



ERIE COUNTY AGRICULTURAL & FARMLAND PROTECTION BOARD MEETING MINUTES

October 17, 2024 | 6:00 PM

Roycroft Power House | 39 South Grove Street | East Aurora, NY 14052

Board Members in Attendance: Brett Kreher, Bryant Zilke, Rachel Chrostowski, Diane Held, Dan Henry, Dan Castle

Board Members Excused: Scott Bylewski, Len Janiga, Mark Gaston

Staff in Attendance: Sarah Gatti

Guests in Attendance: Barbara Johnston

1. **Consideration of the August 2024 Meeting Minutes**

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

2. **Nomination of Officers for 2025**

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

Sarah Gatti advised that elections would occur at the January meeting.

3. **Approval of Meeting Calendar**

Ms. Gatti proposed four quarterly meetings to be held in January, May, August, and October 2025. The meeting location is yet to be finalized. Options include the Roycroft Power House, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Erie County, or Kenneglenn. Ms. Gatti will send calendar invites following approval of the meeting calendar.

Rachel Chrostowski made a motion to **APPROVE** the 2025 meeting calendar, seconded by Mr. Zilke and carried by all voting members.

4. Department of Environment and Planning Updates

a) November Storm/Tornado Fund

Commissioner Castle provided an update noting that there was about \$400,000 remaining and the Fund has been expanded to include damages to farms sustained during the July 2024 tornadoes.

b) Municipal Planning Grants

Commissioner Castle provided an update noting that the Town of Newstead received funding to prepare their first Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan.

c) Sky Lanterns

Ms. Gatti informed the Board that Legislator Mills expressed support for introducing legislation banning sky lanterns in Erie County. The Department of Environment and Planning (DEP) will work to draft this legislation.

d) Agricultural Districts 303b Public Comment and Discussion

Ms. Gatti stated that the AFPB is an advisory board on agricultural issues to the County Legislature. In this capacity, the AFPB provides a recommendation to the County Legislature on agricultural districts pursuant to Agriculture and Markets Law Sections 303b. The Legislature is the body who votes to modify, continue, and/or consolidate agricultural districts. The County Legislature's public hearing is the agricultural district law's forum to provide public input to the County Legislature on this issue. Each applicant or member of the public will have the opportunity to provide comments at the public hearing, which will be held on October 30 at 2pm at Old County Hall.

Following the public hearing, the County Legislature will examine all the information provided, including the public comments provided at the public hearings and will formally vote on the proposed actions. The resolution is then sent to the Commissioner of Agriculture and Markets in Albany, who makes the final determination.

No members of the public attended the AFPB meeting and there was no public comment given.

Regarding the Open Enrollment period, Ms. Gatti provided a brief overview of each modification request, followed by a Board vote on each application.

- Application #1: The Board voted to **INCLUDE** SBL #12.00-2-1.1 and **NOT INCLUDE** the other parcels included on the application.
- Application #2: The Board voted to **INCLUDE** these parcels.
- Application #3: The Board voted to **INCLUDE** this parcel.
- Application #4: The Board voted to **INCLUDE** this parcel.
- Application #5: The Board voted to **INCLUDE** this parcel.
- Application #6: The Board voted to **INCLUDE** these parcels.

- Application #7: The Board voted to **INCLUDE** this parcel.
- Application #8: The Board voted to **INCLUDE** this parcel.

A detailed voting record is included as Appendix A of these minutes.

7. **Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan**

a) **Review maps**

Barbara Johnston of LaBella provided an overview of the active farmland by soil category, parcel rating, and cluster analysis maps.

Regarding the parcel rankings, the Board felt that the methodology should better support smaller agricultural parcels with good soils and that the ranking should be percent-based, rather than based on numerical values. Ms. Gatti and Ms. Chrostowski recommended that Ms. Johnston consider the Amherst Open Space and Prioritization Plan ranking criteria for this map and that framework was shared with her. Other outcomes include revising the map legend to include intuitive language that makes sense to those reading it, and reconfiguring the data ranges to maximize those parcels prioritized for protection.

Regarding the cluster analysis map, Ms. Johnston explained that the clusters have changed since 2012 because mapping technology has improved and because the criteria for what constitutes an agricultural parcel has been expanded. The Board was supportive of the updated clusters, but noted some areas of active farmland were not on the map. Mr. Henry indicated the missing areas on a map. These areas will be added to the map.

Ms. Johnston noted a map of protected and conserved land is pending.

b) **Discuss how best to portray development pressure**

Ms. Johnston explained the current ideas for ranking development pressure, including water/sewer expansion and proximity to energy transmission lines. A map will be prepared and will be discussed at a future meeting.

c) **Review and discuss input from Farmer Focus Group meetings**

A summary handout was distributed.

d) **Status of farmer/ stakeholder interviews**

Ms. Johnston provided an update, noting the gaps. Board members were asked to provide contact information for those that have not yet been interviewed. Commissioner Castle requested that Tim Bigham of the Erie County Farm Bureau be interviewed.

e) **Confirm focus areas for Plan / Vision & Goals**

Ms. Johnston stated the focus areas of the Plan, seeking comment from the Board. The Board agreed with the focus areas. Regarding goals, Commissioner Castle requested the goals be manageable and within the County's jurisdiction to implement.

f) Next steps/ Schedule

Ms. Johnston stated that LaBella hopes to have a draft Plan ahead of the January Board meeting.

