



# Cattaraugus County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board

## AGRICULTURAL & FARMLAND PROTECTION BOARD MEETING

County Center, Little Valley, NY

December 15, 2015

### **Board Members**

David L. Zilker  
**Chairman**

Barbara D. George  
**Vice Chairman**

Crystal J. Abers

James L. Boser

Daniel Brown

Charles W. Couture

Brian Davis

James Finch

Daniel T. Martonis

Donald Telaak

### **Ag Board Members Present:**

David Zilker, Chairman  
Barbara D. George, Vice Chairman  
Crystal Abers  
Daniel Brown  
Charles Couture  
Brian Davis  
James Finch  
Daniel Martonis  
Donald Telaak

### **Ag Board Members Absent:**

James Boser

### **County Planning Board Ag Committee Present:**

Robert Keis

### **Planning Staff Present:**

Paul R. Bishop, Senior Planner  
Ginger G. Malak, Program Assistant  
Kate O'Stricker, Development Specialist

### **Guests:**

Richard Zink, Executive Director, Southern Tier West RP&DB

Chairman Zilker called the meeting to order at 1:05 PM.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

*Charles Couture moved with a second from Brian Davis to approve the October 6, 2015 minutes as submitted. Motion carried.*



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## **AGRICULTURAL DISTRICT CONSOLIDATION PROCESS**

Paul Bishop reported that the Department has reviewed the surveys received from about three quarters of the Towns. Kate O'Stricker has started preparing the report. Changes have to be given to the Real Property Office to finalize the map.

## **COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

Paul Bishop reported that the SEQR review ends and deadline for comments on the Comprehensive Plan is December 24, 2015.

Mr. Bishop distributed copies of the Executive Summary and excerpts on Agriculture and the related Goal (Cattaraugus Will Preserve and Promote Its Agricultural Heritage and Economy). He stated that the Department has money available to implement or leverage funding from other sources for projects recommended in the Comprehensive Plan. Discussion included the following comments:

- What are some examples of what other counties have funded? Staff will look into what other counties have done under Agricultural and Farmland Protection.
- FFA students gave a presentation at Farm Bureau. More should be done for FFA.
- Social media should be utilized to reach students.
- Add leadership to the last strategy bullet ("support of leadership and educational programs")
- Support debate teams with topics, such as agriculture, life science, agriculture options; not many understand that there are agriculture options. Also, need to demonstrate that agriculture is more than farm; it includes support services such as machinery, etc.
- Students need exposure to agriculture. School's budgets are constrained and they may not be able to do more.
- Universities should be targeted to have agriculture added to their offerings. It is difficult to target elementary and secondary levels as the core disciplines are so stringent.
- Try to address the anti-farmer sentiment, which includes pesticides, etc. Discussion should include how your dinner gets to the table. Many people don't really know where their food comes from (i.e. chocolate milk comes from brown cows).
- Add to the Objectives and Strategies: forestry products and maple industry is very important to the County. The Plan includes a section on forestry.

- Add to the Objectives and Strategies: niche markets, such as wineries and breweries; and crops such as hops and shitake mushrooms.
- Mention collaboration with New York State, State Associations, and local organizations.
- Mention the consumers and local entities as important to agriculture.
- The adopted Comprehensive Plan should be brought to different venues, such as the Farmer–Neighbor Dinner. Prepare a poster with the goals, objectives and strategies listed on it.
- This awesome. This is good to have in moving forward.

Crystal Abers reported that a draft of the Comprehensive Plan was presented to the Development and Agriculture Committee on November 18, at which time a copy was available to the County Legislature online. Mrs. Abers gave much credit to the Legislature for providing the funding to develop the Plan. The Department is anticipating the adoption of the Plan by the end of January.

Mrs. Abers reported that the Public Hearing on the Comprehensive Plan was held on December 9, 2015. Bob Fischer from Town of Portville, Bob Wood from Town of Carrollton, and Christopher Sansone from the Seneca Nation of Indians made comments on the Plan. All comments were very positive, which emphasized the need for the plan and how it will help communities move forward. She believes that the Legislature walked away with a good feeling about the Plan.

Mrs. Abers stated that the County Comprehensive Plan is a snap shot in time. The purpose of the Plan is to present a vision as to how the County and the Department can move forward. It is the intent of the Plan to It is a tool that the County can use in seeking funding. Funding sources expect that a proposal is derived from a Plan. The Strategies should not be too specific; rather it is the intention to speak in generalities to allow for some latitude. For example: the Plan mentions niche markets, but not the specific crops that would fit into that category (i.e. hops).

## **2016 5<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL FARMER-NEIGHBOR DINNER**

Crystal Abers reported that the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Farmer-Neighbor Dinner will be held on April 13, 2016. The Committee had met prior to the Board meeting to discuss the event and food. She asked if anyone had any comments regarding the dinner. Mrs. Abers reported that 281 attended last year. She emphasized that everyone must make reservations with a strict cutoff being 300.

