

**ONTARIO COUNTY**  
*Agriculture Enhancement Board*

*Frederick Lightfoote, Chairperson*

**MEETING MINUTES**

**February 21, 2023**

**Members Present**

Julie Barry – representing Ontario County Planning Department for Tom Harvey

Frank Fessner

Tucker Kautz – representing Ontario County Soil and Water Conservation District for Megan Webster

Fred Lightfoote

Jared Martin

Jacob Maslyn – representing Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ontario County for Tim Davis

Elizabeth Newbold

**Members Excused**

Lisa FitzGerald

Kristin Hanggi

Donna LaPlant

Robert McCarthy

**Staff**

Erin Holley

1. **Call to order**: Chairperson Lightfoote called the in-person meeting to order at 7:05PM.
2. **Introductions**: The Agriculture Enhancement Board (AEB) members introduced themselves.
3. **Approval of Minutes from Previous Meeting**: **Motion to approve November 15, 2022 meeting minutes. Made by: F. Fessner. Seconded: E. Newbold. Motion carried.**
4. **New Business**
  - a. **Consideration of annual agricultural district open enrollment applications**: During the November 1 – November 30, 2022 open enrollment period, four applications were received. The following parcels were submitted for consideration as inclusions in Ontario County Agricultural District 1.

Municipality	Owner	Tax Map No.	Acres	Address
T. Canadice	Kurta, Eric S.	162.00-1-34.110	45	9739 Coykendall Rd
T. Canadice	Kurta, Eric S.	162.00-1-22.000	1	9740 Coykendall Rd
T. Gorham	Shurn, Susan M.	127.15-1-65.000	41	4586 Wild Rose Ln
T. South Bristol	Bison View Vineyards, LLC	168.00-1-46.220	21	6080 Hicks Rd
<b>Total Acres</b>			<b>108</b>	

**Kurta Parcel 162.00-1-34.110:** This 45-acre parcel is in the Town of Canadice’s Rural District. It consists of 53.1% farmland of statewide importance and 44.4% prime farmland if drained. There are no adjacent or nearby parcels in Ontario County Consolidated Agricultural District One. The applicant provided a business plan for Coykendall Farm, which is a startup operation specializing in a variety of agricultural products, including premium grade hay, apples, garden produce, sweet corn, berries, maple syrup, honey, ginseng, nuts, and chicken eggs. The property currently has a successional forest, open fields for pasture or haying, a produce garden, a native plant nursery, and an apple orchard. This parcel was used as a farm in the early 1900s.

**Kurta Parcel 162.00-1-22.000:** This 1-acre parcel is in the Town of Canadice’s Rural District. It consists of 86.2% farmland of statewide importance and 3.8% prime farmland if drained. There are no adjacent or nearby parcels in Ontario County Consolidated Agricultural District One. This parcel is adjacent to the Kurta Parcel 162.00-1-34.110, was part of the former 1900s farm, and is included in the current Coykendall Farm business plan. This parcel will be the site of a farm stand that will sell produce, apples, and baked goods. It has a large barn for storing farm equipment, a pumphouse with well water for backup irrigation, and a dozen mature black walnut trees for harvesting and selling nuts. The old farmworker house onsite will be used for an agritourism venture that includes a vacation rental on a working farm with exclusive you-pick in season.

After considering the requirements for inclusion of viable agricultural land in an agricultural district per the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYSDAM) Circular 1150 Article 25AA – Agricultural Districts §303 b. and the potential for significant environmental impacts that have been discussed at this meeting, the AEB finds that: (i) The parcel consists of predominantly viable agricultural land, (ii) the inclusion of such land would serve the public interest by assisting in maintaining a viable agricultural industry within the district, and (iii) no significant adverse environmental impacts will occur as a result of inclusion of this parcel. **Motion to recommend Kurta Parcels 162.00-1-34.110 and 162.00-1-22.000 to Ontario County Board of Supervisors to recommend to NYSDAM the inclusion of these parcels in Ontario County Consolidated Agricultural District One. Made by: T. Kautz. Seconded: F. Fessner. 7 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions. Motion carried.**

**Shuryn Parcel 127.15-1-65.000:** This 41-acre parcel is in the Town of Gorham’s Hamlet Residential and Limited Development Overlay Districts. It consists of 86.7% all areas are prime farmland and 13.3% farmland of statewide importance. There are no adjacent but several nearby parcel in Ontario County Consolidated Agricultural District One. Wild Rose Community Farm currently leases 30 acres that have been actively farmed for 5-7 years. The same farmer has been farming it for the entire period, growing primarily field corn. The owner will continue to lease to the same farmer until Wild Rose Community Farm grows enough to require additional land. Wild Rose Community Farm, LLC was established about a year ago after the current owners purchased the farm. The owners are in the process of building greenhouses in order to grow vegetables and strawberries for sale. The operation is also being expanded to include a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) and market garden for direct sales to the community. Greenhouses are currently being built on the available 11 acres to support the operation. The intent is to use the entire farm to raise produce for local sale through the use of a farm stand and subscriptions for the CSA. The applicant is also interested in having a small herd of meat goats and hair sheep. In addition, the applicant has established their first beehives, which will be used to raise bees for honey.