8. Other Business

Ms. Chrostowski informed the Board that the Gerhardt conservation easement project is moving forward.

Ms. Chrostowski inquired whether Erie County would be interested in funding a portion of the grant-writing work undertaken by the Western New York Land Conservancy as part of their farmland protection work, noting that Genesee and Monroe County have entered into such agreements with the Conservancy. Commissioner Castle requested copies of those agreements.

Ms. Held stated she had received a call from a concerned resident regarding the Knoll Road solar project. The resident cited ecological concerns related to wildlife. Ms. Held inquired if the Board or DEP could provide any assistance. Ms. Gatti stated that once the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets determines the application complete, the Board is ready to reply but cannot act prior to that.

9. Adjournment

Mr. Zilke made a motion to **ADJOURN** at 7:47PM, seconded by Mr. Henry, and carried by all voting members.

APPENDIX A

DRAFT

#	PARCEL(S)	ACRES	APPLICANT ADDRESS	TOWN	APPLICANT	DISTRICT	BYLEWSKI	CASTLE	CHROSTOWSKI	GASTON	GILMOUR	HELD	HENRY	JANIGA	KREHER	POZANTIDES	ZILKE	INCLUDE	DO NOT INCLUDE
1	12.00-2-1.1	40	0 East River Road	Grand Island	Robert & Christie Harper Trust	North #1	E	M	Y	E	E	Y	S	E	Y	A	Y	X	
1	12.15-2-34.2	2	4928 East River Road	Grand Island	Robert & Christie Harper Trust	North #1	E	M	Y	E	E	Y	S	E	Y	A	Y		X
1	12.15-2-33.11	2	0 East River Road	Grand Island	Robert & Christie Harper Trust	North #1	E	M	Y	E	E	Y	S	E	Y	A	Y		X
1	12.15-2-32.1	2	4916 East River Road	Grand Island	Robert & Christie Harper Trust	North #1	E	M	Y	E	E	Y	S	E	Y	A	Y		X
1	12.15-2-16.1	1	0 East River Road	Grand Island	Robert & Christie Harper Trust	North #1	E	M	Y	E	E	Y	S	E	Y	A	Y		X
2	226.02-5-43	10.9	7992 Boston State Road	Boston	Katie Reding	Southeast #15	E	Y	S	E	E	Y	Y	E	Y	A	M	X	
2	226.02-5-40	15.3	0 Boston State Road	Boston	Katie Reding	Southeast #15	E	Y	S	E	E	Y	Y	E	Y	A	M	X	
3	335.14-2-12	9	359 West Main Street	Springville	Brett J. Landsman	Southeast #15	E	Y	Y	E	E	Y	S	E	Y	A	M	X	
4	239.00-2-1.2	3.5	8620 Sisson Highway	Eden	Daniel Gelfond	Southwest #8	E	Y	Y	E	E	S	Y	E	Y	A	M	X	
5	245.00-2-6.2	20	10861 Partridge Road	Colden	John Riley	Southeast #15	E	Y	S	E	E	Y	Y	E	Y	A	M	X	
6	214.00-1-37.3	19	Boies Road	Colden	Mark Stoehr	Southeast #15	E	Y	M	E	E	Y	Y	E	Y	A	S	X	

M = MOTION

S= SECOND

Y = YEA

N = NAY

E = EXCUSED

A = ABSENT

#	PARCEL(S)	ACRES	APPLICANT ADDRESS	TOWN	APPLICANT	DISTRICT	BYLEWSKI	CASTLE	CHROSTOWSKI	GASTON	GILMOUR	HELD	HENRY	JANIGA	KREHER	POZANTIDES	ZILKE	INCLUDE	DO NOT INCLUDE
6	214.00-1-38	8.1	7285 Boies Road	Colden	Mark Stoehr	Southeast #15	E	Y	M	E	E	Y	Y	E	Y	A	S	X	
6	214.00-1-41	8.3	Boies Road	Colden	Mark Stoehr	Southeast #15	E	Y	M	E	E	Y	Y	E	Y	A	S	X	
6	214.00-1-13.3	5.3	Center Street	Colden	Mark Stoehr	Southeast #15	E	Y	M	E	E	Y	Y	E	Y	A	S	X	
6	214.00-2-9.121	18.2	Darien Road	Colden	Mark Stoehr	Southeast #15	E	Y	M	E	E	Y	Y	E	Y	A	S	X	
7	194.00-5-9	11.9	2772 South Creek Road	Hamburg	Wendy A. Good	Southwest #8	E	Y	S	E	E	Y	Y	E	Y	A	M	X	
8	266.18-1-2	11.8	10455 Erie Road	Farnham	Rose and Charles Berns	Southwest #8	E	Y	Y	E	E	S	Y	E	Y	A	M	X	

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