

Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board Meeting
May 17, 2023
Meeting Minutes

Ag Board members present: L. DeBuck, P. Ruskiewicz, D. Smith, A. Sorensen, M. Ullrich, P. Wiley, J. Wright.

Ag Board members excused via email: S. Soons.

Guests present: S. Abeles – OCLT, K. Apostolides – OC Farm Market Coordinator, D. Llewellyn – Glynwood (via computer), J. MacLeod – OC Planning.

Call to order – 7:16.

April Minutes

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

Summary of Accounts

The summary of accounts was updated to show the allocations for the farmers market advertising and a renewed contract with Kristy. General discussion ensued. J. Wright moved to accept the summary of accounts as presented, P. Wiley seconded, unanimously approved.

Inquiries & Correspondence

J. MacLeod stated that the only correspondence that the Ag Board received was the letter from K. Sumner that she received earlier in the day. The letter is addressed to Senator Skoufis and it is seeking financial support for continued work along the Wallkill River to help protect produce that is grown in this area from future flood events. K. Sumner asked that the Ag Board write a letter to support the OC Soil & Water District's request. General discussion ensued. M. Ullrich moved to write a letter to Senator Skoufis supporting the proposed benching and protection of muckland, as this is important to Orange County agriculture, A. Sorensen seconded, unanimously approved.

Old Business

Glynwood Update / Request of Slaughterhouse Project

Discussion ensued about the Glynwood update / request of the slaughterhouse project. D. Llewellyn stated that Glynwood has received a grant with Cornell Cooperative Extension and a planning grant to help with their slaughterhouse project. He stated that right now Glynwood is working on its capacity, sales. Educational needs and processing. He stated that Glynwood is one and a half years into the two-year grant to study the need for a slaughterhouse in the area. Glynwood had created a survey consisting of about 200 questions related to its slaughterhouse project. He stated that they received about 70 responses to the questionnaire.

D. Llewellyn stated that the Hudson Valley does not have enough animals to support a slaughterhouse that only services the Hudson Valley. However, a value-added chain could help connect regional meat producers (farmers) with meat processors. He stated that the aim is to have a clearer view of the value-added production.

Currently, Glynwood is looking for an independent contractor that can do the work for three years. Glynwood is aiming to have the job be full-time. D. Llewellyn stated that Glynwood is hoping to pay the contractor \$100,000 per year. However, they might have to settle for a half or three-quarter-time employee due to the cost. K. Apostolides stated that the grant pays for the position, but Glynwood still needs a 25% match. J. Wright stated Glynwood should make this a self-supporting role so it doesn't lose the contractor after three years. D. Llewellyn stated that Glynwood might reach out to the Ag Board and other Ag Boards to help it meet the 25% match. However, he is not seeking money at this time.

The contractor would be a liaison between the meat producers and the meat processors. Glynwood also wanted to know if the Ag Board wants to collaborate on this effort. L. DeBuck stated that the Ag Board wanted to focus on supporting the livestock processor. He stated that the dairy industry is not expanding and the Ag Board wants to see the land, hay, and corn be utilized. Therefore, there will be more of a need for other livestock to fill in and to be processed for meat eventually.

M. Ullrich stated that there are a couple of people that act as liaisons between the meat producers (farmers) and meat processors in New York State. However, they are not in this area. D. Llewellyn stated that Kathleen Harris, with the Northeast Livestock Processing Service, is one such liaison. He stated that they have extra capacity, but only during the off-season. They process all kinds of standard meat.

Glynwood's study included the Hudson Valley and the Capital Region. However, it did not include New Jersey's needs. J. Wright stated that Glynwood could be missing farmers that would be willing to use a meat processing facility in the area. The meat processing facility could draw on farmers from New Jersey, Connecticut, etc. D. Llewellyn stated that the survey was not limited only to the Mid-Hudson area.

