

**Agricultural and Farmland
Protection Board Meeting
September 9, 2020**

- I. **CALL TO ORDER** – Chairman Lawton called the meeting to order at 3:05 PM.
A. Introductions – Introductions were made. Ms. Jardine thanked everyone for coming and Ms. Griffiths introduced T Hanson, new Executive Director of CCE Tioga.

II. **ATTENDANCE**

- A. Members: Elaine Jardine, Tim Lawton, T Hanson, Ben Whittemore, Howard Visscher, Ed Hollenbeck, Lisa Bloodnick, Dale Weston, Pam Moore
B. Excused: Terie Huseby, John Lacey
C. Staff: Megan Griffiths
D. Guests: Wendy Walsh of TCSWCD, Barb Neal of CCE Tioga

- III. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA** – Chair Lawton asked for a motion to approve the agenda. Legislator Ed Hollenbeck made the motion to approve the agenda; Legislator Dale Weston seconded the motion. All were in favor.

- IV. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES** – Chair Lawton allowed a few minutes for everybody to look over the minutes, then asked for a motion to approve the following minutes:

- A. August 5, 2020 – Lisa Bloodnick made the motion to approve the minutes; Pam Moore seconded the motion. All were in favor.

- V. **SPENCER AGRICULTURAL DISTRICT #1 8-YEAR REVIEW** – Megan Griffiths reported the following:

This eight-year review resulted in the addition of 3,142 acres added to the district, and no land was removed. The total acreage of this district is now 49,711. There was also an increase of 3,194 acres in farms as well as 19 farms added to the District.

Pam Moore inquired if any land in Amish farms was added to this District. Megan reported that she received no requests for enrollment from Amish families. Wendy Walsh commented that Howland's farm in Candor was purchased by an Amish family in the last eight years, and the farm land remains in the District. Pam Moore also pointed out a typographic error in the Short EAF. Megan reported that she had already fixed that based on Pam's prior notification via email.

Chair Lawton asked for a motion to approve Resolution #3 of 2020 to Recommend Adoption of the modification to the Spencer Agricultural District #1. Howard Visscher made the motion to approve the resolution;

Legislator Ed Hollenbeck seconded the motion. All were in favor. Tim Lawton, Chair, signed the resolution.

VI. OTHER BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR

A. Tioga County Strategic Economic Recovery Plan – Agriculture Committee Strategic Actions

Elaine Jardine started the discussion describing the countywide Strategic Planning effort, listing the Agriculture Committee membership, and reporting the four-meeting process the Committee conducted to arrive at the Strategic Actions presented to the Board today. E. Jardine asked the Board if they had any ideas that were distinctly different from those presented today, and to think about this in the next couple days as well. Legislator Dale Weston brought up an idea he heard of in the past couple years regarding a mobile meat processing unit. E. Jardine stated that the concept had been addressed by adding an action regarding educating meat farmers about preparing and finishing their animals year round, eliminating bottlenecks in the current USDA meat processing facilities. Pam Moore offered ideas that she had passed along previously via the TC Agricultural Resource Group. Another ARG member also passed along some ideas. The Agricultural Committee voted on those ideas, which resulted in only two that were included; updating the Agricultural Resource Directory, and educating produce farmers to grow vegetables with longer growing seasons such as kale and spinach. The Board did not offer any more ideas for actions.

B. Solar Projects on Agricultural Land

Elaine Jardine started this discussion by informing the Board that Tioga County has experienced the proposal and location of several smaller-sized solar projects in Tioga County in the past few years, most typically located on agricultural land. This trend will likely continue in the future, and Board members agreed due to Governor Cuomo's statewide renewable energy agenda. E. Jardine continued that the unknown cumulative or aggregate impacts of all these small solar projects on farmland is the issue. E. Jardine also stated that she is aware of and understands that private property rights very important to consider as farmers need the money generated from utility leases to invest in farms or retire.

The County Planning Board is required to make recommendations on these projects. Wendy Walsh asked if these projects are accomplished via purchasing or leasing the land. E. Jardine answered leasing. Wendy Walsh asked about how many of these solar projects are there, when the County Planning Board review is triggered, and what kinds of standards they are reviewed against. E. Jardine stated that County Planning Board review is triggered when the projects are located within 500 feet of municipal boundaries, county or state roads or parcels enrolled in the NYS Agricultural Districts Program. The standards used are basically physical requirements

from municipal site plan review or solar laws. Pam Moore stated Ag & Markets guidance regarding solar projects on farm land doesn't really apply anymore due to the State's priority for renewable energy. ED&P can create map of locations of these projects for the Board. If Board members could please think about any standards or guidance that might be appropriate for the County Planning Board members to use when reviewing these project to make recommendations to municipal boards.

C. Right to Farm Road Signs

Pam Moore brought up again the interest for Right To Farm road signs in the Town of Nichols. She did speak with Gary Hammond, Tioga County DPW Commissioner about this, and he is against such a sign. He said it is not a safety sign. Pam said that the Town Board would pursue other alternatives to get the signs made, if County DPW would allow them to be installed. Pam asked Legislator Dale Weston if he approach the County Sheriff about history of vehicular accidents with farm equipment, as he said he would at the August meeting. Ben Whittemore said he just experienced one, and also that he has seen RTF signs in the Town of Dryden. E. Jardine suggested that Pam Moore now speak with Legislator Mike Roberts.

VII. ADJOURNMENT –

With no further discussion, Chair Lawton motioned to adjourn. Legislator Hollenbeck seconded the motion. All were in favor. Meeting was adjourned at 4:08 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Elaine Jardine
County Planning Director, Economic Development & Planning