

COLUMBIA COUNTY
AGRICULTURE AND FARMLAND PROTECTION BOARD MEETING
March 1, 2007

The meeting of the AFPB was called to order at 9:30 am by Chairman Marian Dunbar at First Pioneer Farm Credit. Those also present were: Roland Vosburgh, Joel Allen, Suzette Booy, Betty Young, Jim Waterhouse, Larry Benson, Weir Stewart, Mallory Mort, and Steve Hadcock. Joel introduced Steve indicating that he had expressed an interest to attend the AFPB meetings. Plus Joel asked him to bring along his computer equipment in order to show the 21 minute "Chatham Grown" film on DVD.

Joel prefaced its showing with a copy of the handout from the Chatham Film Festival on January 14, 2007. This was the film we attempted to watch at our last meeting. Once shown, all agreed it was very well done and gave a very positive image of agriculture in the Town of Chatham. Several felt it would be appropriate to recognize the efforts of the Chatham Keep Farming and Chatham Agricultural Partnership in developing this film. Roland moved that the secretary prepare and send a letter to Chatham Keep Farming commending them on an outstanding film. Seconded and approved unanimously. Chairman Dunbar added that two of the farms included in the film: Little Seed and Staron Farms, were included in a recent PDR application by the Town of Chatham.

Roland reported on the forum he attended on Saturday, Feb. 24th, as part of the Keep Farming initiative in the Towns of Livingston, Clermont, and Germantown. A second forum was held on Tuesday evening, Feb. 27th. Joel was unable to attend both and did extend his regrets. Roland stated that Todd Erling, a resident of the Town of Livingston and executive director of the Hudson Valley Agricultural Development Corp. (HVADC), hosted the forum attended by 25 to 30 people, including Assemblyman Peter Lopez and a representative of Congressperson Gillibrand. Topic was the value of local agriculture and the farmer survey.

Suzette and Marian reported on our meeting with the County Board of Assessors at their monthly meeting on Feb. 21st. Suzette stated that 14 of the 19 municipalities in the county were represented at the meeting. 19 people were in attendance plus Mallory Mort, Joel Allen, Roland Vosburgh and Chairman Dunbar of the Columbia County AFPB. Marian introduced us and then we proceeded to share with the assessors some of our thoughts and concerns. We did extend to them our sincere thanks for their extra effort in getting Ag Value Assessment (AVA) renewal forms to the previous applicants and being sure they were completed prior to March 1st. This is NOT a requirement of the assessors. All felt this was a productive meeting and would lead to some additional meetings and/or trainings on agricultural topics. One assessor did express his concern over the reduced value in land that has received a PDR. Citing one example, a landowner took the town to court to reduce his property value to 0, now that is has had its development rights removed. Understand the landowner won. The assessor feels this has major implications for towns where PDRs are adopted. Roland feels the assessors have a lot of information that would be of value and importance to their municipalities. Ways they can help make the agr. district review process easier and more complete, were discussed.

Roland reported that the 303B application for inclusion in an agr. district during the annual 30 day request period (October in Columbia County), was approved by the county and has been forwarded to NYS Dept. of Agr. and Mkts. for their approval. He went on to explain the review of Agricultural Districts 1 and 2 were also approved by the county and have been forwarded to NYS DAM. He also reported that he and Joel developed and mailed out 341 worksheets in early February for Agricultural Districts 3 and 4, which are currently under review.

Roland reported on the training sessions in Dutchess County on agricultural districts. Joel suggested our AFPB should/could host similar sessions for town and village officials, assessors, and realtors. We've been talking about this for some time now.

Chairman Dunbar reminded everyone of the annual Agricultural Brunch hosted by the Agricultural Business Committee of the Columbia County Chamber of Commerce. This will be held from 11 to 12:30 at the Bridges Restaurant at the St. Charles Hotel in Hudson, on Wednesday, March 14th. Reservations, \$15 per person, should be made by calling the Chamber at 828-4417. "The New Faces of Columbia County Agriculture" is the main topic with Todd Erling talking about the HVADC.

Also the Hudson Valley Agr Partnership conference at CGCC on Friday, March 16th from 8:30 to 4:30. Registration is \$30 per person after March 1st. Roland, Joel, and Marian plan to attend.

Also the spring session of the semi-annual Agricultural Roundtable, hosted by Cornell Cooperative Extension, will be held at their meeting hall on Friday morning, March 23rd at 9:30. Those working with or for the county's agricultural industry are invited to attend and share.

Roland reported on two training sessions provided by PACE University on Planning at CGCC on March 23 and 24 - can attend one of the sessions. That's where he'll be on March 23rd.

Betty stated that there will be a Storm Water Runoff conference at SWCD on November 9th, 2007.

Chairman Dunbar asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the January 4th and February 1st meetings. Weir moved they be approved as presented. Approved unanimously.

Joel distributed copies of the Revised February 2007 booklet completed initially by the AFPB in November 2002 "Questions Every Farmer Should Ask About Agricultural Conservation Easements." An article from Farm Credit Financial Partners Inc. served as a primary portion of this booklet. Many copies were distributed originally to town supervisors and town clerks. More are now available from Joel. This booklet is now also on the CCAFPB web site and can be printed from there.

Roland updated the AFPB on his work on the attachments for the AFPB Plan and web site with Sherri Royce at Data Processing. Several have been added and several are linked back to the original source. Still have a few more to do. Visit www.columbiacountyny.com Click on CCAFPB.

We then briefly discussed how GIS and/or GPS might be able to help us in the agr. district review process with Marian mentioning a class on “GIS For Dummies” being offered at Cooperative Extension’s Spring Gardening Day at CGCC on March 31st. This is being taught by William Hohmann, a former commercial forester in Kinderhook.

The Board agreed to meet next on Thursday, April 5th, at First Pioneer Farm Credit, if need be.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:10pm.

Respectfully
Joel W. Allen, secretary

submitted,