

Columbia County Ag & Farmland Protection Board
Meeting Minutes
January 3, 2008, First Pioneer Farm Credit, Claverack, NY

The meeting was called to order by Chair Marian Dunbar at 9:37 A.M. Members present were: Larry Benson, Roland Vosburgh, Jim Waterhouse, Mallory Mort, Suzette Booy, Chuck Colaruotolo and Steve Hadcock. Guest Joel Allen was present as well. Marian received regrets from Betty Young that she could not attend this months meeting.

Chair Dunbar reviewed some items that were in the minutes and asked if Peter Paden had received a thank you for the letter he prepared. Steve said he sent Peter an Email thanking him for his input and received an acknowledgment from Peter of the Email. Marian asked Roland if a copy of the farmland protection plan had been sent to Board of Supervisors. Roland said no and was waiting for addresses of particularly the newly elected Supervisors. Larry stated that he had heard that Betty Young was reappointed to serve on the AFPB for 2008. Marian asked what Ag Districts the board will be working on this year. Roland stated that will be reviewing Districts, 3 and 4, 5 and 6, 7 and 8, 9 and 10. Marian also mentioned that the Board stated at the last meeting that it will prepare a series of white papers.

The discussion then centered on the letter prepared by Peter Paden from Columbia Land Conservancy. Marian shared her thoughts about the letter. Her conclusion after reading the letter was that she found nothing in the letter that would lead to changes in the plan in its current form. Discussion by members took place on various sections of the letter. Jim mentioned that Dutchess County AFPB works with the landowner to prepare applications for land preservation grants. Roland offered a comment that the type of county government in Dutchess County is different than Columbia County and would not want to change the grant application process here. Steve mentioned page three paragraph four in Mr. Paden's letter. Steve suggested that the board consider changing the wording in Section 2.2 from being economic *or* land use to economic *and* land use. Discussion took place centered on the wording of the plan, specifically for section 2.2. Roland stated that the economic issues does include land use issues. Mallory suggested that wording in Section 2.2 be revised to be more inclusive regarding economic issues.

Chair Dunbar shared a letter from Liz Brock, NY Field Representative of American Farmland Trust. Marian highlighted sections of the letter in her discussion of it. In the letter prepared by Liz, she focused on emphasizing land use more than economic development. Several Board members questioned whether the reviewers read the complete plan and only focused on certain parts.

Suzette suggested that the new Chair of the Board of Supervisors, Art Baer, be invited to the next AFPB meeting. Motion made by Roland and seconded by Larry to invite Mr Baer to the February meeting. Motion passed. Marian is going to write a letter inviting Mr. Baer to the next meeting. The purpose of meeting is to discuss the standing Agriculture Committee for the Board of Supervisors. Joel Allen asked if there is need for a standing Agricultural Committee is in order to have a committee for AFPB to report to. One person asked if other counties have standing Agricultural Committees. Suzette shared what she learned from talking to her counterparts in other parts of the state. Many do not have a standing Agriculture Committee. Larry stated that with the change in county leadership may be a good time to advocate for a standing Agricultural Committee. If the Board of Supervisors elects not to establish the standing Agricultural Committee, what standing committee should AFPB report to? Joel Allen

reminded the Board that by statute the Board has a representative from county government.

Larry asked where we go from here. Marian suggested that we respond to the letters received from Columbia Land Conservancy and American Farmland Trust and state how we will use the ideas in the letter. Jim reiterated that drafts of the plan be sent Liz Brock and Peter Paden and offer them to make revisions and additions. Chuck asked what is sustainability and how land preservation will help keep farmers in business.

Marian noted in Peter's letter that he mentioned the rural character of Columbia County. Marian wants to wait and see what is in several towns' comprehensive plan about the importance of agriculture. Larry stated that New Lebanon comprehensive plan does place an emphasis on the importance of agriculture, but is going to ask the town board to state how they are going to recognize the importance of agriculture. Jim shared what he has learned from working in Massachusetts and what perspective land owners and farmers have there regarding land preservation.

Marian had talked to Chuck earlier about the makeup of the AFPB that may be quite different in the future. There may be a transition from "traditional" farmer to newer farmers in the county. Several members of the board wondered if we could go to NYS Dept. of Agriculture and Markets and ask to allow retired farmers be allowed to serve on the committee.

Larry stated that the comments made at the informational meeting may not be much different from what might be received at a future meeting and therefore suggested not to have further meetings. Roland concurred that comments at a future hearing may not be much different than what we have already received. Larry also mentioned that an announcement of the public informational meeting and public hearing was sent to each town. To the best of our knowledge, no members of town boards or zoning boards attended the public information meeting and public hearing.

Joel Allen suggested that we might have a meeting with Peter Paden and Liz Brock and discuss the letters with them. Marian mentioned that 10 groups and organizations were asked for input on the idea of the establishment of a standing Agricultural Committee. She only received comments from two people. Joel Allen articulated that there is a huge gap in the perception of the role of the AFPB. Several groups have own perception of what the Board should do versus members of the Board. Chuck expressed his frustration that the AFP Board has not been able to get any synergy from groups that we have reached out to.

Chuck suggested that Peter Paden, on behalf of Columbia Land Conservancy, be offered the opportunity to enhance their section of the appendix on the website. Roland clarified that the board has never asked groups or organizations how they might work with the plan as presented. Jim stated that preserving land is "the buzz" right now. When a conservancy's prepares a grant, they put in that the county supports land preservation. He also mentioned what is proposed in the federal Farm Bill. The conservancy's needs to prove the importance of protecting open space in order to stay in business. Chuck suggested that the Board contact Peter and Liz to ask them to partner with us and offer what they will do to help with the plan. Mallory mentioned that the groups are here to stay and agreed with Jim to revise some of the wording in the plan.

Chair Dunbar summarized the discussion of the Board meeting. The letters from Peter Paden and Liz Brock were discussed at length with a variety of ideas being discussed. Marian stated that she will contact Peter to let him know what was discussed at this Board meeting regarding his letter. Roland volunteered to clarify “the message” of the plan and present it to the Board. Marian is also going through the draft plan and see where parts of the plan might be clarified. The consensus of the board was to not pursue another public information meeting or public hearing.

Marian offered ideas for the next meeting included inviting the new Chair of the Board of Supervisors Art Baer. The public presentation to the whole Board of Supervisors has been put on hold until talking to the new Chair. Roland stated that he might have information on Agricultural Districts 3 and 4 to review at the next meeting.

Motion made by Jim and seconded by Mallory to approve the December minutes. Motion passed.

Motion made by Jim and seconded by Larry to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen Hadcock, Secretary