

**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
GENESEE COUNTY LEGISLATURE
WEDNESDAY, MAY 11, 2022 AT 6:00 PM
OLD COURT HOUSE, 7 MAIN ST. BATAVIA, NY**

The Genesee County Legislature held a Committee of the Whole on Wednesday, May 11, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. Legislature Chair Stein called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

In attendance: Legislator's Stein, Clattenburg, Maha, Torrey, Klotzbach, Yunker, Deleo, Dibble, Hawley. County Manager Matt Landers, Assistant County Manager Tammi Ferringer, Elba Town Supervisor Donna Hynes via Zoom, Chair of Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board Donn Branton, also owner of Branton Farms in Stafford, NY, Director of County Planning Felipe Oltramari, GCEDC CEO Steve Hyde, Legislature Clerk Lisa Casey, County Attorney James Wujcik

Approval of the minutes for the March 30, 2022 Committee of the Whole was motioned by Legislator Dibble and seconded by Legislator Deleo.

The meeting was called to understand conservation easement opportunities that have become available to Genesee County. Legislator Stein mentioned the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan from 2001. Legislator Stein, also an officer of Stein Farms had recused herself of any decision making regarding conservation easements.

Director of Planning Felipe Oltramari was called to discuss the opportunities of the conservation easements, the agreement of contract for services between the County and Genesee Valley Conservancy. Farms in the County are under intense development and economic pressure and conservation opportunities to protect farmland are being lost. The County is agricultural and Farmland Projection Board recognizes the importance of implementing an effective farmland protection program to amass a critical acreage of farmland to maintain an adequate agricultural land base in the County. Solar projects were discussed. Maps were provided with further discussion on the Farmland Protection Program Current Projects and Funding Regions Map and the Genesee County Commercial Solar Projects.

Mr. Branton discussed his concerns on conservation easement programs and solar projects. How will it affect tax rolls? Donn is in full support of conservation easements but not in support of solar projects. He has received propositions for solar farms by out-of-state companies that have no dealings with this area. Another concern is recycling batteries/blades – Are these companies putting the cart in front of the horse?

President of Genesee County Economic Development Steve Hyde mentioned that solar/conservation easements is not his expertise. He supports renewable energy which solar farms play a part in. Conservation easements should remain as land use decision which stays with local municipalities. This comes down to landowners to make the decisions, with strategic mechanisms to protect the land use. There are towns out there that don't like the solar projects. Discussed the "forever element" of these solar farms.

County Manager Matt Landers in full support of conservation easements. Legislator Stein ended with this this offers opportunities for choice that wasn't available to this County prior and looking to a balance of our land use in the County which offers another avenue.

At 7:10 p.m. the meeting adjourned upon motion of Legislator Maha seconded by Legislator Clattenburg, carried.

Rochelle M. Stein

Submitted for Approval 6-15-22