J. Wright stated that the Ag Board has heard a lot about potential meat processing facilities, but the proposed plans don't seem to come to fruition. He questioned how this helps the farmers. D. Llewellyn stated that it is hard to find a shovel ready site for a meat processing facility. K. Apostolides stated that the processor in Sullivan County is not taking beef yet, but it is taking chicken. However, they are still anticipating taking in beef cattle in the future. M. Ullrich stated that it takes a long time to get meat processing facilities up and running. She also stated that the survey she conducted indicated that there would not be much of an increase in the number of beef cattle that would be sent to market even if there was more capacity to process the beef cattle. A. Sorensen stated that there could also be some constraints to consider with the meat processing facilities, such as the need for kosher or halal meats for certain holidays. D. Llewellyn stated that Glynwood's work is not the end all be all. He stated that the goal is to get more processors to improve meat processing in this area, from when the animal is received to when it is sent out as a processed carcass.

L. DeBuck stated that the Ag Board appreciates the work that Glynwood is doing. He clarified that this meeting with Glynwood was only informational at this time. D. Llewellyn agreed and stated that Glynwood would not be eligible to seek another grant until at least this October, if not until next May. However, it is willing to arrange a group call with the Ag Board and other entities that might be interested in the meat processing facility in the future. General discussion ensued. No action taken at this time.

Annual Agricultural District Update

Discussion turned to the annual agricultural district update. There were ten applications for inclusion into the Ag District this year. The site visits occurred on Friday, May 5, and on Tuesday, May 9. On these days, nine of the ten sites were visited. L. DeBuck, P. Ruszkiewicz, M. Ullrich, P. Wiley and J.

MacLeod attended the May 5 site visits. M. Ullrich, P. Wiley and J. MacLeod attended the May 9 site visits. The tenth site, the Hopmayer property in Crawford was not visited since the Ag Board agreed to put this property into the Ag District. This site had been removed during the 2020 Eight-Year Ag District Review, but is being reinstated since the applicant provided proof that the property is being used agriculturally.

The Ag Board members that went to the site visits met prior to this meeting to discuss which properties they believed should be put into the Ag District, based on the agricultural activity. L. DeBuck identified each application with a number to make it easier to identify which properties are being spoken about, based on the order they are listed on the "2023 List of Properties Proposed for Inclusion in an Orange County Agricultural District." He listed them as (1) the Christine Hopmayer Property, (2) the LJG/ELG Family Trust Property, (3) the Old Sycamore Realty III, LLC Property, (4) the Rosina's Vineyard, LLC Property, (5) the Michael & Alva Antonelli Property, (6) the Red Mills Road Properties, LLC Property, (7) the Angel M. Rivera & The Ann Marie Rivera Revocable Living Trust Property, (8) the Andrew Justin Property, (9) the A. Nina Wabnig-Wishe Revocable Trust DTD Property, and (10) the Seth H. Pulver Property. General discussion ensued. L. DeBuck moved to recommend that the County Legislature add properties 2-6, 8 and 9 (LJG/ELG Family Trust Property, Old Sycamore Realty III, LLC Property, Rosina's Vineyard, LLC Property, Michael & Alva Antonelli Property, the Red Mills Road Properties, LLC Property, Andrew Justin Property, and A. Nina Wabnig-Wishe Revocable Trust DTD Property) to Orange County Agricultural District 1 based on the site visits and agricultural activity at these sites, M. Ullrich seconded, unanimously approved.

Then the Ag Board members discussed the remaining two properties proposed for inclusion. These were number 7 (the Angel M. Rivera & the Ann Marie Rivera Revocable Living Trust property) and number 10 (the Seth H. Pulver property). L. DeBuck stated that he was at the site visit for the Rivera property and there was no agricultural activity at this site. He said that this was a wood lot at the end of a cul-de-sac. The owner built a bridge over a stream and a gate to keep the public off of the property. He also built a pond in an area that had been a wetland. This site looked more like a personal campground than an agricultural parcel. The owner also owns a heavy equipment construction company and he wants to build a 6,000 square foot building to store his equipment on this site. He also said that his wife might put a garden on the property in the future. However, nothing has been planted at this time. The Ag Board members agreed to not recommend this property for inclusion at this time, but that the applicant can reapply next year if he can prove that viable ag activity is occurring.

