

STEBEN COUNTY AGRICULTURE, INDUSTRY & PLANNING COMMITTEE

Wednesday, May 1, 2019

9:35 a.m.

Legislative Committee Room
Steuben County Office Building
Bath, New York

****MINUTES****

COMMITTEE: Robin K. Lattimer, Chair K. Michael Hanna, Vice Chair Hilda T. Lando
 Aaron I. Mullen Thomas J. Ryan

STAFF: Jack K. Wheeler Amy Dlugos Matt Sousa
 Jennifer Prossick Craig Patrick

LEGISLATORS: Carol A. Ferratella Kelly H. Fitzpatrick John V. Malter
 Frederick G. Potter Scott J. Van Etten

OTHERS: Alison Hunt
 Mary Perham

I. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Lattimer called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION: APPROVING THE MINUTES OF THE APRIL 3, 2019, MEETING MADE BY MR. MULLEN. SECONDED BY MR. HANNA. ALL BEING IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIES 5-0.

III. DEPARTMENTAL REQUESTS

A. Planning

1. **Approving the Addition of Agricultural Lands to Certified Agricultural Districts** – Mrs. Dlugos requested authorization to add lands to Agricultural Districts No. 2 and No. 3.

MOTION: APPROVING THE ADDITION OF AGRICULTURAL LANDS TO CERTIFIED AGRICULTURAL DISTRICTS MADE BY MRS. LANDO. SECONDED BY MR. HANNA. ALL BEING IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIES 5-0. Resolution Required.

B. Weights & Measures

1. **Contract – Gas Sampling – NYS Agriculture & Markets** – Mr. Wheeler requested authorization to enter into an agreement with NYS Agriculture and Markets for a five year period for gas sampling. The annual amount to be paid to us is approximately \$7,000 per year.

MOTION: AUTHORIZING THE DIRECTOR OF WEIGHTS & MEASURES TO ENTER INTO A FIVE-YEAR CONTRACT WITH NEW YORK STATE AGRICULTURE & MARKETS FOR THE GAS SAMPLING PROGRAM AT A RATE OF APPROXIMATELY \$7,000 PER YEAR MADE BY MR. MULLEN. SECONDED BY MRS. LANDO. ALL BEING IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIES 5-0.

IV. OTHER BUSINESS

A. *Solar Development/Agricultural Land Use* – Mr. Mullen asked if the committee could look at a model policy. Mrs. Dlugos replied our department works with local governments and have been using the NYSEDA model law which discusses prime farm land. We are in the process of developing an app which will show other areas for solar

development and that will not show the prime agricultural lands. This app will be looking at other factors to determine locations for solar development and we are pushing the protection of our prime farm lands.

Ms. Lattimer stated that one of the concerns that she and Mr. Mullen have is the viability. Mrs. Dlugos stated if a solar developer is looking at prime farm lands, we would like to direct them to a location that would be in close proximity, but would be a different soil type. We will be looking at guidelines that we could send to the towns. Ms. Lattimer stated a guidance policy for the municipalities would be a good idea.

Mr. Ryan asked if a developer is adding a solar farm in agricultural land, do they get a different tax assessment? Mrs. Dlugos stated a solar developer would not be getting a different assessment simply by being located in an agricultural district. Depending on the town, solar providers will be taxed. If they do have an agricultural assessment and are taking the land out of production, they would have to pay back the penalty.

Mr. Wheeler commented we are a resource; we don't do zoning or permitting, but we are giving the towns information about mapping for soil types and what would be good alternative areas for development. We are doing anything we can do to help them make decisions.

Mr. Sousa stated going forward, it would be ideal to map the prime agricultural land and overlay information that the solar companies are looking for. The main thing is to try to avoid the use of prime agricultural land. Ms. Lattimer commented most of the municipalities would rather not have agricultural land taken out of production.

Mr. Wheeler commented the dollar amounts of the leases are not as incentive laden to give out prime land. Mr. Sousa commented if towns have no regulations, some of the solar developments with upfront capital are just purchasing parcels outright.

Ms. Lattimer stated the municipalities can do what they want; she just wants the County and the Planning Department to be on top of this issue. Mrs. Lando stated we can offer information, but we cannot stop people from doing it.

Mr. Malter stated we are looking at countywide assessing; if we go with that, it would be wise to set a policy for this. Mr. Wheeler stated you could do that, but you cannot do zoning. Mrs. Dlugos stated we can send out the model policy to the committee and we can also work this into our annual training.

Mrs. Ferratella asked when will the app be available? Mr. Sousa replied we have all of the information, we just need to put it together into an app. The concept is to include it on our web mapping. Mrs. Lando asked when is your next training session? Mrs. Dlugos replied we typically do training in the fall. We might be able to do something sooner. We will share with the committee the information that we will share with the local governments. She stated we are also encouraging municipalities to look at applying for funds to do a local agriculture and farmland protection plan. There is funding available on a rolling basis through NYS Agriculture & Markets.

B. *Cornell Cooperative Extension* – Mrs. Lando stated Robert Shirley is the interim director. We will be meeting tomorrow to work on searching for a new director.

MOTION: TO ADJOURN MADE BY MR. RYAN. SECONDED BY MR. MULLEN. ALL BEING IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIES 5-0.

Respectfully Submitted by Amanda L. Chapman, Deputy Clerk, Steuben County Legislature

****NEXT MEETING SCHEDULED FOR****

Wednesday, June 5, 2019

Legislative Committee Room

9:00 a.m.

Please send agenda items to the Clerk of the Legislature's Office

NO LATER THAN NOON

Wednesday, May 29, 2019