

AGRICULTURAL ENHANCEMENT BOARD

January 22, 2026 at 6:00 PM
20 Ontario Street
Economic Development Conference Room 122A, Mezzanine Level
Canandaigua, NY 14424

1. Call to Order

The 1/22/2026 meeting of the Ontario County Agricultural Board was called to order at 06:02 PM at 20 Ontario St, Canandaigua, NY 14424 with Chairperson Frank Fessner presiding.

2. Introductions

Upon roll call, the following members were:

Present:

Farmer Lisa FitzGerald

Farmer Frank Fessner

Board of Supervisor Representative Mike Baker

Ag Land Preservation Elizabeth Newbold

Alternate for M. Tidball Jacob Maslyn

Director of Planning Thomas Harvey

Alternate for M. Webster Tucker Kautz

Alternate for M. Tidball Jacob Maslyn

Present Not Voting:

Sr. Planner - Alternate for T. Harvey Linda Phillips

USDA - non-voting member Joann Rogers

Absent:

Ex Director CCE Moira Mo Tidball

District Manager OCSWCD Megan Webster

Erin Holley

Farmer Fred Lightfoote

Excused:

Director of Real Property Tax Dennine Leeson, Farmer Jared Martin, Agribusiness Fernando Soberon

Present, Voting 6, Present, Not Voting 2, Absent 4, Excused 3

Guests:

3. Approval of Minutes

Thomas Harvey motioned to approve the minutes of the November 5, 2025. The motion was seconded by Jacob Maslyn. The motion passed.

4. New Business

a. Ag District Open Enrollment

The Board discussed the viability of the requested parcels as viable agricultural land based on the information included in the agenda packet and farmer contact with Board member representatives of agricultural support organizations.

Board Motion: To recommend inclusion of property owned by Walter Polashenski, tax parcel 10.00-1-8.130 at 4931 Maxwell Road in the Town of Farmington. **Motion made by:** Elizabeth Newbold, **Seconded by:** Tucker Kautz. **Vote:** 6 yes, 0 no. **The Motion:** Passed.

Board Motion: To not recommend inclusion of property owned by Ryan F. Pierce and Robert J. Scott, tax parcel 77.00-2-9.100 east of SR 14 south of Tincan Aly in the Town of Phelps as the applicants have not yet received NYS DEC jurisdictional determination necessary to establish whether there is viable agricultural land on the property. **Motion made by:** Tom Harvey, **Seconded by:** Tucker Kautz. **Vote:** 6 yes, 0 no. **The Motion:** Passed.

b. 2024-2025 Biennial AEB report

The report provides a good summary of Board activities. Board requested that the report be amended to clarify that Agricultural Enhancement Implementation Grants are awarded to projects that further agricultural protection strategies outlined in the 2018 Agriculture Enhancement Plan.

Board Motion: To approve the amended biennial report and submit it to the Board of Supervisors.

Motion made by: Tucker Kautz, **Seconded by:** Elizabeth Newbold. **Vote:** 6 yes, 0 no. **The Motion:** Passed.

c. Webpage updates:

- New landing page and consistent navigation links between pages
- Landing page provides links to Ag and Solar resources on main Planning Department page and to the 2 page Ontario County 2022 Census of Agriculture profile.
- new PDR/CE page with program overview, land trust contacts; land trust working on service area map.

<https://www.ontariocountyny.gov/1607/Agriculture-Protection>

d. Discuss Ag Board role in prioritizing PDR/CR applications

Elizabeth Newbold reviewed the original role of county or municipal pre-applications when the Farmland Protection Implementation Grant program was a competitive grant tied to development pressure. Ontario County did not develop a pre-application process, but the Town of Canandaigua did and interest in the program has spread primarily by word of mouth from those initial applications, some prepared with county assistance.

1. The Board expressed support for developing and publicizing county-wide an expression of interest form for participation in farmland protection conservation easement programs. The expression of interest can be used by this Board and land trusts to assess whether properties match available program eligibility guidelines and priorities and will help landowners understand the resources and commitments necessary for participation and how participation might factor into their succession plan. Such a process also demonstrates to the Board of Supervisors the level of interest

in agricultural protection and the impact state and federal programs have on protecting farmland and farm viability. Land trust response to letters of interest can also identify what steps landowners would need to take to be eligible for participation in conservation easement programs.

