

ONTARIO COUNTY
Agriculture Enhancement Board

Frederick Lightfoote, Chairman

MEETING MINUTES
September 20, 2022

Members Present

Frank Fessner
Lisa Fitzgerald
Tom Harvey
Tucker Kautz – representing Ontario County Soil and Water Conservation District for Megan Webster
Fred Lightfoote
Jared Martin
Robert McCarthy
Elizabeth Newbold

Members Excused

Tim Davis
Kristin Hanggi
Donna LaPlant

Staff

Julie Barry
Erin Holley

1. **Call to order:** Chairman Lightfoote called the in-person meeting to order at 7:03PM.
2. **Introductions:** The Agriculture Enhancement Board (AEB) members introduced themselves.
3. **Approval of Minutes from Previous Meeting:** Motion to approve March 1, 2022 meeting minutes. Made by: L. Fitzgerald. Seconded: F. Fessner. Motion carried.
4. **New Business**
 - a. **Board Reappointments:** J. Barry stated that the terms for J. Martin and R. McCarthy expire on December 31, 2022. Both J. Martin and R. McCarthy expressed their willingness to serve 4-year terms through December 31, 2026. **Motion to recommend reappointment of Jared Martin and Robert McCarthy to the Ontario County AEB. Made by: T. Harvey. Seconded: F. Fessner. 8 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions. Motion carried.**

- b. **Vice Chairman Designation:** Chairman Lightfoote stated that the AEB has never designated a Vice Chairperson and described the importance of this designation for the greater good of the AEB. Chairman Lightfoote nominated R. McCarthy to serve as Vice Chairman based on his local government experience and willingness to serve. **Motion to designate R. McCarthy as Vice Chairman of the Ontario County AEB. Made by: F. Lightfoote. Seconded: T. Harvey. 8 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions. Motion carried.**

- c. **Implementation Grants:** Chairman Lightfoote explained that the Ontario County Board of Supervisors provides \$5,000 annually to the AEB to assist with the implementation of strategies in the Ontario County Agricultural Enhancement Plan.
 - i. **Healthy Soils Initiative:** T. Kautz requested an extension of this open contract because COVID-19 delayed the project. The Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) will regain momentum in the coming year now that COVID-19 restrictions are easing. **Motioned together with c.ii. below.**

 - ii. **Cover Crop Project:** Based on recent conversations with member agencies, Chairman Lightfoote proposed the allocation of 2022 AEB implementation funds to a SWCD cover crop project described by T. Kautz. **Motion to approve contract extension with and allocation of \$5,000 to SWCD. Motion: T. Harvey. Second: E. Newbold. 8 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions. Motion carried.**

 - iii. **Slow Moving Vehicle Campaign:** J. Barry provided a summary of the project completed by Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) and noted the invoice amount. It was suggested that final reports on implementation projects include measurable outcomes and plans for sustainability. **Motion to approve payment of \$5,000 to CCE. Made by: L. Fitzgerald. Seconded: R. McCarthy. 8 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions. Motion carried.**

- d. **2023 Agricultural Enhancement Plan Implementation Projects:** In anticipation of the next round of implementation projects, Chairman Lightfoote suggested that board members reorient themselves with the priorities of the Agricultural Enhancement Plan. J. Barry will bring to future meetings a matrix of the plan's implementation strategies to help facilitate discussions.

5. **Old Business:**

- a. T. Kautz asked if there was a replacement for Bob Somers at New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYSDAM). The group discussed its understanding that Jeff Kehoe is the NYSDAM contact and Bob's replacement.

6. **Member Reports and Other Business:**

- a. Finger Lakes Land Trust – E. Newbold explained changes to NYSDAM's Farmland Protection Implementation Grants Program – Conservation Easement Projects, which is more equitable now that it is no longer dependent on development pressure and focuses on specific categories of

farming instead. In addition, the program places more emphasis on individual town objectives and priorities regarding land protection. E. Newbold mentioned that Ontario County does not have any farms in this grant program, perhaps due to lack of interest or incentive. It was suggested that the AEB seek clarification from NYSDAM on the county's role for subsequent grant cycles. There was also a suggestion to discuss this topic further at future AEB meetings.

- b. Ontario County Soil and Water Conservation District – T. Kautz reported on several manure storage and erosion control projects that are advancing. He mentioned that the SWCD office has been busy with grant work and agricultural assessment responsibilities. He attended NYSDAM's Farm Bill Listening Tour and was pleased to see the number of participants, the interest from local agricultural communities, and the discussion around food systems. T. Kautz said that methane digesters may be a trend that more Ontario County farms consider in the future.
- c. Ontario County Planning Department – T. Harvey recently attended the 2022 New York State Association of Counties (NYSAC) Fall Seminar, where he learned that NYSAC would like to facilitate communication between NYSDAM and the New York State Climate Action Council regarding the State's clean energy and climate agenda. At the seminar, he was also made aware of draft state legislation that would allow a portion of the impact fees collected on solar projects to be distributed to counties for farmland protection projects. T. Harvey reported that, since the New York State Office of Cannabis Management issues permits to produce adult use cannabis, municipalities cannot use local zoning to regulate production regardless of whether it occurs in an agricultural district. Local municipalities can, however, regulate point of sale uses. J. Barry mentioned that the Planning Department is gearing up for the next round of agricultural district open enrollment, which runs from November 1 to November 30 each year. T. Harvey and J. Barry discussed Ontario County's recent Farmworker Safety Housing grant application to the New York State Office of Community Renewal. Grant funds would allow for safer, healthier living conditions on multiple farms throughout the county.

- 7. **Next Meeting:** Chairman Lightfoote stated that the next AEB meeting is scheduled for November 15, 2022.
- 8. **Adjournment:** Being no further business for discussion, Chairman Lightfoote requested a motion to adjourn. **Motion to adjourn. Made by: T. Harvey. Seconded: T. Kautz. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 8:34PM.**

*Respectfully submitted by,
Julie Barry*