

Columbia County Ag & Farmland Protection Board  
Meeting Minutes,  
9 September 2007, First Pioneer Farm Credit, Claverack, NY

Meeting was called to order by Chair Marian Dunbar at 9:35 A.M. Members present were: Mallory Mort, Roland Vosburgh, Jim Waterhouse, Weir Stewart, Suzzette Booy, and Steve Hadcock. Marian shared that Todd Earling wants to present a PDR proposal for the former Syngenta property in Livingston.

Marian then directed attention to the cover letter in support of the Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) for Benson property in New Lebanon. Motion made by Roland Vosburgh and seconded by Weir Stewart to accept the letter as presented and send it to the Commissioner of Agriculture. Motion passed. Marian shared that Marissa Cody from Columbia Land Conservancy shared the answers to questions one through fourteen that are similar to the summary questions. Marian didn't see anything different from what we have already covered. Any questions, call Marissa directly.

Next was the review of the PowerPoint presentation for the Farmland Protection Plan public hearing. It was suggested that we add what board members represent on the member slide. Suzzette asked how long the PowerPoint presentation might take. Roland said he did not know how long the power point show would take with commentary, but he will be working on the narration and should know by the next meeting. Marian reminded members to come up with possible questions that might be asked during the public hearing. Roland mentioned that the presentation follows the plan and highlights the various parts. Jim asked if the online attachments are there on the website and accessible. Roland said yes, and Steve said that the website could be shown at the public hearing as well. Marian asked if the October 4 board meeting should be for the working group or the whole board. Roland mentioned that need to make decisions about advertisement today. Mallory asked if the website can be found on Google. Suzzette said she was unsure.

Todd Earling was introduced by Marian. Todd is the Executive Director of the Hudson Valley Agribusiness Development Corporation (HVADC). Todd gave a brief outline of what HVADC does. He gave a presentation on a PDR for the former Syngenta research farm. The research farm closed last year and HVADC has been in discussion with Syngenta for a PDR. All of the land has been actively farmed for many years. HVADC has put together a plan for the purchase of the land. It would purchase the land and then lease part of the land back to neighboring farmers for use. Some land would be allowed to be developed for housing. The farmstead would be used to recruit agribusinesses to Columbia County. The balance of the land would be used by green markets for the beginning farmer program. Finally, a research facility to support Hudson Valley agriculture would be developed. HVADC has been negotiating with Syngenta regarding this proposal. The deadline for the PDR is next week. Marian asked who the applicant for the PDR. Todd said that the Town of Livingston will be the applicant with the help of Columbia Land Conservancy. Jim mentioned that if had to rebuild the facility, it would easily double the asking price. This proposal meets all the parts of the proposed AFPB plan. Marian asked if the Columbia County Economic Development Corporation can own land. Todd said yes. Weir asked how much funding does HVADC have in order to be able to sustain the project.

Todd said that HVADC has three years worth of funds and would partner with organizations to prepare the educational program. Marian asked if there are any discussions with American Farmland Trust or Scenic Hudson for funds from them. Todd said that have had some discussions with them about this. Jim mentioned that one thing that came out of Columbia Land Conservancy's listening sessions was to have a fund raiser. This effort might be a good place to start. Roland asked two questions. When might know if the PDR is accepted? Would know in six to eight months and funded in less than two years. Has Agriculture and Markets ever funded PDR for land that is not own by private entities? Todd said that CLC feels that the PDR is eligible for funding. Jim explained that no name has to be on the application and do not necessarily identify the landowner. Marion clarified and stated that in a conversation with Dave Bame that as long as a legal entity that the articles of incorporation authorize the purchase and holding of land, a legal entity is eligible for PDR. Roland said that we need a copy of the application and a town resolution before giving final approval. Motion made by Steve and seconded by Jim Waterhouse that the board is supportive of the concept of the PDR for Syngenta property and a letter of support will be sent contingent upon receiving the application and Town of Livingston resolution. Motion passed. Motion made by Mallory Mort and seconded by Jim Waterhouse authorizing Chair Marian Dunbar to write a letter of support contingent upon receiving the documentation cited in the previous motion. Motion passed. Todd is going to Email Steve two documents regarding HVADC.

Motion made and seconded to approve the April 25 and July 26 minutes. Motion passed. Roland distributed a sheet regarding a plan for leading up to the public hearing. Roland and Steve will coordinate the publicity for the hearing. Roland went through each point he outlined in the plan. Roland suggests that he and Steve develop a standard release and distribute it to as many organizations as possible. Suzzette offered to print items for the hearing. The consensus was to open the October meeting to all members of the board and not necessarily a work group.

Marian asked Roland for an update on Agriculture District Review. The process is moving along. Meeting adjourned at 11:25 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen Hadcock  
Secretary