

Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board Meeting
June 16, 2021
Meeting Minutes

Ag Board members present via conference call / TEAMS meeting: J. Hoeffner, L. DeBuck, E. Ruscher, S. Soons, A. Sorensen, J. Wright.

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

Call to order – 7:11 pm.

May Minutes

J. Wright moved to accept the May minutes as presented, L. DeBuck seconded, unanimously approved.

Summary of Accounts

J. MacLeod stated that the \$1,500 allocation from last month for the social media and farmers market rack cards is shown on the summary of accounts. There are no other changes at this time. J. Wright moved to accept the summary of accounts as presented, L. DeBuck seconded, unanimously approved.

Inquiries & Correspondence

J. MacLeod stated that the Ag Board received a letter from the New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets regarding the “AML §305-a(1) Review Concerning the Town of Newburgh’s Zoning Code and its Application to Oak Street Farm & Vineyard, LLC, Orange County Agricultural District No. 1”. This letter addresses the denial of an area variance for this property. The property owners had constructed a 273 square foot accessory building without a building permit. The property owners had previously applied for and received two area variances for other agricultural accessory structures, including a height variance and a floor area variance. The Town denied the 273 square foot area variance. Ag & Markets indicated that this action “unreasonably restricts the farm operation in possible violation of §AML 305-a(1).” General discussion ensued. J. Hoeffner stated that the Ag Board could tell the Town of Newburgh to back off. J. Wright stated that the Ag Board might need guidance regarding the legality of the Town’s actions. A. Sorensen stated that the Ag Board could ask the Town for a copy of its response to Ag & Market’s letter. The Ag Board members agreed to have A. Sorensen and J. MacLeod reach out to the Town regarding this application. No further action taken at this time.

J. MacLeod stated that the Ag Board received a resignation letter from the Ag Board from Phil Johnson. General discussion ensued. No action taken at this time.

Old Business

Agricultural District Update

Discussion ensued about the Agricultural District update. Orange County Legislature’s E&E Committee and Rules Committee approved the properties proposed for inclusion in the County Agricultural District. There was some discussion in the Committees about the Atlantic Fibre application, which had been in the Agricultural District prior to the 2020 Eight-Year Agricultural

District Review. The E&E Committee passed this application by one vote and the Rules Committee passed this application with a full board. The recommendations will now be going to the full legislature for its vote. General discussion ensued. No action taken at this time.

Farmers Market Update

Discussion turned to the farmers markets. K. Apostolides stated that the final list of the farmers markets is being posted in social media. She stated that she plans on visiting one farmers market per week and get information about the markets to be published. S. Soons stated that we could use Facebook to get email addresses for people who are interested in the farmers markets. She stated that \$55 has been spent on obtaining URL addresses to advertise the farmers markets. These include orangecountyfarms.com and ocnyfarms.com. K. Apostolides noted that she recently found out the SNAP recipients have not been getting a full list of the farmers markets. She will work to make sure that they get the full, correct farmers market list. There is also going to be a new farmers market opening in September in Greenwood Lake. However, there are no vendors for this farmers market yet. Business for the farmers markets are slower than last year, but busier than previous years.

The rules for the farmers markets are not as strict as last year since the COVID numbers are down in this area. She stated that some of the farmers markets will have live music this year. Sampling of the vendors' products will be allowed. However, masks will still be needed for unvaccinated people.

S. Soons stated that the FMNP payment process is archaic. J. Hoeffner indicated that there could be an effort to reach out to Ag & Markets about this issue. K. Apostolides stated that this is a legislative issue that could be brought up at the politicians meeting. J. Hoeffner thanked K. Apostolides and S. Soons for their help. General discussion ensued. No action taken.

Potential Ag Board Members

Discussion then ensued about the potential Ag Board members. K. Apostolides stated that based on the survey of the Ag Board members, the top three ranked potential Ag Board members were Chris Vreeland, Blane Allen, and Rick Minkus. None of these potential candidates have been contacted to see if they are interested in being on the Ag Board yet. Thus, K. Apostolides indicated that she will reach out these candidates, based on their ranking, to see if they are interested in serving on the Ag Board. J. Wright stated that they are all good candidates. J. MacLeod should write a letter describing what it is like to be on the Ag Board. K. Apostolides stated that she will reach out to Chris Vreeland first and have him write a letter if interest if he is interested in being on the Ag Board. General discussion ensued. No further action taken at this time.

Other Business

County Culverts

J. Wright stated that K. Sumner will be meeting with the County to get a better feel for the situation regarding the County culvert issue. He stated that he will talk to P. Ruskiewicz and K. Sumner about this issue. The Ag Board indicated that it could invite K. Sumner to the next Ag Board meeting. General discussion ensued. No further action taken at this time.

Meeting adjourned: 8:01 pm.