

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

The meeting was called to order by Chair Marian Dunbar at 9:33 A.M. Members present were: Suzette Booy, Larry Benson, Jim Waterhouse, Chuck Colaruotolo, Jim Davenport, and Steve Hadcock. A guest present was Todd Erling of the Columbia County Planning and Economic Development. A quorum was present.

Chair Dunbar introduced Todd Erling to update the Board on the NYS Department Agriculture and Markets (NYSDAM) grant and his attendance of Agricultural Days in Washington. Todd had not heard about the progress of the grant, but Marian did talk to John Brennan at NYSDAM this morning. Mr. Brennan stated that the grant is being reviewed and Marian and Todd will be informed personally when the grant will be funded. The funds will be coming out of the state Environmental Protection Fund, but its release is uncertain.

Todd gave a background on the Agriculture Days and reception in Washington, D.C. Senator Gillabrand is a member of the Senate Agriculture Working Group and convened in October to discuss agricultural issues. With the working group meeting, there is a reception where foods from New York State are served. Of the thirty individual food booths that were there, only three were wine. There was a good cross section of agricultural commodities present at the reception. Todd also updated the Board about the progress of Local Ocean, a new aquaculture business in the county. Expanding to growing flounder and was recently permitted by DEC to do so.

Chair Dunbar introduced a Section 303-b Application from Timothy LaValley, located in the Town of Gallatin. Steve distributed a written description prepared by Roland Vosburgh. Larry Benson made a motion and Jim Davenport seconded to add the tax parcels of this landowner to the Agricultural District 4.

Chair Dunbar reviewed the roster of Board members and saw that Chuck's term has expired. Marian has talked to Chuck and he is willing to serve another four years. Motion made by Suzette Booy and seconded by Jim Davenport to appoint Chuck Colaruotolo for another four years representing the vegetable industry. Motion passed.

Motion made by Jim Waterhouse and seconded by Jim Davenport to accept the October minutes. Motion passed.

Marian shared a discussion she had with Columbia Land Conservancy Executive Director Peter Paden. There are two bills pending in New York State that they discussed and that Peter is favor of. One is to increase the cost share the state pays for purchase of development rights. Currently, the match is up to 75 percent and would like to increase it to 87.5 percent. The other law pending would allow nonprofits to apply directly for conservation easements on property. Jim Waterhouse strongly supports the change in law. Marian is concerned about checks and balances and that the Farmland Protection Board will be involved in review. The first bill is called Land Trust Eligibility Act and the numbers are: A6687 and S4476. The second bill is to increase payments to assist in farmland protection. The bill numbers are: A6686 and S5414.

The next meeting is January 7, 2010 at First Pioneer Farm Credit.

Meeting adjourned at 11:20 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen Hadcock
Secretary