After considering the requirements for inclusion of viable agricultural land in an agricultural district per the NYSDAM Circular 1150 Article 25AA – Agricultural Districts §303 b. and the potential for significant environmental impacts that have been discussed at this meeting, the AEB finds that it would like to gather and review additional information on including but not limited to; the local zoning code, the Wild Rose Community Farm operation, access, fencing and plan for nuisance complaints before taking action. **Motion to table Shuryn Parcel 127.15-1-65.000 until a future AEB meeting. Made by: E. Newbold. Seconded: J. Martin. 7 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions. Motion carried.**

**Bison View Vineyards, LLC Parcel 168.00-1-46.220:** This 21-acre parcel is in the Town of South Bristol’s Community Residential and Agricultural Overlay Districts. It consists of 27.1% farmland of statewide importance and 12.4% prime farmland if drained. There are multiple nearby parcels and an adjacent Bison View Vineyards, LLC parcel included in the Ontario County Consolidated Agricultural District One. The parcel is also surrounded by land protected by the Finger Lakes Land Trust. Bison View Vineyards is a third-generation farm consisting of pasturelands, hay storage, and a barn.

After considering the requirements for inclusion of viable agricultural land in an agricultural district per the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYSDAM) Circular 1150 Article 25AA

– Agricultural Districts §303 b. and the potential for significant environmental impacts that have been discussed at this meeting, the AEB finds that: (i) The parcel consists of predominantly viable agricultural land, (ii) the inclusion of such land would serve the public interest by assisting in maintaining a viable agricultural industry within the district, and (iii) no significant adverse environmental impacts will occur as a result of inclusion of this parcel. **Motion to recommend Bison View Vineyards, LLC Parcel 168.00-1-46.220 to Ontario County Board of Supervisors to recommend to NYSDAM the inclusion of this parcel in Ontario County Consolidated Agricultural District One. Made by: E. Newbold. Seconded: J. Maslyn. 7 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions. Motion carried.**

5. **Old Business:**

- a. **Draft AEB bylaws:** AEB members reviewed the draft bylaws and discussed several updates to the language such as open meeting laws and proxy vs alternate voting. J. Barry will provide a redlined copy of the revised draft bylaws at the next AEB meeting.
- b. **2023-2024 mini-grants:** There was a suggestion to combine the mini-grant process for the 2023 and 2024 cycles since the AEB is still trying to play catchup because of the COVID pandemic. The grant cycle timeline was reviewed, including activities by quarter and how and who to publish mini grant availability. AEB members discussed the importance of an objective application review process, using a scoring matrix and the establishment of a review committee that would make recommendations to the AEB. **Motion to establish objective criteria for ranking mini-grant applications and a review committee when appropriate. Made by: E. Newbold. Seconded: J. Maslyn. 7 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions. Motion carried.**
- c. **Discussion of solar farm development:** There is continued concern over the loss of prime farmland as the state approves an increasing number of large solar developments. The AEB would like to better understand if there are opportunities for local input from agricultural and farmland protection boards on the issue of solar development. It was suggested the AEB prepare correspondence to state legislators and agricultural and farmland protection boards around the state on this issue. J. Barry is inquiring with NYSDAM on whether the AEB can update its Agricultural Enhancement Plan to include provisions related to solar development. The AEB discussed its role as a resource for Ontario County municipalities on this topic.

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

- a. Ontario County Soil and Water Conservation District – T. Kautz discussed that SWCD is working on several grant applications and holding a Soil Health and Nutrient Workshop on March 1, 2023.

- b. Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ontario County – J. Maslyn reported on master gardener training, a pesticide course, and the Casella Waste Management academic scholarship program that will now be administered by CCE.
  - c. Ontario County Planning Department – J. Barry reported on the progress of the Ontario County Farmworker Safety and Housing Program, which was awarded Community Development Block Grant funds through NYS Office of Community Renewal. A grant administrator and construction manager have been hired for the project.
7. **Next Meeting:** Chairperson Lightfoote stated that the next AEB meeting is scheduled for April 4, 2023.
8. **Adjournment:** Being no further business for discussion, Chairperson Lightfoote requested a motion to adjourn. **Motion to adjourn. Made by: J. Maslyn. Seconded: F. Fessner. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 9:30PM.**

*Respectfully submitted by,  
Julie Barry*