

Columbia County Ag & Farmland Protection Board  
Meeting Minutes  
February 5, 2009, First Pioneer Farm Credit, Claverack, NY

The meeting was called to order by Chair Marian Dunbar at 9:32 A.M. Members present were: Larry Benson, Jim Waterhouse, Chuck Colaruotolo, Mallory Mort, Suzette Booy, Betty Young, Kenneth Flood and Steve Hadcock. Guests present were Todd Erling with Hudson Valley Agricultural Development Corporation, Roland Vosburgh of the Columbia County Planning Department and Jim Davenport, a dairy farmer. A quorum was present.

Chair Marian Dunbar introduced Jim Davenport as a potential member of the board and welcomed him. Steve brought copies of the updated Article 25AA and Marion encouraged each member to take one. Chair Dunbar introduced new member Kenneth Flood who is Commissioner of Economic Development and Planning. Members present introduced themselves and gave a brief background.

Chair Dunbar received a call from the Chair of the SWCD Board, Robert Podris, stating that he will be unable to attend the AFPB meetings. At the next SWCD Board Meeting, Chair Podris is going to ask for a volunteer to attend our meetings. Marian re-emphasized the fact that the person who volunteers to attend the meetings will not be a voting member. Robert Podris understood this stipulation, but he himself is unable to attend.

A discussion on Geographic Information System (GIS) took place. Kenneth Flood is pursuing getting a GIS established that is routinely accessible to county departments. Ken explained to the Board members how GIS can be utilized in a variety of different ways. Marian shared that Columbia Land Conservancy is working on an 18 month inventory of land use in Columbia County that will be included into GIS. Chuck mentioned that having GIS would be a tremendous asset to help promote the county for economic development.

Larry asked Ken if he would be willing to make some calls to see if the purchase of development rights (PDR) process can get back on track. Ken agreed to do make some calls and see what can be done. Marian shared that this AFPB board has developed a publication on what landowners need to know before starting PDR and Conservation Easement and make applicants well aware of the process.

Chair Dunbar has learned that the standing committees of county government have been reorganized and the Agriculture Committee is no longer a standing committee. The Agriculture Committee has been integrated into the Planning and Economic Development Committee. Ken explained that this is an opportunity for this Board to meet with the committee on an as needed basis.

Jim Waterhouse asked if we could have an update on the status of the Ag and Markets grant. Todd shared what has transpired and is a high priority for him to complete and get in. The Agricultural Initiative, that the Chair of the Board of Supervisors wants done, has been modified to incorporate the agricultural plan grant. Most of the key players are on board and are ready to participate. Todd distributed a work plan for the grant, if funded. The work plan is longer than the draft Farmland Protection plan. Todd distributed census data for 2002 and 2007 and went over the differences.

Suzette shared that a meeting has been set up with county assessors and having Mark Twentyman come and talk about agricultural assessment. The meeting will be held March 11, but is unsure of the time.

Roland gave a report on the status of re-approval of Agricultural Districts three and four. What has been

done so far for Agricultural Districts three and four was presented to the Economic Development, Planning and Agriculture for approval. The committee unanimously approved the findings and recommend approval by the Board of Supervisors. The parcels that requested addition to Agricultural Districts three and four were approved by the committee as well. Roland distributed some materials for members to review as well. Roland asked Todd what the status of a county-wide initiative for Keep Farming (by Glynnwood Center) has progressed if at all. Todd shared that there has been a shift by Glynnwood and is not as high a priority at this point.

Todd shared that cell tower placement in the county is becoming an issue. It was discussed at the Farm Bureau meeting last night and may come to this Board for more discussion in the future. Marian reminded that this Board serves in an advisory capacity and will write letters of support, but do not lobby.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen E. Hadcock, Secretary