

**Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board Meeting**  
**January 20, 2021**  
**Meeting Minutes**

Ag Board members present via conference call / TEAMS meeting: J. Hoeffner, L. DeBuck, E. Ruscher, P. Ruskiewicz, M. Simpson, D. Smith, S. Soons, A. Sorensen, M. Ullrich, J. Wright.

Guests present via conference call / TEAMS meeting: K. Apostolides – OC Farm Market Coordinator, J. MacLeod – OC Planning, K. Sumner – OC Soil & Water.

Call to order – 7:07 pm.

**November Minutes**

J. Wright moved to accept the November minutes as presented, P. Ruskiewicz seconded, unanimously approved.

**Summary of Accounts**

J. MacLeod stated that the Ag Board has a budget of \$22,950 for 2021. She also stated that the bills for the social media advertising from the 2020 budget and the Ag Plan Implementation Consultant from the 2019 budget have been submitted and are being processed. The \$8,000 for the Re-Scoped Dairy Industry Assistance from 2019 had been cut from the budget in 2020 due to the County's budget constraints. General discussion ensued about the summary of accounts. J. Wright moved to accept the summary of accounts as presented, M. Simpson seconded, unanimously approved.

**Inquiries & Correspondence**

J. MacLeod stated that the Ag Board received a copy of the letter from the Orange County Legislature to the New York State Department of Ag & Markets regarding the 'Inclusion of Lands – Orange County "newly consolidated" Agricultural District No. 1'. This letter was included with the submission of the Eight Year Agricultural District Review to the State. General discussion ensued. No action taken at this time.

J. MacLeod also stated that the Ag Board received a copy of the letter from the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets to the Orange County Legislature certifying the 2020 Eight-Year Agricultural District Review. The AG Board asked if there is anything else that needs to be done regarding the Eight-Year Ag District Review. A. Sorensen said that the Ag Board does not have to do anything more. General discussion ensued. No action taken at this time.

**New Business**

**Election of Officers**

Discussion ensued about the election of the Ag Board officers. L. DeBuck stated that he would be willing to continue as the Vice Chairman. J. Hoeffner stated that he would like to see someone else step up as the Ag Board's chairman, but he would accept the position if no one else stepped up. General discussion ensued. J. Wright moved to re-appoint J. Hoeffner as the AFPB Chairman and L. DeBuck as the AFPB Vice Chairman, E. Ruscher seconded, unanimously approved.

## Required Ethics Board Forms

Discussion turned to the required Ethics Board forms. Each Ag Board will receive one of these forms to fill out and return to the Ethics Board. The Ag Board noted that P. Johnson still has to fill out his form from last year. A. Sorensen or J. MacLeod will reach out to P. Johnson to get him to fill out his form. P. Johnson also needs to submit a written resignation, as the Ag Board did not receive this yet. Although he verbally resigned during the November Ag Board meeting, a written resignation is required to make the resignation official. This could be a written letter or even a short email. J. Hoeffner stated that he will email P. Johnson to get a written resignation, even if it is a response to J. Hoeffner's email. No further action taken at this time.

## Old Business

### Contract for Kristy Apostolides

Discussion then ensued about the contract for K. Apostolides. Her proposed scope of work has been sent to the Ag Board prior to its meeting so the Ag Board members can review the work K. Apostolides proposes to do. However, she is currently out of contract. General discussion ensued. M. Ullrich moved to approve the scope of work and to allocate the amount of money that K. Apostolides is requesting for her work, J. Wright seconded, unanimously approved.

### Potential Ag Board Member

Discussion then turned to a potential new Ag Board member to replace P. Johnson. K. Apostolides stated that she has a list of possible candidates to replace P. Johnson. This list includes Rick Minkus, Tunis Sweetman, Joey Morgiewicz, Jason Grizzanti, Erica Grizzanti, Chris Vreeland, Jeff Crist, Jenny Cohen, Mark Rogowski, Jr., Chris Pennings, Blaine from Farm Credit, Hans from FSA, Jason Touw, Kristin Touw, Matt Southway, the owner of Aiden Brook, Nick Fitzpatrick, Ed Jacobs and Kasha Bialis. The new member would have to be in agri-business. The Ag Board members agreed that they were not clear about what would or would not qualify as agri-business. They asked if agri-business could include a farmer with a farm stand or would the position require someone that is involved in servicing agricultural businesses. A. Sorensen stated that he will reach out to Jeff Kehoe, at Ag & Markets, to get clarification. J. MacLeod will send out the clarification from Ag & Markets as soon as possible. No further action taken at this time.

### Ag Plan Priority Project Implementation Update

Discussion then ensued about the Ag Plan priority project implementation update. K. Sumner provided a document addressing Orange County Soil & Water's efforts to meet the goals of Priority Project 8 of the 2013 Ag Plan Update. He stated that Soil & Water has met a lot of the priorities that were identified in the plan. Phase 1, Phase 2 and part of Phase 3 of the Floodplain Bench project have been completed. The remaining work in Phase 3 was planned to be completed in 2021, using a \$400,000 SAM grant that former Senator Jen Metzger had nominated OC Soil & Water for. However, it is not clear if Soil & Water will get this money. If Soil & Water does not get the funding soon, it might lose the contractor that was hired for this project.

The next phase of the benching project will go from County Route 1 to the Majek bridge, including about 3,800 feet. K. Sumner stated that Soil & Water is expecting to get grants to finish this section. However, the grants are being held up in Albany.

K. Sumner indicated that Soil & Water has tried to get federal funding to help pay for the Wallkill River flood mitigation efforts. Despite having several meetings with representatives of local elected federal officials and ACoE, federal funding has not been made available for this purpose. However, Soil &

Water has been successful in obtaining funding for the Wallkill River flood mitigation project through the State.

Soil & Water also finished the last section of the tree thinning and debris clearing at the Celery Avenue reach of the Wallkill River. This project tries to address restricted flood flows due to tree growth upstream from Maple Avenue. He stated that this project addressed farmers' concerns while complying with NYSDEC's regulations and concerns.

Another project that Soil & Water worked on was the channel modification / ledge lowering project near Celery Avenue. Although this project is fully designed and permitted, it lacks dedicated funding. This project faced opposition from landowners close to the project location. K. Sumner stated that the County has provided surveying services for the bench projects, which have resulted in significant cost savings.

K. Sumner stated that another area of concern is the maintenance of the Wallkill River corridor just downstream of Maple Avenue. Although maintenance of this reach is crucial since it is the outlet for the whole Black Dirt valley, it is outside of the limits of the formal river maintenance program. Since there are no easements or other mechanisms in place in this area, maintenance projects in this reach require securing multiple landowner access agreements. Soil & Water has had ten years of false starts in this project and needs legal assistance from the County. General discussion ensued. No action taken at this time.

## **Other Business**

### **Carbon Farming**

Discussion then turned to carbon farming. Carbon farming is designed to sequester atmospheric carbon into the soil. K. Sumner stated that former Senator Jen Metzger was a proponent of carbon farming. He is not sure if someone else will pick up this topic since Senator Metzger was voted out of the Senate.

K. Sumner stated that someone needs to reach out to the new senator, Senator Martucci, to get him acquainted with the needs of agriculture. K. Apostolides stated that the Ag Board should meet with the elected officials more frequently to keep them aware of the needs of farmers. M. Ullrich stated that the Ag Board should pick a state issue to discuss with the new state officials, such as the need for a living wage for farm workers. No action taken at this time.

Meeting adjourned: 8:25 pm.