

Columbia County Ag & Farmland Protection Board
Meeting Minutes
December 6, 2007, First Pioneer Farm Credit, Claverack, NY

The meeting was called to order by Chair Marian Dunbar at 9:36 A.M. Members present were: Larry Benson, Roland Vosburgh, Jim Waterhouse, Mallory Mort, Betty Young, Suzette Booy and Steve Hadcock.

Chair Dunbar distributed the agenda and went over it briefly.

Suzette gave a report from Department of Real Property Service. She queried other counties to see if any other counties have County Agricultural Committees and the activity of AFPB in their respective counties (see attached). Suzette highlighted what she learned from the counties that responded. Suzette did some research and summarized how many parcels receive Agricultural Value Assessment (AVA). Throughout the county, 1,734 parcels receive AVA out of 35, 500 county wide. The total value of AVA received in Columbia County is \$208,146,067 that is roughly 4.4 percent of the county's assessed value. Marian quoted from 25AA how (page 33 07 edition of 25AA) 305-1E. The state has not funded this to the best of memory.

Jim Waterhouse reported that he has not heard anything about the funding of Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) that have been supported by this Board.

Betty Young stated that this may be her last meeting. Betty has asked current Chair Board of Supervisors James Keegan to consider the establishment of an Agriculture Standing Committee.

Roland shared what transpired at some of the meetings he attended. He attended the Chamber of Commerce Economic Development and Government Policy Committee regarding the Farmland Protection Plan. He attended the Watershed Connections Seminar at which one of the discussions was about riparian buffer strips. Roland spoke at Southern Columbia County Keep Farming farmer social. He talked about the county government's role in agriculture and then talked about agricultural issues in Columbia County. He attended, with Marian and Betty, the Economic Develop Corporation meeting at which NYS Dept. of Agriculture and Markets Commissioner Patrick Hooker talked. The other meeting Roland mentioned was the Glynwood Center's Climate Change, Agriculture and Community Planning. Mid-Hudson Patterns for Progress is sponsoring a meeting next week to bring planners in each county together. Roland is going to share that an important economic engine for Columbia County is agriculture. He shared a survey that was in "Grassroots," the NYS Farm Bureau periodical. Farm Bureau members were surveyed as to what pressing issues are facing New York agriculture. The biggest issue Farm Bureau members stated facing them is "taxes and the regulatory environment in NYS." The next biggest issue was the low prices received by farmers.

Chair Dunbar shared a letter from Peter Paden, Executive Director of Columbia Land Conservancy. Marian shared some parts of the letter and encouraged Board members to read the letter and be prepared to discuss it at the next meeting. Jim Waterhouse read it and did make comment on what was in the letter on page three regarding economic development. Jim suggested that Peter be sent the AFPB plan and have CLC review and mark up the plan. Chair Dunbar read a part of 25AA that stated the Board

may accept someone from a land conservation organization to be on the Board. Motion made by Betty and seconded by Mallory to send correspondence to Peter Paden thanking him for his letter. The correspondence will be sent by the Secretary. Motion passed.

Betty Young reported that she has not heard from Chair, Board of Supervisors, regarding the establishment of a standing Agricultural County Committee. She suggested that it will be discussed next year with the reorganized Board of Supervisors. Chair Dunbar asked if the proposal for the standing Agricultural Committee went to the organizations that were identified at the last meeting. Steve stated that it had been sent out and has not received any replies to date. Marian also mentioned that we should plan the presentation for the whole Board of Supervisors that will be given in February. Time was taken to clarify what the purpose of the presentation is. The purpose is to educate the Board of Supervisors on what the AFPB does. Steve suggested that a one page document be prepared and distributed to the Supervisors. Roland volunteered to send all new Supervisors a copy of the Farmland Protection Plan. Marian also suggested that the document entitled Farm Friendly Columbia County, prepared by Roland Vosburgh, be sent to the new Supervisors and attorney's for towns.

Chair Dunbar asked if any Board member has heard of any further comments about the AFPB plan and the informational meeting held in November. Roland shared a letter to the editor by Peter Brosnan that was in the "Register Star." Marian stated that the article in the "Register Star" about the informational meeting was well balanced and the reporter did a fine job. Roland asked what has been done with the recording from the public hearing. Steve stated that attendees at the meeting that wanted to be recorded were done so successfully. Roland asked what should be posted at the website regarding the informational meeting and public hearing. Roland moved that the official public transcript be of the recording at the public hearing and put on the website. The motion was seconded by Betty. Motion passed.

Roland asked what Mike Scannell meant by the total cost of production. Steve shared that he has had some conversation with Mike about this subject. Roland also shared that he recalled that Mike wanted a part of the Farmland Protection Plan do an analysis of why people have left farming in the past. From this discussion, Roland suggested that a series of white papers might be done to address specific issues, such as why farmers left farming, and made available along with the plan. Roland would like to readdress the importance of discussing economics in the plan relative to land use. Marian has summarized in a spreadsheet what land in each town is in an Agricultural District and receives AVA. She has also included what soil groups land in each respective town is in.

Marian shared some other items that she recorded in her notes at the meeting. Marian wondered when changes to the plan are available, should the working committee work on it or the whole Board? The consensus was to let the whole Board work on changes to the plan. Roland suggested that the Board hold informational meetings instead of public hearings in order to keep the cost down of public hearing notices in the newspapers. Roland suggested inviting Joel Allen to an AFPB meeting when discussing revision of the plan. Joel was heavily involved with the development of the AFPB plan and might offer good input.

Motion made by Betty and seconded by Jim Waterhouse to accept the minutes as presented. Motion passed. Roland reported that Agriculture District 3 and 4 are moving along.

Motion made by Betty and seconded by Suzette to nominate Marian Dunbar as Chair of the Committee. Motion passed. Motion made by Betty and seconded by Jim Waterhouse that Steve Hadcock be nominated to be Secretary of the Board. Motion passed. Motion made by Betty and seconded by Jim to nominate Roland Vosburgh as Vice Chair. Motion passed. Motion made by Betty and seconded by Suzette that the polls be closed and the secretary cast one ballot for the slate. Motion passed.

Marian did receive a copy of the minutes of the Columbia County Soil and Water Conservation District designating Weir Stewart as their representative to the AFPB.

The next meeting will be January 3 at 9:30 A.M. Meeting adjourned at 12:07 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen Hadcock
Secretary