

Columbia County Ag & Farmland Protection Board
Meeting Minutes
April 2, 2009, First Pioneer Farm Credit, Claverack, NY

The meeting was called to order by Chair Marian Dunbar at 9:34 A.M. Members present were: Larry Benson, Jim Waterhouse, Mallory Mort, Suzette Booy and Steve Hadcock. Guests present were: Todd Erling with Hudson Valley Agricultural Development Corporation, Roland Vosburgh of the Columbia County Planning and Economic Development Department, Peter Paden of Columbia Land Conservancy, Jim Davenport of Tollgate Holsteins and Laura Sager representing Columbia County Soil and Water Conservation District. A quorum was present.

Chair Dunbar introduced Peter Paden from Columbia Land Conservancy (CLC) to go over the proposed resolution to receive a grant from NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets. Peter explained that this is a new grant program and have just started to put materials together for the grant application. One requirement of the grant application is written support from the county Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board in the form of a resolution. Marian found a few things in the grant application that she shared with Board members. Roland shared that a new approach to Purchase of Development Rights (PDR's) is being presented in this grant proposal. The position of the Board to date is that a PDR is a legal instrument and have endorsed CLC to pursue it with a caveat. Peter explained, in his opinion, the approach on how to process PDR's is not changing. Peter provided an updated copy of the resolution to the Board members present.

Marian asked Roland if the Board will have to do more than we are doing already in the area PDR approval process if CLC was to get the grant. Peter said that the grant could be crafted to highlight the bullets that are important to this Board. Marian asked Peter to review the narrative before it is submitted. Peter will be willing to share the narrative with the Board. Suzette asked if this resolution needs to go to the Board of Supervisors. Marian and Roland explained that this is similar to AFPB support of PDR applications and does not need to go to the Board of Supervisors.

Marian asked for the preference of the Board on what action to take. To either pass the resolution as presented or submitting a letter of support. Jim suggested that both be done. Motion made Larry Benson by and seconded Jim Waterhouse to adopt the resolution as presented. Motion passed.

Roland asked Peter to explain in more detail the new project CLC has started of pairing people who want to farm with landowners that have land available for farming. Peter gave a thorough explanation of the program.

Marian mentioned that a letter has been sent to Chair Arthur Baer asking that Jim Davenport be appointed to the AFPB. She has heard from Betty Young that the appointment is being worked on and will be approved at a later Board of Supervisors meeting.

Marian asked Suzette to recap the assessor meeting last month where Bob Somers and Mark Twentyman talked about Agricultural Districts and Agricultural Value Assessment. Suzette

reported that the meeting was well attended and assessors were very interested in the information that was presented.

Roland mentioned the ruling by the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYSDAM) regarding the Town of Copake Planning Board action regarding Lackawana Farms. He gave a brief history of what has transpired to date. NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets ruled that the Town of Copake Planning Board made unreasonably restrictive actions in the building plans for Lackawana Farms. Roland stated, his opinion, that NYSDAM ruling is being mis-characterized. Roland reminded those present that in 2005 the Board made a recommendation to the Town of Copake regarding the scenic overlay proposal and encouraged the town to discuss their plans with NYSDAM.

Todd reported that a meeting with the work team was scheduled, but was cancelled due to an unexpected commitment. He did talk to some members of the work team individually to get input into revising the work plan. Jim shared that the scope of the work plan is comprehensive in order to justify findings presented in the final draft. Marian asked how the work plan compliments the county's Agricultural Initiative. Todd highlighted how different parts of the work plan do compliment the initiative. Roland asked what the target date for making the application. Todd has talked with Ken Flood about the date to submit and Ken feels that it should be refined. Todd suggested the work group get together within the next two weeks and finalize the work plan. Jim suggested that Todd make changes to the draft and Email it to the work group for final review. Tentatively, will meet if needed on April 17 to finalize the plan.

Marian mentioned on behalf of Ken Flood that on April 6 there will be a "planning conversation" at Columbia Greene Community College. Chairs of local Planning Boards are invited to attend this meeting. Marian is planning on attending.

Laura Sager was encouraged by Marian to share what is going on at Soil and Water Conservation District. Laura gave an overview of what the District does here in Columbia County. With Linda Szegla's retirement as area NRCS Conservationist, the question has arisen if the position will be refilled. Laura stated that there are plans to refill the position that covers Columbia and Greene counties. Marian asked Laura what support the Board can give the District. Laura asked for help in letting farmers know about the agricultural non-point source projects that are available.

Chair Dunbar reported that she received a letter from NYSDAM stating that the Section 303-b request to add parcels to agricultural districts here in Columbia County has been approved by the department.

Meeting adjourned at 11:20 P.M.

The next meeting will take place on May 7 and be held at First Pioneer Farm Credit.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen E. Hadcock

Secretary