

ST. LAWRENCE COUNTY
AGRICULTURAL AND FARMLAND PROTECTION BOARD
48 Court St. Canton, New York 13617-1169
Tel: (315) 379-2292 • Fax: (315) 379-2252

MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, February 5th, 2026, 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 6:04 pm.
1. Members present: R. Andrews, (*Chair, SWCD*); M. Bowdish; L. Denesha, (*BOL Liaison*); D. Fisher; E. Wilson, (*Real Property Director*); J. Pfothner, (*Planning Director*); J. TeRiele.
 2. Members Absent: J. Greenwood; C. Hostetter, (*CCE*); S. McKnight.
 3. Staff present: S. Joseph, (*Planner II*).
 4. Others present: B. Ahfeld, (*IDA*).
- B. Adoption of Agenda.** Agenda adopted.
- C. Approval of the Minutes.** Motion to approve December 4th, 2025 meeting minutes (Denesha / Pfothner). Meeting minutes approved.
- D. Introductions:** The Real Property Director position is now filled, and so the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board introduced themselves.

II New Business

- A. Letter to Governor regarding solar siting and farmland protection:** Motion to write a letter of support for this letter to the Governor of New York State. (Denesha / TeRiele). Motion Passed. Mr. Denesha reviewed the importance of Farmland protection from solar development pressure. Discussion on payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT), and discussion on financial pressures for leases.

III Old Business:

- A. NYISO NYS Electricity Production:**
1. Staff reviewed presentation based on NYS Independent Systems Operators (NYISO) Power Trends Report 2025. The NYISO controls the transmission lines and real time electricity market for NYS. The Power Trends Report has usage and production statistics: <https://www.nyiso.com/power-trends>
 2. Discussion on loss of Fort Drum bioenergy plant (60 MW). It offered a value to less desirable tree species and wood residue, had a beneficial by product of wood ash, and provided enough electrical and steam for entire base.
 3. Any project that NYS takes on above 10 MW has to register in the NYISO queue, with a two year waiting process. Applies to both consumption and production. Solar companies are arguing the queue should grant public utility variance if projects get denied by local land use boards. The public utility variance could potentially overrule local land use control for solar under 20 MW. Solar over 20 MW are decided by NYS.
- B. 2016 Ag Plan revisit:**
1. Discussion on Ag Plan and potential updates. Discussion on changes to the County in the last ten years, with reduction in agricultural producers, land pressure from solar development, and influx of residents from other places. Discussion on what is our agricultural economic development strategy look like. Discussion on the milk market, demand especially for protein. Kraft Foods in Lowville and Chobani in Rome have a contract to exchange protein and fat. Discussion on distance to processing for St. Lawrence farmers, and the need for processing plants locally. Discussion on reaching out to different interested parties.
- C. Board Vacancy:**
1. Discussion on potential individuals to join AFPB to fill the vacancy.

IV Reports:

A. Solar Developments:

1. Large Scale:

- a. 22-02969 Permitted: Rich Road, Canton 240 MW on 3,842 acres 20 MW battery storage. Construction delayed and planned to begin in 2028.
<https://documents.dps.ny.gov/public/MatterManagement/CaseMaster.aspx?MatterSeq=85374&MNO=22-02969>
- b. 23-02991 Complete Application Under Review: Two Rivers, Brasher and Massena 200 MW on 3,296 acres. The Planning Office attended public hearing gave comments on the value of agricultural land. Large number of Amish that opposed the project.
<https://documents.dps.ny.gov/public/MatterManagement/CaseMaster.aspx?MatterSeq=85397&MNO=23-02991>

2. Community Scale:

- a. Project in hamlet of Madrid that requested a use variance was denied by County Planning Board July 2024 because not permitted use and located on prime farm land. The developer resubmitted arguing it needs a public utility variance. The County Planning Board denied it again at January meeting. The Madrid Zoning Board of Appeals is reviewing the project and will render final decision at their meeting.
- b. Colton project 5 MW corner of Gulf Rd and Hason Rd. County Planning Board review offered some conditions. Little impact to agriculture, but neighbor disputes on connecting to substation.
- c. Discussion on Hays project under construction on State Highway 310. 10 MW reduced by Ag and Markets to 5 MW to protect prime farmland
- d. Not a new community scale since end of 2023 besides Colton and Madrid projects.
- e. Discussion on decommissioning.

