

Columbia County Ag & Farmland Protection Board  
Meeting Minutes  
September 10, 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: Larry Benson, Jim Waterhouse, Jim Davenport, Kenneth Flood and Steve Hadcock. Guests present were Roland Vosburgh of the Columbia County Planning and Economic Development, Laura Sager of the Columbia County Soil and Water Conservation District, Todd Erling Columbia Economic Development Corporation, Assemblyman Marc Molinaro, and Tom Crowell of Columbia Land Conservancy. A quorum was present.

Chair Dunbar introduced Tom Crowell to discuss the Town of Chatham Draft Agricultural Protection Plan. Tom gave a brief introduction to the draft plan and then proceeded to highlight parts of the plan. He shared some of the demographics of the Town. The developers of the plan have set a goal of no net loss of agricultural land in the town. Tom shared some of the other goals in the plan as well. Tom pointed out the fifth goal is to promote community awareness of agriculture and its importance. The last half of the plan is a variety of appendices that support the narrative in the first half of the plan. The process for final approval of the plan is that a hearing is being held tonight to share the draft plan with Town of Chatham residents and the Town Board. Next week, the Chatham Town Board will vote to formally approve the plan. Next month, AFPB will vote to approve the plan.

Jim Waterhouse said that the draft was well done. The plan is missing one grid that demonstrates how much a farm family pays in land taxes compared to how much a non-farm family pays in land taxes. On page 65 is suggested wording revisions to the town's zoning ordinance. Jim's opinion is that the wording states what you can't do regarding land use. The net effect is a negative impact on the farmer who is the landowner. Jim shared some alternatives and examples that other Towns in the state have done to work with farm families to sell parcels of land for development.

Marian asked Tom what the perception was of Town of Chatham Board members of the plan. Tom stated that the committee has talked to each town board member and they are generally supportive of the draft plan. Marian asked what will happen when the people currently involved in Chatham Agricultural Partnership (CAP) move on. Tom stated that it has been discussed and the Town Board and CAP are working on a succession plan.

Larry Benson stated that the goals outlined in the draft are wonderful to have but difficult to obtain. Goal two of net zero loss of agricultural land may not be realistic in light of the current economic climate for farmers. Particularly, for dairy farms right now. Dairy farms are the largest users of land and under tremendous financial stress and may go out. The farms that might take their place will most likely not use as much land.

Marian had some comments on the plan. On page 21, discusses monitoring the development of land in the town and county. Marian feels that the county needs to be involved in land development issues and town farmland protection plans. For strategy 2.2, need to be mindful of the Farmland Protection Board being involved. She also mentioned that may want to more

prominently mention Cornell Cooperative Extension of Columbia County and Columbia County Soil and Water Conservation District. On page 17, Marian suggested a change in wording.

Roland had some comments as well. Roland mentioned on page 26, it mentions what the county can or does do relative to land use. What does the state or federal government do? Tom pointed out that on page 25 it states what the state does. Roland asked Tom to comment on local funding source for land preservation initiatives that the town might do. Tom elaborated on how the town and possibly the county might use funds for land preservation. Assemblyman Marc Molinaro shared some ideas on how a local municipality might be able to generate funds for cost sharing.

Marian introduced Ken and Todd and asked them to update the Board on the Agriculture and Markets grant for developing a county farmland protection plan. Ken started the discussion by announcing that an Agriculture sub-committee of the County Planning and Economic Development Committee has been established. Ken also mentioned that the resolution was passed in support of the plan last night. Todd distributed a record copy to Marian and the secretary. Larry asked if any of the in-kind work that has been previously done would count. Todd said it would not count.

Todd had asked Assemblyman Molinaro to attend the AFPB meeting, since he is visiting several farm businesses today in Columbia County. Assemblyman Molinaro made some comments. Marian gave an overview of the county protection plan development and how Todd Erling was brought in to help request the grant.

Steve went over the proposed agenda for an educational meeting in October. Ken mentioned that the Chamber Buy Local activity is on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and the CEO Roundtable is on the 29<sup>th</sup>. Suggested to shifting the time to 7:30 to 9:30 P.M.

Marian distributed text for a brochure. Steve had sent her a draft of a brochure and Marian has asked Board members input to the text of the brochure. Marian mentioned the Office of Real Property Services did one many years ago.

Marian has asked the county attorney if AFPB meetings are open meetings. He is looking into it and will advise her. If it is an open meeting, will need to publicize the dates and times of meetings more. Discussed ideas of how to publicize Board meeting dates and Steve volunteered to put meeting dates on CoCo to Do.

Meeting adjourned at 11:35 A.M.

The next meeting will take place on October 8 and be held at First Pioneer Farm Credit.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen E. Hadcock  
Secretary