

MINUTES

GENESEE COUNTY AGRICULTURAL AND FARMLAND PROTECTION BOARD

Tuesday, March 14, 2023

A meeting of the Genesee County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board was held on Tuesday, March 14, 2023 at 10:00 AM in the IT Training Room of Genesee County Building 2 at 3837 W. Main Street Rd. in the Town of Batavia.

Members in attendance: Christian Yunker, Jan Beglinger, Kevin Andrews, Dennis Phelps, Donn Branton, and Felipe Oltramari. Staff present was: Erin Pence. Attending via Zoom Cloud Meetings was Matt Halladay from the Genesee Valley Conservancy and Rachel Chrostowski from the WNY Land Conservancy.

The meeting was called to order at 10:01 AM.

Approval of Minutes

A Motion to APPROVE the minutes of the October 24, 2022 meeting was made by Christian Yunker, seconded by Dennis Phelps, and carried.

Farmland Protection Projects

Copies of the Stein Farms project map were passed out to board members, and Matt Halladay spoke about Stein Farms protection project and explained the strategy of the different farmstead areas and the right for future farmstead area. Of the three farms that Matt is working with, Stein Farms is furthest along in the process; Cottonwood Farm and Har-Go Farm are at the stage of starting a preliminary site plan and the beginning of the appraisal process. Matt shared his screen to show general areas of Cottonwood Farm and Har-Go farm. Matt requested for letters of support from the board for the three projects presented.

Rachel Chrostowski showed a map of Tiede Farm and discussed the plans for its application. She requested a letter of support for the Tiede Farm project.

Dennis Phelps asked if the value of land per acre changes over time. Matt Halladay replied that this depends on sales. There were questions about the appraised development value and how the payments were determined; Rachel explained that the grant itself pays the landowner and that there are different levels to apply for, but generally 87.5% of the development value is approved, and the remaining 12.5% is considered a donation by the landowner.

Christian Yunker asked about solar panels and if solar development is considered by appraisers when determining land value. Matt replied that it is not yet the case, as such solar development is relatively new, but once more projects are on the grid, such information can be used, but that is likely 2-3 year out.

Christian Yunker made a motion to provide letters of support for the four projects presented to the board by Matt Halladay and Rachel Chrostowski, seconded by Jan Beglinger, and carried.

Donn Branton mentioned that he had talked with Amanda Grisa from the Genesee Land Trust regarding Protection Projects on his own land. There was a discussion of the three organizations: Genesee Land Trust (GLT), Genesee Valley Conservancy (GVC), and WNY Land Conservancy (WNYLC); and how their geographic areas of interest overlap in Genesee County. The Board agreed that Amanda Grisa should be invited to the Farmland Protection Workshop to be planned. Donn asked if the same funding currently provided to GVC and WNYLC could also be provided to the Genesee Land Trust. Felipe mentioned that this agreement could be possible under the same type of agreement the County Legislature made with the other organizations.

Matt and Rachel mentioned that they would attend future Board meetings to update the board on the status of the projects.

Farmland Protection Workshop

Matt Halladay described what is usually discussed at Farmland Protection Workshops and that they were hoping to schedule one in late April in Genesee County to provide information to farmers regarding farmland protection and funding opportunities and to answer any questions. He mentioned that he would coordinate with Rachel and Amanda Grisa on the date so that all three organizations would be represented.

Agricultural District 1 Review Report

Erin Pence presented a report of the recently completed 2023 Review of Agricultural District 1 to the Board. She reported that 1,911 parcels were enrolled in the District after the review, and those parcels totaled 68,214 acres in area. This total is a net change of -2% from the 2015 review. The response rate for surveys to landowners in Agricultural District 1 was 49.5% in 2023, an increase over the return rate in 2015, which was 40%.

Donn Branton made a motion to recommend to the Legislature of Genesee County to renew Agricultural District No. 1 for another 8 years with the modifications presented, seconded by Kevin Andrews, and carried.

Other Business

The board discussed that there is an opening on the board, preferably for a farmer. Board members were consider potential names and send along any likely candidates.

Meeting adjourned at 11:10 AM.