L. DeBuck stated that he was not at the site visit for the Pulver property. However, other board members were and he discussed this visit with them. He stated that this site contains a bed-and-breakfast. However, it had very little agricultural activity at this time. M. Ullrich stated that based on the soils map, the good soils are occupied by the mansion and open area that is not proposed to be used agriculturally. However, the area that the applicant is proposing to use for agriculture does not contain the best soils. Thus, it is not clear how successful the agricultural activity would be. The Ag Board also noted that there is a conflict about the proposal between the Village of Woodbury and the Town of Woodbury. The Village is concerned that the applicant is seeking to use this site as an event venue, rather than as an agricultural operation. However, the Town has indicated that the applicant is seeking to start a farm winery. The Ag Board members agreed to not recommend this property for inclusion at this time, but that the applicant can reapply next year if he can prove that viable ag activity is occurring. No further action taken at this time.

Farmers Market Update

Discussion then ensued about the farmers market update. K. Apostolides stated that the farmers markets are starting to open now and that there are 17 farmers markets this year. However, the

Clover Knoll farmers market will not be operating this year. Last year Clover Knoll had trouble getting farmers to keep coming to this farmers markets. She stated that Ag & Markets requires a minimum of two farmers to be a farmers market. M. Ullrich stated that there should really be two vegetable vendors and one fruit vendor at a farmers market, at a minimum.

K. Apostolides stated that next week there will be a meeting with the farmers market managers to get the scavenger hunt up and running. She stated that the farmers markets will also be collecting residential food scraps to compost. The farmers markets might be selling compost bins and rain barrels in the future, too. General discussion ensued. No action taken at this time.

Agricultural Plan Priority Project Update

Discussion then turned to the agricultural plan priority project update. S. Abeles stated that the Orange County Land Trust (OCLT) has had a lot of change in its staff in the past few years. She stated that she is now working on farmland protection within OCLT. There will be a PDR grant that she thinks will be released at the end of this month and OCLT has had 15 or 16 farmers interested in seeking a PDR grant in the past. OCLT will be reaching out to these farmers to see if they are still interested in seeking a PDR and is hoping to put in a few PDR applications. M. Ullrich agreed that it would be good for OCLT to reapply for the farms that have not received PDR grants but are still interested. S. Abeles stated that OCLT is hoping to put in two PDR applications for the upcoming funding round.

OCLT intends to create a program in the future to make the PDR application process easier in the future. It needs to do GIS mapping to determine which farms should have higher priority when OCLT is working on the applications in the future. However, S. Abeles wanted to know what she should consider to make OCLT's application process better. A. Sorensen stated that in the past, the Ag Board has written support letters for OCLT's applications for PDR grants and it should continue. M. Ullrich stated that a tool that prioritizes the farms for protection would help Ag & Markets decide which farms to protect. She stated that there are a lot of high priority, high pressure farms that need to get into the PDR program to protect them. General discussion ensued. No action taken at this time.

Other Business

New Ag Board Member

Discussion then ensued about appointing a new Ag Board member. M. Ullrich stated that she reached out to G. Stap. He said that he is not interested at the moment, but he might be in October. P. Ruszkiewicz said it might take until October to appoint a new member, anyway. L. DeBuck stated that he will reach out to G. Stap again. No further action taken at this time.

Perennial Weed Event

M. Ullrich stated that CCE will be offering a class that will address perennial weeds on June 20 at 12pm at Wagon Wheel Farm. General discussion ensued. No action taken.

Onion Meeting

M. Ullrich stated that CCE will be holding a meeting about onions on July 6. General discussion ensued. No action taken.

Meeting adjourned: 8:58 pm.