



ERIE COUNTY AGRICULTURAL & FARMLAND PROTECTION BOARD  
MEETING MINUTES  
January 23, 2020  
6:00 PM  
1999 Alvin Road, Grand Island NY 14072

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Board Members in Attendance: Brett Kreher, Bryant Zilke, Diane Held, Len Janiga, Rachel Chrostowski, Nancy Snyder

Guests in Attendance: Tom Thompson, Wendy Salvati, Sheila Daminski, Jim Sharpe, Chris Beyer

Staff in Attendance: Sarah Gatti  
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1. *Consideration of the December 10, 2019 meeting minutes*

Bryant Zilke made a motion for **APPROVAL**, seconded by Rachel Chrostowski and carried by all voting members.

2. *Election of Officers of 2020*

Len Janiga made a motion to **ELECT** Brett Kreher as Chairperson of the Erie County Agricultural and Protection Board (AFPB); seconded by Diane Held and carried by all voting members (Brett Kreher and Bryant Zilke abstaining).

Len Janiga made a motion to **ELECT** Bryant Zilke as Vice-Chairperson of the Erie County Agricultural and Protection Board (AFPB); seconded by Diane Held and carried by all voting members (Brett Kreher and Bryant Zilke abstaining).

3. *Meeting Calendar for 2020*

Ms. Gatti proposed three quarterly meetings to be held in May, August, and October 2020. The Board was in agreement and Ms. Gatti stated she would pursue reserving the meeting space.

4. *Grand Island Draft Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan Review (Vote)*

Members of the Grand Island Farmland Protection Committee (GIFPC) and Wendy Salvati of WWS Planning were in attendance to discuss the Grand Island Draft Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan. Ms. Salvati addressed the AFPB's concerns in detail. Mr. Sharpe, Ms. Daminski, and Mr. Thompson also contributed to the discussion.

Issue: The Town may wish to consider revising the name of the document to the Town of Grand Island Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan. The current title may be confusing to future users and may prove restrictive when applying for state and federal funding.

- Discussion: The GIFPC and Ms. Salvati named the document upon the advice of the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYSDAM). NYSDAM is informed of, and approves of, the document title.
- Action: Ms. Salvati will add clarity to the Plan, explaining it is intended to be an Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan.
- Issue: Large-scale solar energy systems, and the potential threat they pose to agricultural lands, are not thoroughly addressed in the Draft Guide.
- Discussion: Mr. Sharpe explained the GIFPC had considered this issue during the planning process, citing limited substation capacity as an impediment to large-scale solar development on Grand Island. There are proposed solar farms on Grand Island and once they are constructed the substations will be at capacity, thereby reducing pressure on agricultural lands.
- Action: Upon advice from NYSDAM, the Town will consider zoning amendments prohibiting solar farms on soil groups 1-4. These zoning amendments are budgeted for and will be undertaken in 2020.
- Issue: The Draft Guide should make clear that non-commercial hobby farms may not be subject to the protections offered by the New York State (NYS) Agricultural District program. The Draft Guide can promote these smaller-scale ventures while still making clear they are distinct from large-scale commercial farm operations.
- Discussion: Ms. Daminski explained that the abundant mention of non-commercial/hobby/small-scale farms was intentional and designed to lay the groundwork for future zoning amendments. These amendments have been budgeted for in 2020 and will advance farm-friendliness on Grand Island.
- Action: No action is required.
- Issue: The Draft Guide discusses conservation easements in brief, but most of this information is unclear and can be perceived as negative. The Draft Guide states that if development pressure increases in the Town, conservation easements should be considered. It may be wise to proactively pursue conservation easements rather than wait until there is heightened development pressure. The Western New York Land Conservancy (WNYLC) should be identified on page V-12 as a partner in the use of conservation easements and purchase of development rights programs.
- Discussion: The GIFPC sought clarity on this comment. It was explained that the Draft Guide's stance on conservation easements seemed to say, "these are so complicated, let's not even try".
- Action: Ms. Salvati indicated the GIFPC would review the language and tone on conservation easements and would add the WNYLC as a resource. Ms. Chrostowski stated she would be willing to provide assistance to the Town on this issue.
- Issue: The Draft Guide may lack the necessary information to be successfully leveraged for farmland protection grant opportunities.
- Discussion: Ms. Gatti indicated this issue had been clarified through the night's previous discourse. The Board agreed.

Issue: The Draft Guide is helpful as a resource guide but lacks clear direction in regard to the protection of farmland, and does not adequately address ongoing agricultural issues the Town of Grand Island has recently experienced.

Discussion: Ms. Gatti indicated this issue had been clarified through the night's previous discourse. The Board agreed.

Issue: Some of the data used in the Draft Guide is outdated and should be updated where possible.

Discussion: Ms. Salvati questioned what data was outdated. Ms. Gatti and Ms. Chrostowski stated the land use data is from 2017.

Action: Ms. Gatti will pursue getting updated information and forward it to Ms. Salvati.

Issue: The Draft Guide should include a discussion on the cost of community services and the potential taxpayer benefits associated with farmland.

Discussion: Ms. Salvati was in agreement.

Action: The Plan will be revised to include a discussion on the cost of community services.

Brett Kreher made a motion to **CONDITIONALLY APPROVE** the *Grand Island Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan*, contingent upon amendments as discussed; seconded by Len Janiga and carried by all voting members.

#### 5. *Erie Grown Logo*

Ms. Gatti presented the revised Erie Grown logo.

#### 6. *Western New York Land Conservancy: Letter of Support*

Ms. Chrostowski indicated the letter of support was no longer needed.

#### 7. *Correspondence: Town of Sardinia Zoning Ordinance Amendment – Lead Agency Request*

Ms. Gatti explained she had received a lead agency request for the Town of Sardinia's zoning ordinance amendment. The amendment includes language relative to siting large-scale solar energy systems on agricultural lands. Ms. Gatti asked the AFPB to submit comments to her no later than February 10<sup>th</sup> and she would synthesize and forward their comments to the appropriate party.

#### 8. *New Business*

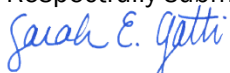
Chairperson Kreher shared a notice from NYSDAM regarding a 305-a review ongoing on Grand Island. The subject parcel is located at 2413 Staley Road (SBL 36.00-2-34). No action is required at this time.

#### 9. *Next Meeting*

The next meeting date is to be determined.

**The meeting was adjourned at 7:50 pm.**

Respectfully submitted,



Sarah E. Gatti