

Chautauqua County Ag & Farmland Protection Board Meeting
April 02, 2007 - Gerace Office Building, Room 331 - Mayville, NY

Special meeting, called by Chairman Steve Baran, to discuss a response to NYS Ag and Markets request on the proposed extension of a water line along State Route 5 between Pratt Road and Pecor Street in the Town of Portland for a distance of approximately 23,000 linear feet or 4.35 miles. Proposed project would be located within portions of Agricultural District #3.

Also to discuss the Jan. 2007 release & possible impacts of the annual agricultural assessment values on farmers and landowners.

Members Present: Steve Baran, Chairman, Brian Aldrich, David Munsee, Dennis Rak, Bill Morrill (Real Property Tax), and Doug Jacobs (County Planning).

Meeting was called to order at 4:05 PM by Chairman Steve Baran.

The minutes from the February 06, 2007 were reviewed by members. No corrections were noted. Brian Aldrich made a motion to approve the minutes as submitted. Motion seconded by Dennis Rak. The minutes were unanimously approved.

Chairman Steve Baran briefly discussed a letter received from NYS Ag and Markets regarding the proposed demolition of the existing Johnson Adult Home on State Route 20 in the Town of Pomfret. It will be replaced by a proposed 24 unit facility on the same 2.2 acre property. The property is within Ag District #9 but should have no impacts on neighboring or nearby agricultural lands. No action or comments by the AFPB are necessary at this time.

Steve mentioned that one of the purposes of today's meeting was to discuss the board's response to a request for comments on a Notice of Intent (NOI) from Ag and Markets. The NOI is in regards to the proposed extension of a water line along State Route 5, between Pratt Road and Pecor Street, in the Town of Portland for an approximate distance of 4.35 miles. All of the water main construction will occur within the highway right-of-way and should have no detrimental effects on farming operations or lands within the vicinity of the installation. The proposed project will address concerns about private water wells that are high in sulfur content or may have contamination concerns. This project will offer property owners access to a public water source. A motion was made by Dennis Rak that the board drafts a letter to NYS Ag and Markets indicating our support of the project and that no negative effects on local farm operations are anticipated. The motion was seconded by Brian Aldrich and unanimously approved. Chairman Steve Baran will compose the letter and forward to County Planning staff for distribution as necessary.

Additional discussion took place regarding the 2007 Annual Agricultural Assessment Values released by NYS Real Property Tax Services (ORPS) in January. David Munsee briefly discussed the agricultural assessment program which is a part of the NYS Agricultural Districts Law (Article 25-AA). The law states that property owners who are either inside or outside of an agricultural district are eligible to apply for an annual Ag assessment if specified criteria are met. David noted that the 2007 agricultural assessment values are up 34% this year. Based on the new values, David noted that some soil types within the county would have an assessment value as high as \$610 per acre. He also stated that Cattaraugus County was holding a public forum in regards to this matter on April 10th and that he was

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planning on attending that informational meeting. It was suggested he respond back to AFPB members regarding the meeting's content, attendance and public interest.

Additionally, David suggested that possibly a similar public forum could be held in Chautauqua County regarding the 2007 agricultural assessment value increases. He also suggested that Dave Wilson from Soil and Water Conservation may assist with this type of informational meeting which could possibly take place at the Frank Bratt Agricultural Center on Turner Road. There were some concerns expressed about who would cover the costs of advertising and holding a public forum. Discussions took place about how and why to make farmers and landowners in the county aware of the increased agricultural assessment values. Possibly information could be distributed via newsletters, news articles or e-mail. It was suggested that additional ideas should be explored as how to best inform county farmers, residents, and property owners regarding this issue.

Bill Morrill, Director of Real Property Tax Services, commented that the increased assessment values should not have a significant effect on agricultural properties or farmland rental properties within the county. More pressures would probably be felt in areas closer to suburban areas and development expansion areas. He also noted that this year's increased values were due to the method established for calculating agricultural assessment values. The new assessment values are based on the average of the previous eight year annual values. In the 2007 calculations, the oldest year, which had a very low assessment value, was removed from the eight year data and the newest year, containing a very high assessment value, was added. Thus creating a much higher percentage increase than is usually expected.

Bill also commented that the state's available farmer's school income tax credit does not seem to be very well utilized by farmers in our county. Possibly sharing more information about this tax credit initiative may offer some tax relief to farmers and offset some of the increased costs that may be associated with the new agricultural assessment values.

Meeting adjourned by the chairman at 4:35 PM. Next meeting will be scheduled as needed.

Respectfully Submitted,

Doug Jacobs
County Planning Department

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