

**Tioga County Agricultural and
Farmland Protection Board Meeting
October 13, 2023
10:00 AM in the Legislative Conference Room
Minutes
APPROVED**

I. **CALL TO ORDER** – Chairman Lawton called the meeting to order at 10:12 AM.

II. **ATTENDANCE**

A. Members Present: Tim Lawton, Barb Neal, Howard Visscher, Steve Palinosky, Lisa Bloodnick, Barb Roberts, Pam Moore, Elaine Jardine. **Absent/Excused:** John Lacey, Ben Whittemore, Dale Weston

B. Local Officials: None

C. Staff: Wendy Walsh and Danielle Singer, TC SWCD

III. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Motion to approve the agenda: P. Moore, 2nd H. Visscher, Carried

IV. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES – February 16, 2023**

Motion to approve the minutes: H. Visscher, 2nd S. Palinosky, Carried

V. **NYS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & MARKETS LAND TRUSTS OUTREACH GRANT PROGRAM**

E. Jardine reported that the opportunity of this grant application came to her attention in late August. She then inquired if TCSWCD would be interested in pursuing the funding opportunity. As Land Trusts are the only eligible applicants, E. Jardine reached out to Finger Lakes Land Trust and D. Singer reached out to American Farmland Trust NYS. Finger Lakes Land Trusts was not interested because they do not have a farmer on their Board, which is also a requirement of the grant program. American Farmland Trust was interested. At that point, we decided to pursue the eligible activities of connecting non-farming farmland owners with farmers and farm and farmland succession planning.

Then we presented the grant opportunity to the Tioga County Agricultural Resource Group. They were in favor and suggested adding the eligible activity of understanding and negotiating leases on agricultural land. Then we held an informational meeting of the County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board and all attending were in favor of the grant application with the three stated eligible activities. J. Lacey stated at the September 29th meeting of this Board that the Farm Bureau was also in favor of this grant application with these three eligible activities. Additionally, NYS AFT stated as well that the three stated eligible activities were what they would like to pursue for this grant.

Another aspect of the grant that E. Jardine reported was that a specific area was to be delineated, but because of the selected eligible activities, we didn't see how we could select just one area and decided to apply it countywide. A GIS analysis of viable farmland is required to be done for the application. Because the application will be organized countywide by Agricultural Districts, this analysis will need to be conducted countywide. E. Jardine asked D. Singer if AFT was going to conduct this GIS analysis, and she reported that AFT is expecting the county partners to bring this to the table.

Motion to approve Resolution #2-2023 to Endorse the American Farmland Trusts grant application to the NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets Land Trusts Outreach Grant Program: L. Bloodnick, 2nd P. Moore, Carried

VI. MEMBERS EXPIRING TERMS

Lisa Bloodnick, Ben Whittemore and Tim Lawton 4-year term expire on December 31, 2023. E. Jardine will be calling them to see if they are interested in serving another term.

VII. OTHER BUSINESS

S. Palinosky discussed the issue of Agricultural Districts codes not showing in the ImageMate display of the county's real property database. Between him and Bryan Goodrich, they discovered how to assign an Agricultural District code to each parcel. Steve stated that by the end of this year, they should have completed assigning the codes in the real property database, so they show in ImageMate.

S. Palinosky also discussed the problem of assigning Ag Districts codes when parcels are split or merged. Splitting parcels is no problem. Parcels should not be merged if the new parcel is in the Agricultural District until the property owner is contacted and agrees to do so. E. Jardine stated that then they will have to wait until the next Annual Inclusion period which occurs from January 2 – to January 31 each year. Steve also went on to say that identifying and coding exemptions needs to be cleaned up in the real property database because there are two types – one if the property is in the NYS Agricultural Districts program and one if the property is NOT in the NYS Agricultural Districts program.

P. Moore asked if the viable farmland by parcel for Amish families was entered into the GIS by parcel. E. Jardine reported that Bill Ostrander never completed it because he did not receive the tax map id numbers from Pam. She stated that she would be interested in the GIS analysis conducted for the Land Trust grant purposes, because she wants it to be available to Amish families/farmers, as well as for the Agricultural & Farmland Protection Board and County Planning Board. The data has to be in an accessible format, especially for the Amish.

P. Moore then brought up for discussion the TJA Clean Energy solar project being proposed on active, fertile, prime farmland in the Town of Newark Valley. The County

Planning Board has reviewed this project twice, about a year apart, and recommended unanimously both times Disapproval of the Site Plan Review and Solar Energy Special Use Permit because of its location in the 100-year floodplain with no safety shut off mechanisms in place, and because it is an area designated as high priority protection agricultural land in Tioga County's Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan of 2015. Last year during the first round of approvals, the Town of Newark Valley Board did not vote on it. During the following year, TJA Clean Energy proposed an agrivoltaics (sheep grazing) and honeybee apiary. As stated above the County Planning Board again recommended disapproval of the proposal. This forces the Town of Newark Valley Board to achieve a supermajority vote to override the County Planning Board recommendation of disapproval. TJA Clean Energy has attended recent Town of Newark Valley Board meetings in order for the Town Board to vote. T. Lawton stated he attended the October 3 Town Board meeting, and the Town Board scheduled to vote on this project at their November 7 meeting. P. Moore stated that the property owner now has told the Newark Valley community that if he doesn't get approval for this solar project, he will never let the land be farmed on again. T. Lawton asked if this property was included in the NYS Agricultural Districts Program. E. Jardine checked on the subject parcel in GIS, and it is not in the Ag Districts Program.

The Board discussed the possibility of providing the Newark Valley Town Board with something that states they are not in favor of this solar project proposal to be located on the subject property. E. Jardine stated that she would like this position to be stated in writing, in the form of a resolution. She will write the resolution, if the Board approves it, and arrange for it to be signed by Tim Lawton, Board Chair, next week. Then she will email it to Stu Yetter, Town of Newark Valley Supervisor.

Motion to approve Resolution #3-2023 to create a position statement of Not in Favor of the TJA Clean Energy solar project proposed in the Town of Newark Valley: B. Roberts, 2nd P. Moore, Carried

VIII. Motion to adjourn the meeting: B. Neal, 2nd B. Roberts, Carried. The meeting adjourned at 11:04 AM.

Respectfully submitted,
Elaine Jardine
Tioga County Economic Development and Planning