dairy operations in NYS has HPAI but there is concern with bird migration spreading the disease. HPAI has been identified in a large poultry farm on Long Island, several backyard flocks, and numerous wild birds. NYS is participating in milk monitoring program with USDA, and has cattle import restrictions from States with known HPAI outbreaks. DEC has a bird mortality reporting website.

III. Old Business:

- A. Ag District Consolidation:** During the 2024 8 year review the County decided to consolidate the two agricultural districts into one district called Agricultural District 1. The review and consolidation was submitted to NYS Ag and Markets and was approved. The combined district contains 648,941 total acres. 395,012 acres of land owned or rented by farms with an estimated 1,447 farm operations. During the eight year review 1,250 acres were added and 1,451 acres removed. Next eight year review will be 2032.
- B. USDA 2022 Ag Census:** Staff continued to review information regarding the 2022 Ag Census.

IV. Reports

- A. Solar Development:** There has not been any small solar projects (<20MW) before the County Planning Board since 2023. The larger industrial projects (>20MW) are under jurisdiction of Office of Renewable Energy Siting (ORES), and while the local municipality can offer feedback, the ultimate decision is made by the State. Three large projects are in the pipeline. Rich Road (240 MW on 3,842 acres) in Canton has been permitted and in development. It will have 20 MW of battery storage which will equate to 50 shipping containers. Moss Ridge (60MW) in DeKalb submitted application, but State deemed incomplete. Moss Ridge plans to resubmit by April 2025. Two Rivers (200 MW on 3,296 acres) in Brasher and Massena submitted application and State is determining completeness. The developers made effort to reduce impact to agricultural land. On 15 of the 19 parcels have less than 25% of the prime agricultural land consumed by this project. Of the remaining parcels with greater than 25% make up roughly 15% of the project and range from 26.5%-31.5%.
- B. Methane Digesters:** No new methane projects have come before the County Planning Board. The large project on SH 310 has seemed to have stalled. SWCD received a grant from NYS Enhanced Nutrient Management Program for \$489,000 for a manure transfer pipeline.. Greenwood Farm methane digester is functioning and providing gas to the pipeline.
- C. IDA:** Hosted Ben Cruise, from Next Move NY work force development council working to get more Fort Drum soldiers to transition to North Country. ARPA funding award \$220,000 for Ag. \$600,000 worth PILOT invoices for municipalities through SLC. New water buffalo dairy farm in Hammond. Maxxi Milk in Lisbon is doing genetic work on dairy animals.
- D. SWCD:** SWCD got the Enhanced Nutrient Management grant for \$489,000. Additionally three Climate Resilient Farming grants, two for cover crops and one for manure management. Ag and Nonpoint source pollution grants have opened and, currently five farms are applying. County forester is continuing with the hazard tree removal along County roads. Time of year for farmers coming in to determine ag land values. Margaret Haggard no longer BOL representative and now Daniel Fay and John Burke will be the BOL liaison. Ag and Markets training session scheduled for 20th Feb. SWCD staff member received crop certification which will allow them to apply for more funding. Allocated \$15,000 to SLC Planning for Septic tank replacement program. The water testing lab in

Waddington closed. SWCD has an agreement with SLC Public Health, SWCD providing sample kits and refrigeration. Endyne Labs in Plattsburg will pick up the tests the second Monday of the month. The sample must be taken within 24 hours of pick up.

- E. Real Properties:** A mistake was discovered on the tax bills that were mailed out. Wrong tax rates were issued, figured out how it happened, and working hard to prevent it from happening again.
- F. CCE:** New Regional Ag Team member, Farm Business Management Specialist, Colin Hostetter, introduced himself. Six county regional team reimagined as a three county team. He visited 255 farms across the three counties in the first 6 months. A producer survey launched to determine how farmers and food businesses currently use CCE and what would they like to see. \$500,000 farmers market promotion grant for farm and food business incubator program expand commercial kitchen use for Jefferson County.
- G. J. TiRele:** Keeping farm going and servicing machinery.
- H. J. Greenwood:** Digester up and running supplying gas to pipeline. Milk prices pretty good but hard to find labor.
- I. BOL:** Had 2025 organization meeting and Dave Forsythe was elected chair again and Larry Denesha vice chair. Renovations on the Public Safety Building underway and approximately 30 days till completion. Planned 2-3 open houses so the public can come see the renovations. \$100,000 under budget. Petroleum prices are high in St. Lawrence County and BOL called upon NYS Attorney General to investigate possible price gauging
- J. Planning:** Septic Program has been running since 2018, \$1.6 million grant to repair septic systems along specific water bodies. There is about 2 years left to spend down funds. ARPA funds for broadband development and municipal sewer and water improvements. There is \$3 million for each of those programs. New staff member, a fiscal officer, will be joining the office.
- K. M. Bowdish:** Greenhouses are up and running and starting to plant.

V. Other Items

- A. Correspondence.** None
- B. Announcements.**

2. **Adjourn.** The meeting adjourned at 7:45 pm (Pfortenhauer / Denesha).

Respectfully submitted,

Samuel Joseph