

NYSACAA
March 21, 2005

Meeting called to order at 10:10 am by President Anita Deming. Present were Trish Westenbroek, Cathy Wickswat, Karen Baase, Lisa Kempisty, Monika Roth, Steve Hadcock, John Amerosso, and Tom Gallagher. Absent was Paul Cerosaletti.

Prior to the start of the meeting, a tour of the new Department of Agriculture and Markets offices was given by Tim Pezzolesi.

Secretary's Report: Minutes from December 15, 2004 meeting were approved.

Tim Pezzolesi, the Executive Assistant for Commissioner Nathan Rutgers gave a presentation on grants, needs, and priorities for New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets. Current priorities include the Farm Bill and how distributions will be made. They are pushing innovative methods rather than traditional payment methods. They are hearing that this will be a tough year fiscally. Specialty crop competitiveness act is current funding source. The previous funds distributed through Ag & Markets. These have been through Pride of NY program in the past. Are trying to get these funds again. Tim handed out a Grow New York packet with information and details of current grant programs.

On the federal side, trade barriers are being studied. Received a federal grant to look at trade barriers. Twelve producers and Dept. of Ag & Markets personnel recently traveled to Canada to discuss ways to work across borders. One Canadian buyer told the group this was the first time anyone from New York State had approached him. There appears to be many ways to work together to get more NY products into Canada.

On the dairy front, the dept. has worked with Congressman Reynold to support the Dairy Equity Act. The department is always looking at the question "Who owns the land and what are they interested in doing with it?" The Commissioner feels that more information is needed about using the land. The department would be interested in hearing from our group more about the land and the trends in land use. Feedback from the group to Tim included:

- 1) In Catskills, outside people are purchasing land and breaking leases, causing problems with some farmers on where to spread manure.
- 2) In some areas of the state, the question is "When will we lose critical mass of agriculture?"
- 3) Even in rural counties like Tioga County, land is being purchased for higher prices than in the past.
- 4) Bioenergy options are being discussed (i.e. switchgrass in Tompkins County).

Currently NASS sent out a survey to landowners.

Farm viability program looks at programs identifying profitability potential on farms. Must be able to measure success. Would be interested in regional projects. Growth for research and extension will be through the grants programs. The farm viability program was initially funded \$1 million through USDA. Most of this money is used for projects.

The New York State governor's budget shows good support for Department of Agriculture and Markets. Anita Deming reported that potential SUNY cuts will impact Cooperative Extension drastically. Erie, Niagara, Oneida and Jefferson Counties have already been affected.

The Ag and Farmland Protection Program funding has been increased to \$15 million for this year's budget.

Tim mentioned that the Commissioner is chairman for the national meetings of Associations of State Agricultural Departments. It will be held in Cooperstown this fall, September 15 – 26. Trying to do a video to showcase agriculture. The group gave him ideas to use. He handed out his business card and asked for people to contact him.

Treasurer's Report: Trish gave the report as of 3/15/05: Checking \$6,635.78; savings \$3,358.08; certificates of deposit \$19,315.67. Membership report: 75 paid memberships, 3 life members; 3 complimentary memberships for Helene Dillard, Dr. Bill Fry, and Dr. Susan Henry. Certificates of deposit are due for renewal the first week of April. The Buffalo 2005 meeting has requested a stipend of \$5000 from New York State. Discussion was held about the financial condition of NYSACAA and whether it can contribute the \$5000 without causing cash flow problems in the long run. Questions were asked about how soon again we would be asked to contribute. Every 8 years, the northeast hosts a meeting so our commitment would be in 2013. Steve Hadcock reported that the National meeting is on the cusp of being changed. Possibilities include every other year meetings rather than every year; higher cost for participants and less events at the meeting (i.e. 4-H talent revue).

Monika Roth made motion to renew \$10,000 in CD, donate \$5000 to the national meeting. Motion seconded by Cathy Wickswat. Steve Hadcock abstained from voting. Motion approved. Lisa Kempisty made motion to accept treasurer's report and motion seconded by Karen Baase. Motion approved.

