



# Cattaraugus County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board

## AGRICULTURAL & FARMLAND PROTECTION BOARD MEETING

County Center, Little Valley, NY

December 12, 2019

### **Board Members**

David L. Zilker  
**Chairman**

Barbara D. George  
**Vice Chairman**

Crystal J. Abers

David Koch

Charles W. Couture

Brian Davis

James Finch

Daniel T. Martonis

Donald Telaak

Richard Rivers

Brian Andrews

**Ag Board Members Present:** David Zilker, Chairman  
Charles Couture  
Richard Rivers  
Barbara George  
Brian Davis  
Donald Telaak  
Crystal Abers  
James Finch

**Ag Board Members Absent:** Daniel Martonis  
Brian Andrews  
David Koch

**Planning Staff Present:** Marie Myers Shearing, Planner  
Pat McGlew, Development Specialist  
Danna Scharf, Keyboard Specialist

**Guests:** Phil Gottwals  
Kim LaMendola  
Rhonda Lindquist  
Robert Keis  
Nathan Blesy  
Jim Brennan  
Stephanie Beneng

Chairman Zilker called the meeting to order at 1:07 PM

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Charles Couture moved with a second from Barbara George to approve the April 2, 2019 minutes. Motion was carried.



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## **Presentation by Phil Gottwals, Update and Progress Report: Cattaraugus County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan**

Phil started his presentation by stating that there have been 3 rounds of in-county interviews. To-date, 42 individuals have been interviewed, with two more scheduled on this visit to Cattaraugus County. The final number of interviews is expected to be around 50. The concerns expressed by interviewees have been very consistent; low numbers of new and beginning farmers entering agriculture was frequently stated as troubling, as was the high real estate taxation rate. The Agricultural Community surveys came back with 45 general public and 16 farm business responses. The top 3 key issues for Farmers are:

- Rising taxes
- Little political advocacy for farming
- Prices paid for farm products being low while the cost of production is high.

Additionally, road built infrastructure and conditions are a concern.

The progress of Economic Trends key issues were: Economic Restructuring, Aging Population, Poverty, Food Access, and Agricultural Highlights. Farm net income is very low after operating expenses are removed. Jim Brennan made note that young farmers starting out have no concept of the total costs to run a farm. The Board agreed that programs to educate new and beginning farmers are much needed.

Research by ACDS identified the following land use issues: Taxing authorities have become dependent on agriculture lands for generating revenue (which is already heavily taxed), decline in forestry and agricultural production impacting tax revenue, inconsistent valuations, and declining population. There's also limited land with high-quality soils; 210 farmers reported draining 17,040 acres. Owned farmland has decreased while rented has gone up 13% since 2002. Renting farmland is growing because of the nutrient management strategies for CAFO's. 18 out of 32 towns have comprehensive plans and zoning plans.

Proposed plan recommendations include:

- Provide an annual training for town officials which would increase their knowledge of general land use and improve their understanding of specific farmland protection strategies.
- Improving road planning for future construction to accommodate an agriculture economy, such as wider shoulders and deeper ditches to carry runoff.

Additional plan recommendations are forthcoming and will be discussed at the next meeting.

A training meeting for Town officials was discussed. The purpose of such training is to better inform Towns of agricultural issues and how Town activities can be supportive or non-supportive of agriculture in the county. Such an event would lead to greater acceptance of the Ag Plan Update when it is released. After further discussion, a Town training date was proposed for March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

Barbara motioned to hold the training. Charles Couture seconded the motion. Motion was voted upon and carried.

## **2020 Annual 30 Day Notice Period; Agricultural District Parcel Inclusion**

The proposed 30 Day Notice for New Agricultural District Parcel Inclusion was offered for discussion.

Brian Davis moved to approve the proposed 30 day notice, which was seconded by Barbara George. Motion was voted upon and carried.

## **AGENCY UPDATES**

### **Farm Bureau**

Nathan indicated that a major concern of the recent farm and labor bill that's passed was the new wage changes, effective on January, 1<sup>st</sup>. He believes the farm community is not well informed of these changes and will likely end up paying penalties for non-compliance.

### **Cooperative Extension**

Cornell Cooperative Extension had their annual meeting December 9, 2019. Catharine Young was the guest speaker. Dick brought up the idea of the Cattaraugus County AFPB traveling to Geneva to visit with Young, suggesting there is a lot that could be learned from such a trip, given the projects underway and ongoing agricultural research. Cornell Coop Ext has hired its 4<sup>th</sup> and final multi-county specialist, making their 5 county shared team now complete. The areas of expertise of these 4 specialists are: dairy, livestock, field and crops, and business management.

### **Soil and Water**

Brian stated that they're working on wrapping up a lot of their projects from the year.

### **Southern Tier West**

Kim gave the update for STW and said they discussed a wide variety of topics at their last meeting. She encouraged members of the AFPB to participate in the Food Policy Council for Cattaraugus County.

## **OPEN FORUM**

No further issues for discussion.

## **NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting has been scheduled for January 16, 2020 at 1:00 pm at the County Center in Little Valley.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Chuck Couture called the meeting to close at 3:06 pm