2. Next steps include

- o Elizabeth will share sample expression of interest forms from other counties in NYS.
- o 3 land trusts with service areas in Ontario County will jointly develop an expression of interest form for review by this Board.
- o Staff will publicize farm expression of interest opportunity 6 to 8 months before next anticipated NYS request for farmland protection applications, likely in 2028.

5. Member Reports & Other Business

Jacob Maslyn upcoming CCE programs include pesticide applicator, 4-H tractor safety, pressure canner testing, and master gardener webinars. Hope to organize Ag Tour for the Board of Supervisors in April. Others suggested BOS Ag Tour include a visit to a protected farm and inviting Tourism Director Alicia Richie Quinn.

March is Agriculture Appreciation month and the Ag Appreciation banquet will be March 20, 2026.

Tom Harvey reported on progress securing funding and other approvals from SUNY for FLCC Culinary Center of Excellence on undeveloped land on the north side of Lakeshore Drive west of Speedway and the SPRING building to house FLCC Horticulture and Conservation department and greenhouse, CCE, and SWCD.

At 1 pm on Monday, Feb. 9, at the Planning and Environmental Quality Committee, 2026 Economic Developer Ryan Davis will review the updated Economic Development Strategic Plan which substantially expands attention to agricultural economic development. Virtual participation link is available from the Agendas and Minutes tab of the Ontario County website.

Retiring July 2, 2026 after nearly 41 years of service to Ontario County.

Joann Rogers Farm Bridge assistance is currently available. Also enrolling in 2026 dairy margin coverage and processing program changes to base acres program that require overhauling farm records.

Lisa Fitzgerald Nothing to report.

Mike Baker - When presenting the Agricultural Inclusion Recommendation and Biennial Report to the Board of Supervisors, include a brief overview of the purpose and role of the County Agricultural District and Agricultural Enhancement Board in protecting farmland and preserving agricultural viability. Consider also scheduling a lunch time presentation by AEB Board and Land Trust representatives with Board of Supervisors about agricultural protection.

Tucker Kautz Soil Health workshop is scheduled for Tues. Feb 26, 2026.

Speaking at the Finger Lakes Research Conference on full system manure management.

Short timeframe to wrap up grant activities between busy farm operations seasons and calendar year-end of grant contracts; installed fencing, barnyard management features, and other modifications to manage stormwater. Continuing to receive requests for Agricultural Non-Point Source Pollution grant funds for underground manure transfer piping that removes truck traffic and reduces farm labor needs.

Record number (over 400) Agricultural Value Assessment updates. Wish assessors would tell landowners that the process may change allocation of acres eligible for Ag Value Assessment, especially if this is the first update since 2012 digital soil survey.

Elizabeth Newbold Submitted Brock Acres Farmland Protection Implementation Grant (FPIG) application.

Linda Phillips NYS Ag & Markets did not follow the Comptroller's recommendation to eliminate regional

funding allocations in FPIG program but did eliminate NYC regional allocation as NYC landowners are not eligible. Program changes also increased per project maximum from \$2 million to \$3 million and the legislature allocated an additional \$1 million to increase staff capacity, specifically to facilitate FPIGs. NYSDEC proposed new guidance and policy regarding testing for PFOA and PFAS in sewage sludge. Changes would require wastewater treatment plant testing and finalizing the Rural Background study which found 97% of surface soil samples contained PFOS and 76.5 percent contained PFOA. The draft policy includes more information on general procedures and ways to interpret water testing results, and when the DEC will provide alternate water sources when a private well is contaminated, Northeast Dairy Producers Association announced their NYS legislative priorities including permanent extension of the state investment tax credit, which would otherwise expire for projects not up and running by Dec. 31, 2027, and expansion of the tax credit to cover employee housing. Other priorities include a request to double NYS farmworker housing loan program from \$200,000 to \$400,000 and \$10 million for continuation of the dairy modernization grant program, \$500,000 for Cornell's Ruminant Center, \$2.46 million for the Pro-DAIRY programs, and request for a "one stop shop for agriculture" at NYSDEC. Frank Fessner East Bloomfield created an Agricultural Advisory Committee with members representing a diverse cross-section of Town agricultural activities. The intent is to ask NYS for funds to complete a Farmland Protection Plan that maps priority farmland for protection.

6. Next Meeting

Next meeting Monday March 30, 2026 at 6 pm.

7. Adjournment

Board motion to: Adjourn. Motion made by: Thomas Harvey, seconded by Tucker Kautz, Vote: Yes 6, No 0, Abstained 0. The motion Passed. The Agriculture Enhancement Board meeting was adjourned at 8:05PM.