Report of Officers

Past President – Karen Baase reported on ACCEE conference May 11 – 13. Jerry LeClair will be auctioneer for auction. Each group is asked to contribute items. Proceeds are shared by all groups. The registration deadline is April 1 for lower cost registration. There will be a poster exhibit and the organizing committee is still looking for posters. The next Ag Agents Board meeting will be 11 am on May 11. John Ameroso will find a location for the lunch meeting that day. The Ag Agents will put together some baskets.

President – Anita Deming attended the regional JCEP NE Region Leadership Workshop February 9 – 11 in Columbia, Maryland. Report is attached. Take home messages:

- When lobbying – research on website. Focus on key point – what can we do for them. Should only be 5 minutes and no more.
- Other states looking for inservice opportunities, as they have nothing in a lot of states. Anita spoke to Mike Hoffman about this and he will invite other states.
- Hatch federal funds will be much more competitive than in past. Cornell feels that our professors will have good projects to fund.
- We need to be next “Hot Button” issues. ECOP and National Association of Land Grant Colleges lobby for us and this is their advice.

Anita discussed the letter from Helene Dillard and Susan Henry regarding Cornell's position on the Executive Budget for SUNY. The proposed budget looks bleak for Cornell Cooperative Extension.

Discussion was held about life members list. Our group needs to get winter addresses for life members.

The National Extension newsletter would cost Cornell \$90,000. There is no support because of it not being "localized" enough.

Anita handed out list of NACAA 2005 Committee chairs.

Anita will be attending PICP conference April 17 – 20 in Washington, DC. Funds have been approved for a second person to attend the conference.

Committee Reports

National Meeting: Steve Hadcock reported that the list of volunteer chairmen is on the NYSACAA website. There will be a volunteer coordination committee chaired by Cathy Wickswat and Sandra Buxton.

Fundraising: Still need \$50,000 which does not include \$5000 Dairylea contribution and \$1000 from NY State Apple Growers. Tom Gallagher asked everyone to send out letters and follow up. We need to keep fundraising.

Steve asked Lisa to get more information about the tour lunches and how much will be in-kind. This could reduce the amount needed to raise.

April 5 & 6 will be the next planning meeting for the national meeting.

Dean Sprague sent out request for equipment that can be loaned by county associations.

The projected number for attendance is now 1350 based on surveys done at JCEP conference.

District Reports

Northern District – Anita Deming reported that the Dairy Viability Committee has been organized to look at possibility of a new milk plant. Willsboro Farm was evaluated by Cornell. The report recognized that the farm has a great combination of resources. It cost \$170,000 per year to run. More is being done with organic producers.

Organic mill for wheat is in Essex County. There is also an organic mill for soybeans in Massena. Counties did all right for their budgets. Clinton County got a 10% increase, the first increase in 8 years. All other counties got slight increases.

Western District – Have not met formally, but all educators are working on national meeting tours. Since Erie County has lost their Cooperative Extension, more calls are coming into the other counties. In Erie County, the 4-H educators are working through fair, and then their positions are terminated.

Capital District – Next meeting will be held on March 29. Discussion about joint meeting/tour with the southeast agents group.

Southeast District – Have not had any meetings. Hope to get educators together.

NYS Farm Bureau Priority Issues

John Tauzel, lobbyist for New York State Farm Bureau made a presentation on their priorities for the upcoming year. He reported that the NY State budget is progressing better than in past years. The only conference committees that haven't finished are health and education. Both assembly and senate have restored funding for agriculture line items. IPM received \$1 million and Geneva Experiment Station received \$500,000. All three parties have worked together better than in the past, so outlook looks better than most years for passage. He discussed Farm Viability Institute which received \$1 million grant from USDA to establish the center. A lot more grant funding is more likely to go through this center. Farmers serve on the board (along with Nate Rutgers) and make the funding decisions. John reported that NY State Farm Bureau prepares fact sheets regarding the different programs.

