

SENECA COUNTY ACRICULTURE ENHANCEMENT BOARD  
MINUTES  
March 7, 2007

Present were: Jeff Cassim, Doug Freier, Mike Dennis, Greg Wadhams, Kevin Swartley, Harriet Haynes, Patsy Amidon, Shawn Bossard, Roy & Connie Ike,

Meeting called to order at 7:05 pm.

Patsy moved that the Jan minutes were accepted. Doug seconded. Carried.

Ex officio members reported:

- Nothing from Harriet.
- Jim reported via e-mail that while tax assessments were increasing state-wide, but 9 out of 10 towns were going through an assessment process anyway, which will cushion the impact on ag land. Junius was the only town not increasing their assessments.
- Farm Bureau reported on the rural-urban dinner, ag assessment increases, and a biofuels informational meeting.
- No environmental report.
- Patsy reported as BOS rep; biofuels was the hot topic, regarding the issues between the white deer people and the biofuel group.
- No Soil & Water District report.
- Jeff reported that there would be increased interest in getting crops in the ground this spring, due to higher corn prices. Logistics may be a problem – railroad strikes in Canada, everyone wanting everything at once.
- Doug, as the farm rep, reported that there is excitement in growing crops, even with increased costs.

Ag district renewals were discussed. Shawn reported that renewals will start with the north end of the county, combining those districts. Roadside surveys are in process.

Prioritization of farmland for PDR's – Keith is investigating criteria from different places that have gone through this process. Getting electronic data will be important.

Roy and Connie Ike were present at the meeting as guests, discussing the issue of acquisition of farmland by the Finger Lakes National Forest System. Issues include: land coming off from local tax roles. The Forest Service is not playing on a level field when making offers – unfair competition. Poor grazing techniques on the land. Out of state grazers taking advantage of a local population for their benefit, leaving animals on their own. A motion was made by Patsy, seconded by Kevin to write a letter, to the local townships, county board, and state/federal representatives, Chair of the Forest Service. The letter will state that this is not suitable use of land, outlining the issues. Procedures should be established to allow local buyers at least equal access to purchase said land. Takes away from ag viability in the area. Should be using the SEQR process. Make sure

Ikes get a copy. Harriet suggested that the BOS could re-pass the resolution prohibiting land sales to the Forest Service without a SEQR process.

Mike handed out an article about the increase in ag assessments.

The Rural Issues Community Leadership Conference was briefly discussed – board was informed. Board is still pushing for ag district training for town and planning board members in addition to the training required by the new law. Can get credits for this training. Shawn, Jeff, and Harriet will begin organizing a training date. Evening meeting. Bob Somers is available and willing. Shawn will fax info for this type of training from CARDi to Harriet.

Doug reported on the PDR presentation to the town of Fayette. There is interest, and the process will move forward. A suggestion was made for a county wide presentation from Judy Wright for credit for the county planning dept and any other county/town entity interested. Second Thursdays are when the planning board typically meets.

Kevin reported that the IDA is holding two meetings/hearings in regards to the IDA financial benefit package for the biofuels facility on March 15 in Romulus and Varick. Jeff will draft a letter of support from him personally, indicating a favorable reception from the board.

Motion to adjourn was made by Kevin, seconded by Doug – adjourned at 9:05 pm.