Don Telaak suggested that the Board recognize Jim Boser at the Dinner. Barb George stated that it is great to recognize Mr. Boser, but she feels that James Ellis should be

recognized first as he initiated the Dinner. There was discussion as recognizing both of them.

### **TERMS EXPIRING 12/31/2015: DAN BROWN AND CHUCK COUTURE**

Mr. Couture and Mr. Brown have both accepted another term.

### **OTHER**

Paul Bishop reported that Cathy Andera, who lives on Wing Hollow Road in the Town of Allegany, is requesting that the Board review an issue between her and her neighbor. There is a fence running along and on the property line that prevents them from using a driveway that accesses their back pasture and a building they store sawdust in.

James Finch explained the property and the issue as shown on the map provided to the Board.

The Board discussed the issue and determined that this is a legal issue and would not be reviewable under the Board's "Request for Ruling on Generally Accepted Agricultural Practice" form.

Daniel Brown moved with a second from Barbara George that the request is not an issue that the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board can handle; it is a legal issue. Motion was carried.

### **AGENCY UPDATES**

#### **Farm Bureau**

Charles Couture stated that the Governor's **proposed wage increase** is a big issue for farmers. Agriculture is the only business that asks what are you going to pay me for my product, rather than giving a price. Mr. Couture read some statistics regarding the minimum wage increase and the impact on agriculture.

- New York's 2014 net cash income for agriculture was \$2.2 billion.
- Inflating the minimum wage from \$9/hour to \$15/hour will result in a half a billion increase in farm labor costs.
- A \$500 million increase (\$1.243B total cost in labor) is equal to 25% of net farm income.

Farms will take a big hit. It is an issue that will be hard to fight. This is not only an issue in NYS, but an issue across State lines because the minimum wage is not the same in all States. With Pennsylvania having a lower minimum wage, the NYS farmer will have a tougher time in competing with those in PA.

### **Cooperative Extension**

Paul Bishop read a report submitted by Diane Held, Interim Executive Director of Cornell Cooperative Extension of Cattaraugus County (CCE).

- CCE is accepting applications for the Executive Director position through December 17, 2015. Visit our website at [cattaraugus.cce.cornell.edu](http://cattaraugus.cce.cornell.edu) for the position description, qualifications, and application link. Please spread the word to qualified candidates in these last few days that the position is open.
- As of December 14, CCE has a part time administrative assistant, Tamara Bacho, who will be in the office from Monday through Friday 8 am to noon. She joins Amanda Dackowsky, 4-H Educator, and Chris Terhune, EFNEP Educator.
- A subcommittee of the CCE Board has drafted Operating Guidelines for the Extension. The Board will review and possibly approve these at the next meeting on Monday, December 21, 2015 at 6:30 pm. Program Committees for the Extension are established in the Operating Guidelines.

### **Southern Tier West**

Richard Zink reported on the following:

Kim LaMendola is hosting a meeting with ten **Farmers Markets** today. The meeting is to encourage open discussion, sharing, and kick-off of the off season for them. Also, it will identify what training they may want and work with associations to provide that. For the sustainability of the markets, it is important that they recognize the need to operate like a business.

On January 20, Southern Tier West will be hosting the **Western NY Food Hub Grower Informational Meeting** (handout distributed). Ms. LaMendola went to similar meeting held only in Erie County last year and she wanted to bring this opportunity to the Southern Tier in 2016.

Also, under the Local Foods Program, the **Meat Processing Study** (handout distributed) prepared by Kitchen Table Consultants has been completed. The Study found that there isn't sufficient capacity to build another food processing facility (slaughter house). Also, it concluded that a mobile slaughter house is not practical either.

The second phase of the study is to bring the producers and processors together via roundtable discussions and facilitated tours. Roundtable discussions would potentially uncover more needs for education and programming in the future. Facilitated tours would allow producers to familiarize themselves with the facilities in the area and get a better understanding of the processors challenges, contributing to improved working relationships

## **OPEN FORUM**

**Daniel Martonis** reported that there is one change in the law for agriculture tax exemption. Log grown mushrooms are now eligible for the tax exemption.

**James Finch** asked as to when the Legislative Liaison to the Board would be appointed. Mrs. Abers reported that the person would be appointed in January.

He also reported that Christmas Tree sales were doing really well.

**David Zilker** reported that that in July 2016, the Farm Bureau Board of Directors will hold their Annual Meeting in Cattaraugus and Allegany Counties. 25-35 people generally attend the meeting. The agenda will include a two-day tour (one day in Allegany County and one day in Cattaraugus County).

## **NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting was tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, February 9, 2016 at 1:00 pm. It was agreed that the Farmer-Neighbor Dinner Committee would meet at 12:30 pm, prior to the Board meeting.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Barbara George moved to adjourn with a second by Charles Couture at 2:35 p.m. Motion carried.