

**Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board Meeting  
February 19, 2020  
Meeting Minutes**

Ag Board members present: J. Hoeffner, D. Church, P. Ruszkiewicz, D. Smith, S. Soons, M. Ullrich, J. Wright.

Ag Board members excused: L. DeBuck.

Guests present: M. Decker – OCLT, V. Kasinski – Newburgh Urban Farm and Food Initiative (NUFFI), J. MacLeod – OC Planning, K. Morris – OC Planning, A. Reed – OC Legislative Office, R. Schreibeis – OC Executive's Office.

Call to order – 5:18pm.

**January Minutes**

J. Wright moved to accept the January minutes as presented, P. Ruszkiewicz seconded, unanimously approved.

**Summary of Accounts**

General discussion ensued about the summary of accounts. J. Wright moved to accept the ledger as presented, D. Church seconded, unanimously approved.

**Inquiries & Correspondence**

The Ag Board received a letter from the New York State Department of Ag & Markets for an NOI for the proposed Lower Road II CDG Project 2.0 MW solar array in the Town of Wawayanda. No action taken on these letters at this time.

The Ag Board also received two letters from the New York State Department of Ag & markets to remind it that the Eight-Year Agricultural District Review is this year and that the County's submission is due on November 20, 2020. No action taken at this time.

Finally, the Ag Board received a copy of the New York State Senate's Rural Futures Winter 2020 Issue. General discussion ensued. No action taken.

**New Business**

**Newburgh Urban Gardens**

Discussion ensued about the Newburgh urban gardens. V. Kasinski stated that her organization received a \$100,000 grant for a project at the urban garden at Downing Park that will span three years. The project will include irrigation, building out the urban farm, and building two more community gardens. This project will help low income people. It will also help kids that live in Newburgh by getting them off the street and teaching them about agriculture. She noted that the urban gardens donate excess produce. The Newburgh Urban Farm also has bees to help pollinate their plants.

The Newburgh Urban Farm is looking for sponsors for its second calendar. The first calendar sold for \$15 each and the proceeds go to the gardens. These calendars were in high demand. Originally, the Newburgh Urban Farm printed 100 calendars, but then printed another 100 due to demand. V.

Kasinski stated that sponsorship ranges from \$100 to \$500. J. Hoeffner stated that the Ag Board would have to think about whether to sponsor it. V. Kasinski stated that she will need an answer by March 20 since that is when the calendars go to print.

The Newburgh Urban Farm is also hosting its Fifth Annual Urban Farming Fair on Saturday, April 25 from 12:00 to 4:00. Admission is free and the Ag Board members are welcome to attend if they would like to. No action taken at this time.

### Orange County Land Trust (OCLT) Updates

Discussion then turned to updates from the Orange County Land Trust (OCLT). M. Decker stated that there are currently opportunities to preserve farmland through the State and the Federal governments. He stated that OCLT is helping Wagon Wheel Farm to apply for a conservation easement through the Federal government that is due in early April. He also stated that Crestline Dairy is applying for a State PDR that is part of a dairy specific PDR round. He noted that additional information about these PDR applications will come later.

M. Decker indicated that there is an open grant to land trusts to do outreach, which is more pressing at this time. He stated that the three-year grant allows land trusts to do a GIS inventory of agricultural land, screen farms for PDR, reach out to good candidates for PDR applications and track farmers' responses. He said that OCLT will look at all Orange County farms and just needs a letter of support from the Ag Board. If the OCLT is awarded the grant, it would get \$30,000 to \$40,000 over three years and would allow the OCLT to create a pre-application list of farms the helps to evaluate the farms' readiness for PDR application. The application for the grant is due on Friday, but he can draft a letter to help move this process along quickly.

M. Ullrich stated that these evaluations should not be based only on soils. She said that the PDR list needs to consider development pressure and if there is adjacent land that is preserved. She noted that the AFPB has used a weighted system in the past to consider how important these farms are in the County. General discussion ensued. J. Wright moved to write a letter of support for the land trust grant application, P. Ruskiewicz seconded, roll call – J. Hoeffner – Aye, L. DeBuck – Absent, D. Church – Aye, P. Johnson – Absent, E. Ruscher – Absent, P. Ruskiewicz – Aye, M. Simpson – Absent, D. Smith – Abstain, S. Soons – Aye, M. Ullrich – Aye, J. Wright – Aye, motion carried.