B. CCE request for letter of support regarding Farm to School proposal to Ag and Markets.

1. Motion to provide letter of support (Fisher / Denesha) passes.

C. Planning: Performing mobile home assessment. Septic Repair program continues with sixth round of funding and expanded eligible waterbodies to include Black Lake. Discussion on mobile home parks. National Grid upgrading 115 kV transmission lines from Colton to Nicholville 18 miles. CPO is reviewing zoning changes for Town of Massena regarding data centers. CPO is suggesting a special use permit, which is a more thorough review. <https://www.stlawco.gov/Departments/Planning/PlanningStaffWorkReports>

D. Real Property: Involved in blighted property program.

E. Farm Bureau: Keeping an eye on State budget. Governor's budget a lot of ag research and promotion included. Taste of NY event with invitation to all NY State Legislators for lobbying. Environmental Protection Fund in good shape. Cornell University needs some help this year, with federal cuts. Advocating for funds for them. Pro Dairy is short a million dollars, extension investment tax credit for 5 more years, ongoing discussions on biosolids and PFAS. Federally, Big Beautiful Bill had some elements of the Farm Bill, but the formal Farm Bill is in development. Chair of House Ag Committee going to bring it up at the end of February, more for specialty crops. Bridge payments went to corn and veal, wasn't a good distribution, especially for specialty crops. Fix for pork issues in California, and more opportunities for forest products and poorer timber products, and ongoing discussions on ICE and labor

F. BOL: Reviewed organizational meeting in January. David Forsythe re-elected as chair, Larry Denesha re-elected vice-chair. The BOL Chair review some accomplishments: completed a four year project paving an additional 100 miles of county roads, \$14.2 million funds above federal or state funds; completed \$8 million renovation of public safety complex; opened third satellite DSS office in Gouverneur; completed installation of full service building generator in HSC; adopted budget on time; tenth reduction in property taxes in eleven years; commenced design and planning of highway administration and maintenance facility to move to highway outpost; planning replace the parking lot of Court House. Some of the challenges appropriated \$2.1 million from fund balance. Federal Medicaid Assistance Program (FMAP) was designed to be distributed to the Counties to offset cost of Medicaid, State is intercepting these funds which will result 3.1 million loss for the County. NYS increased eligibility for day care subsidies, but did not provide funds to pay for it.

G. SWCD: Have full board now. New round of AEM funding, that will allow three year completion period with increase of funds from \$200,000 to \$300,000. Five projects on board to review and will be accepting applications until beginning of April. Changed application process for AEM. Gathering emails and physical address for a newsletter. Tree sales live until March 6th, can order online. Training Feb 19 with Ag and

Market. Hazardous tree removal hired Putney out of Massena to work on the towns of Russell, Pitcairn, Parishville, Piercefield, Pierrepont, Clare, Edwards, Fowler, Hermon, Hopkinton, and Lawrence. Kravits will finish DePeyster, Dekalb, Gouverneur, Macomb and Rossie. By end of April all County roads will have hazardous trees removed. February 11 meeting with Ag and Market regarding ag assessment and ag districts.

H. **TeRiele:** Winter chores

I. **IDA:** 40 PILOTs in development. Attending conferences Ag Solutions and Networking Expo at Cobleskill March 3 and Northeast Dairy Innovations Summit in Albany March 10 and 11. Still looking to fill Kraft plant. Facilitated \$8,000 loan from DANC value added ag program, to Rocking TT Bar water buffalo farm in Hammond to purchase a milk cooling tank and combination condenser.

J. **Bowdish:** Greenhouses started and plants arriving. Busy season now through May.

V **Correspondence.** None

VI **Announcement:** DEC Regenerate NY accepting applications from private land owners for forest health and tree planting now through August 12. Funds range from \$10K to \$1 million and must be under direction of DEC forester or qualifying forester.

VII **Adjourn.** The meeting adjourned at 7:50 pm (TeRiele / Denesha).

Respectfully submitted,

Samuel Joseph