Other NY State Farm Bureau priorities include:

- 1) Proposal to sell wine in NYS grocery stores.
- 2) Interstate direct shipment of wine
- 3) Expansion of empire zones to include the eleven remaining counties. Most of the counties left are rural counties.
- 4) Expand empire zone funding to agricultural cooperatives.
- 5) Biofuel tax credit for the two ethanol plants which will be on line within a short time (Fulton will be first and Seneca Falls second).
- 6) Farmers School Tax Refund – trying to get horse operations included. Also expand Ag Exemption and Sales Tax Exemption to horse riding arenas. There have been problems with horse boarding operations also, even though they qualify now.
- 7) Workers Compensation Reform that would reduce the cost of premiums in New York while ensuring that injured workers receive a benefit increase.
- 8) Oppose costly new health insurance mandates.
- 9) Support a change in the Healthy New York program that would allow businesses with pre-existing health insurance coverage to enroll in Healthy New York.
- 10) Control taxpayer costs, through support for budget reform measures, including the adoption of a contingency budget and development of consensus revenue forecasting through the Office of the State Comptroller to better manage the state's finances.
- 11) Support campaign finance reform measures that would eliminate the ability of public sector employee unions to form Political Action Committees, limit contributions to political parties housekeeping funds, and establish limits on Albany based fundraisers.
- 12) Support efforts to enact significant and meaningful changes to our civil justice system, including reform of Labor Law Sections 240 and 241, along with reform of liability statutes with respect to agricultural businesses including equine and “u-pick” operations.
- 13) Community Preservation Act – Would allow locals to take 2% of the mortgage reporting tax for the use of land preservation.
- 14) Farmland Preservation – Increase funding.
- 15) CAFO funding
- 16) Deer management

Anita Deming took the opportunity to point out the concerns that Cornell Cooperative Extension has in the proposed cuts for the NYS budget.

Troy Waffner from Assemblyman McGee's office, Alison Woytowich from Senator McGee's office, and Carol Cybulski, special assistant with NYS Dept. of Agriculture and Markets joined our group to discuss legislative needs.

Alison Woytowich discussed proposals in 2005-06 budget. She reported that it might be possible to have a budget close to April 1. Important legislative needs:

- 1) Farmland protection
- 2) 3.5 million for Farmland Viability Institute
- 3) Agribusiness Economic Development zones to serve all regions
- 4) Biofuel production facilities tax credits.

A couple of bills that Senator McGee has sponsored:

- 1) Allow localities (i.e. towns) to submit Ag and Farmland Protection Plans.
- 2) Funding for Soil & Water Conservation Districts – would allow for additional money to be brought in from other sources above the capped amount.

Troy Tausel spoke about the Assembly's Agriculture Committee. There are currently about 90 bills under consideration. They are looking at various sectors within agriculture and methods to help make them competitive. One example is the maple industry and the potential for increased production in NY State. Trying to get them marketing money. The equine industry is an additional enterprise that is growing and has needs that should be addressed. Biofuel could have an impact on corn and soybean growers, as well as job creation in the area of the two proposed plants. Are hoping to get legislation passed that property sellers of land adjacent to agricultural district must notify buyers that they are adjacent to an agricultural district. An additional priority is to create agricultural plastics recycling program funds for creating a pilot project.

Carol Cybulski from Dept. of Ag & Markets talked about a series of workshops that will be held around the state about the department's programs starting April 29, 9 am to 1 pm in Locust Grove. Cornell Cooperative Extension offices will be informed of the schedule.

A discussion was held so that the Board members could give input to the speakers regarding agricultural needs.

The next board meeting will be held in Buffalo prior to ACCE conference on Wednesday, May 11 (possibly starting May 10). Anita will work on a meeting location. Since we are holding the national meeting at the Adams Mark, we may be able to get a room.

Motion made by Monika Roth to adjourn the meeting at 3:05 pm. Seconded by John Amerosso. Motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Cathy Wickswat
Vice President