

# **Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board Meeting**

## **February 17, 2021**

### **Meeting Minutes**

Ag Board members present via conference call / TEAMS meeting: E. Ruscher, P. Ruszkiewicz, 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.

Call to order – 7:05 pm.

#### **January Minutes**

J. Wright moved to accept the January minutes as presented, D. Smith seconded, unanimously approved.

#### **Summary of Accounts**

K. Apostolides stated that the payments for the social media from the 2020 budget should have been paid by now since she had used the County's credit card for the Facebook ads. J. MacLeod will look into this further. General discussion ensued about the remaining Ag Board ledger. J. Wright moved to accept the summary of accounts as presented, E. Ruscher seconded, unanimously approved.

#### **Inquiries & Correspondence**

J. MacLeod stated that she had not received any inquiries or correspondences for the Ag Board in the past month. No action taken at this time.

#### **New Business**

##### **Annual Agricultural District Review**

Discussion ensued about the annual agricultural district review. A. Sorensen stated that he and P. Ruszkiewicz had a TEAMS meeting with Jean Rampfen and the new attorney that is replacing Antionette Reed to bring her up to speed with the Annual Agricultural District Review. He stated that the open enrollment period is during the month of March. General discussion ensued. No action taken at this time.

##### **Agri-Business Revolving Loan Fund**

Discussion turned to the agri-business revolving loan fund. A. Sorensen stated that he would like to propose the idea of the County setting up an agri-business revolving loan fund. He stated that Sullivan County has this type of fund, which issues loans to farm operations. Then the money is repaid by the farm operations and the money is redistributed to other farm operations. The Sullivan County program needed \$600,000 of seed money for the program. He stated that several agribusinesses have benefitted from this program.

He wants to see if the AFPB thinks that this program would be helpful in Orange County. He is looking to see if Orange County might have a source for the seed money if such a program was started in this county. Perhaps the County could partner with local banks and lenders. The Sullivan

County program offers loans with a 2% interest rate for ten-year loans. The maximum loan is for \$50,000. He stated that Orange County could use the Sullivan County program as a guide.

M. Ullrich stated that she thinks that HVADC is trying to do something like this already. The Ag Board should get an update from HVADC about this program. If HVADC does not have a program like this, then maybe the County could use some of its money to seed the program and have HVADC administer the program, making sure that the money from this fund goes strictly to farms and agribusinesses located in Orange County. She stated that the program should make sure that the program is efficient.

K. Apostolides stated that she will bring the thought up at the Ag Plan Implementation Committee meeting next week. J. Wright stated that this program is a good idea. General discussion ensued. No further action taken at this time.

## **Old Business**

### **Potential Ag Board Member**

Discussion then ensued about the potential new Ag Board member. M. Ullrich stated that she had developed a survey listing the people that might be able to fill the Ag Board vacancy. She asked the Ag Board members to each list their three top choices, in order. She would then tally the responses to narrow down the candidate list, since there is a long list of possible board members. Unfortunately, none of the Ag Board members had responded by a few days before the board meeting due to a glitch in the survey that has since been addressed. At this time, there have only been six responses. M. Ullrich stated that she will close the survey in the next day or two to allow the remaining Ag Board members to do the survey. She also stated that the Ag Board members can send her their list of three people they recommend if they cannot get the survey to work and she will add the information into the survey. However, there will not be anonymity if the recommendations are sent to her. M. Ullrich stated that she will have the results of the survey by the end of this week or the beginning of next week. The Ag Board members agreed that a description should be sent to the potential Ag Board member describing what it means to be an Ag Board member.

The Ag Board members also agreed that J. Hoeffner needs to be asked if he had reached out to P. Johnson to get a written resignation from him. If not, J. MacLeod or A. Sorensen will send an e-mail to P. Johnson seeking his written acknowledgement of his resignation. General discussion ensued. No further action taken at this time.

### **Ag Plan Priority Project Implementation Update**

Discussion then turned to the Ag Plan priority project implementation update. K. Apostolides stated that she does not have an Ag Plan priority project implementation update this week. However, she did state that she has an update about the farmers markets. Although the Museum Village market was not held last year, it will be held this year. Also, the Goshen farmers market does not have a manager at this time. Most of the farmers markets in the county will start in May or June. No action taken at this time.

## **Other Business**

### **Food Distribution to Food Pantries**

M. Ullrich stated that there are grants to expand the distribution of fresh fruit and vegetables to medical pantries. She noted that a lot of little food pantries are not getting fresh products. However,

there is a need to get fresh products to needy people to help improve their diet. She stated that one way to do this is to sponsor a family. She noted that private foundations are working to get the fresh products to needy people. K. Apostolides stated that she has worked on a similar project in the past and can offer support if it is needed. General discussion ensued. No further action taken at this time.

#### Public Official Meetings

K. Apostolides asked the Ag Board members which public officials should be brought to the March or April Ag Board meeting. The Ag Board members agreed that Senator Martucci should be invited since he is new in his position. The Ag Board members agreed that they should aim to invite Martucci to the April meeting so the Ag Board can discuss what it wants to talk to the official(s) about. General discussion ensued. No further action taken at this time.

Meeting adjourned: 7:50 pm.