### Old Business

#### Eight Year Ag District Review

Discussion then ensued about the Eight-Year Ag District Review. A. Reed stated that there are currently two County Agricultural Districts and that the County is proposing to consolidate the districts into one County Agricultural District to make future reviews easier. She stated that the County will be reviewing the entire districts to determine if there are any parcels that should be added or removed. Parcels can only be taken out of the County Agricultural Districts during the Eight-Year Ag District Review. She stated that the public and municipalities can propose changes from March 1 to April 15. During the first week of March, there will be notices posted in local newspapers and sent to municipalities containing parcels in the County Agricultural Districts to get property owner and municipal input. Once the County has a list of parcels proposed to be added or removed from the districts, the property owners will be notified of the proposed changes.

The Ag Board will need to provide a report and should include the Ag Plan updated in its report. The report and SEQR are due on May 22, 2020. The public hearing will be scheduled in July and/or

August. The County Legislature votes on November 5 and then sends the packet of information to the State Department of Agriculture & Markets.

Cornell Cooperative Extension will be doing outreach to farmers and the public. J. MacLeod will be the main contact person for this project. She will be addressing calls regarding the current status of parcels (whether they are in the Agricultural District). Questions related to taxes will be directed to Real Property and/or Cornell Cooperative Extension. E. Ruscher will be sending letters to the assessors about this review.

D. Church stated that the Ag Board should be aware that it will be expected to pay for the advertising costs related to the Eight-Year Agricultural District Review. The Ag Board will also need to pay for the mailings to the farmers and the property owners with proposed changes. This could be \$1,000 to \$2,000, but the exact amount is still to be determined. M. Ullrich stated that the Ag Board needs to keep in mind that the cost of postage has gone up since the last Eight-Year Review. J. MacLeod will get a better idea of the anticipated costs for the AFPB for the next meeting. J. Wright asked of the Ag Board will have to notify everyone that is in the Ag Districts if the Districts are consolidated. There is not a clear answer to this at this time, but the Planning Department will try to get clarification on this. No action taken at this time.

### County Ag Plan Implementation Update

Discussion then turned to the County Ag Plan implementation update. M. Decker stated that he will give an update on the priority project related to farmland protection at the next meeting. He noted that there has been an effort to map dairy land. Although this has been difficult to do, he stated that there is approximately 23,440 acres of land in dairy production in Orange County. There are currently 37 to 40 dairy farms in the County. M. Ullrich stated that the AFPB had a mini-grant program in the past that it might want to reconsider using. This contained an application process for interested folks, but not for individuals or for-profit businesses. She stated that maybe a pass-through with a non-profit as the distribution source could be used to help the dairy farmers. However, she is not sure if this is okay.

M. Ullrich stated that there is a dairy feasibility study for Delaware County and Sullivan County is already working on its dairy feasibility study. She noted that Orange County is not as far along in the process. She stated that she is not sure if the Vermont Dairy Feasibility Study is done, but she will look into it. M. Ullrich also stated that New York City wants New York State milk. This might be beneficial to Orange County dairy farmers. However, she stated that the County needs to make sure that the money gets back to the farmers. J. Wright stated that Quick Check started as a dairy operation and he said that the County should see if it is willing to buy Orange County milk.

The next Agricultural Plan Implementation Committee meeting will be on February 27 at 3 pm and the Ag Board members are welcome to attend. General discussion ensued. No action taken at this time.

### Other Business

#### Transfer Tax

Discussion then ensued about the County blanket support for the transfer tax. Although the County Legislature had approved this motion, it did not pass in the State. J. Wright stated that Senator Metzger is in favor of the blanket support. However, Senator Skoufis was against it. General discussion ensued. J. Wright moved to have the Ag Board make a resolution in favor of the blanket support for the transfer tax, D. Church seconded, unanimously approved. M. Ullrich moved to have the AFPB write a letter to all State Senators in support for the County's blanket support for the

transfer tax and allowing towns to vote to be out of the transfer tax, D Church seconded, unanimously approved.

### 2020 Meeting Schedule

Discussion then turned to the 2020 meeting schedule. The Ag Board members agreed to start their meetings at 7:00 pm in April. No further action taken at this time.

Meeting adjourned: 7:04 pm.