

MEETING MINUTES

GENESEE COUNTY AGRICULTURAL AND FARMLAND PROTECTION BOARD

Tuesday, October 15, 2024

A meeting of the Genesee County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board was held on Tuesday, October 15, 2024 at 11:00 AM in the Small Conference Room of Genesee County Building 2 at 3837 W. Main Street Rd. in Batavia.

Members in attendance: Donn Branton, Christian Yunker, LuAnne McKenzie, Janette Veazey-Post, Dennis Phelps, and Felipe Oltramari. Also in attendance were Jimmy Dealaman of the Genesee County Planning Dept., Matt Halladay and Taylor Wilkie from the Genesee Valley Conservancy (GVC), and Tim Welch of the Genesee County Soil and Water Conservation District office.

The meeting was called to order at 11:10 AM.

1. Approval of Minutes

A Motion for approval of the minutes of the March 21, 2024 meeting was made by Ms. McKenzie, seconded by Mr. Oltramari, and carried.

2. Pre-Application Review for NYS Farmland Protection Impl. Grants (FPIG) 2024

Mr. Halladay provided an overview about the NYS Farmland Protection Implementation Grants (FPIG) process and explained that Genesee Valley Conservancy (GVC) runs the program in partnership with the County's Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board. Lands that successfully go through the program receive a farmland protection grant and will have a conservation easement placed upon the property to ensure it remains available for farmers/agricultural uses. He explained that the competitive scoring process helps remove bias from the review process so feedback provided by the Board is valuable in making a final determination. He summarized the 2024 results of the scores provided by the Board and described that overall there was consensus on which applicants received better scores. He clarified that once the scores were totaled the applicants were ranked low to high (1-4) with lower being the higher scored applications. The results were as follows:

- 1) Page Farms; 2) Barniak Farms; 3) McPherson Orchards, and; 4) Adams Farm

Ms. McKenzie asked if age of operator should be considered when scoring applications given that some properties may be more vulnerable to being sold and developed. Mr. Halladay stated that one of the current scoring criterion asks about the applicant's plan

for succession. He encouraged the Board to review the application scoring criteria in the upcoming spring to continue to improve the process each year. Mr. Yunker encouraged that the Board's scoring process should be consistent for reviewing applications under different land trusts.

Mr. Oltramari asked if there are still ongoing conversations with the State about creating a round of funding specifically for our region given the amount of need present. Mr. Halladay said GVC has lobbied with American Farmland Trust and has plans to have a 'Farm Advocacy Day' with the Finger Lakes and Genesee Land Trust and in advance of the State passing their budget.

Mr. Halladay asked that if the Board agreed with the ranked list of 2024 FPIG applicants based on the scores provided, to vote on accepting the ranked list as presented. In a future meeting, the Board would then need to provide a resolution based on the accepted ranked list that will be used when submitting the grant funding applications. Mr. Halladay explained that GVC still needs to obtain a letter of support from the local municipality, and a Planning Board development pressure letter from the County that will need to be first reviewed by the GVC Board.

Mr. Phelps asked what the dollar amount is per acre. Mr. Halladay responded that GVC still needs to conduct an appraisal, but it is usually between \$1,000 - \$3,000 per acre.

Mr. Dealaman asked if the conservation easement prevents future solar development. Mr. Halladay responded that the State ruled solar is not a farm product or commodity that would count as agriculture; however, property owners are still permitted to install a limited amount of accessory solar panels per acre.

Mr. Oltramari asked Mr. Halladay how the Board should proceed in voting on the pre-applications. Mr. Halladay responded that the group could vote on adopting the list as ranked, and later GVC would obtain a resolution from the Board as documentation. Ms. McKenzie asked if there is a possibility of putting all four applicants through the program. Mr. Halladay responded that based on past years of available funding there is a decent chance that all four could get funded, but the ranked list provides a frame work for which applicants are recommended to receive funding first.

A motion was made by Ms. McKenzie to recommend that the Board adopt the list as ranked. Seconded by Mr. Oltramari and carried 6-0.

2. Other Business

a. Solar Farm Project Updates

Mr. Oltramari shared that solar farm development has not been as prominent this year as it was in past years. There was one project reviewed in April that is located on Wortendyke Rd. between Rose and Pike Road in the Town of Batavia (Parcel 17.-1-17). The property is within the Agricultural District 1, so the Planning Board recommended that the project go through the Notice of Intent process so when and if the project proceeds it would be reviewed by the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board.

b. Water/Sewer District Formation

Mr. Oltramari summarized that the County received a Notice of Intent for sanitary sewer (NYS Rt. 77) upgrades in Darien. Staff received this determination and forwarded to the Board. He explained that the determination was that the Department of Agriculture and Markets recommendations be followed and the project should have no impact.

Mr. Oltramari shared that the County was notified of the Town of Stafford's intent to install new water service infrastructure throughout the town (Districts Nos. 14 and 15). The County subsequently corresponded with town engineers explaining that the County water system does not have the infrastructure yet in place to provide the capacity to serve the expansion. In the meantime, the town will still pursue its NEPA application because the eventual project will be federally funded.

Mr. Oltramari shared that the Town of Byron will be decommissioning the South Byron wastewater treatment system. The Town plans to run a force main from South Byron to Byron connecting the two hamlets.

3. Next meeting

The next meeting of the Board is scheduled for December 17, 2024 at 11:00 AM.

4. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made Ms. McKenzie, seconded by Mr. Oltramari. Meeting adjourned at 11:35 AM.