



ONTARIO COUNTY Agriculture Enhancement Board

Frank Fessner, Chairman

AGENDA

Ontario County Agriculture Enhancement Board

Tuesday August 12, 2025

20 Ontario Street, Economic Development Conference Room 122A, Mezzanine level,
Canandaigua, NY 14424

6:00 pm to 8:00 pm

- A. Call to order
- B. Introductions
- C. Approval of minutes of 3/26/25 meeting **ACTION ITEM**
- D. New business

FY 2026 Mini Grants

1. One application received from Marcus Whitman CSD for \$1,200 to purchase lumber and other supplies to have students build new plant benches for greenhouse. Full application attached.
2. Grant review committee recommended asking Marcus Whitman to submit proposal for spending full \$5,000 FY 2026 allocation. See below for plan for use of additional FY 2026 funding.

Additional Marcus Whitman CSD FY 2026 request

\$ 807.50 auto draw system for maple sugar house to avoid shutting down evaporator each time class or visitor enters

\$ 659.13 tubing and supplies to expand sugar bush

\$1,000 historic maple sugaring equipment, exterior sign/process infographics, and viewing step so elementary students and small community visitors can observe process

\$1,050 for 3 sweet maple trees at \$350 each including planting to be located close to sugar house for sap and educational use

\$4,761.63 Total of initial and additional request

3. Grant review committee recommended follow up with non-applicants.
 - CCE wanted to leave funds for school districts
 - Midlakes CSD passed as they have been turned down 2x, but are encouraged to apply next year. I am only aware of AEB not funding the request for floral cooler in the FY 2023 and 2024 funding cycle.
 - BOCES staff in animal husbandry program staff in transition.
 - When asked applicants and non-applicants indicated end of school year is a challenging time to complete a grant application. Plan to have application deadline before Memorial Day in 2026.

4. Board action to award Marcus Whitman CSD \$1,00 or \$4,761.63 **ACTION ITEM**
AND to allocate unspent mini grant funds to match for 2028 Ag Plan update OR future grant award.

Farmer Request for NYSDAM 305-a (1) review of Ontario County Driveway Permit Denial

On behalf of AEB, OCPD staff have reviewed and filed June 5, 2025 letter and enclosures from NYSDAM to OC DPW regarding request from Norman Burkeholder for NYSDAM to review driveway permit denial and June 26, 2025 OCPD response letter. NYSDAM has not yet issued a findings letter to OC DPW, though the farmer has removed the denied access point.

Media Exposure

On 7/15 a film crew for a PBS special on small farms in the Finger Lakes filmed a segment at Acquilana Vineyards, a small farm winery outside the hamlet of Cheshire in the T. Canandaigua, and a tasting at Acquilano Cellars in the City of Canandaigua. The PBS segment for Andy Garcia All Access show is expected to air nation wide this fall.

<https://www.democratandchronicle.com/story/news/2025/07/18/acquilano-wine-cellars-to-appear-on-all-access-with-andy-garcia-canandaigua-ny-winemaker/84511835007/>

https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/from-generation-to-innovation-acquilano-wine-cellars-featured-on-all-access-with-andy-garcia-302459036.html?tc=eml_cleartime

E. Old business

NOI Response Letter for T. Canandaigua CSG solar project on New Michigan Road.

A draft NOI was reviewed with AEB at the 3/26/25 meeting. There were some revisions to the plan and NYSDAM provided a letter of NOI completeness and request to review on June 26, 2025. The letter indicated NYSDAM would be considering mitigation options during the next 30 days and will make an initial determination whether the action will have an unreasonably adverse effect on the continuing viability of a farm enterprise or enterprises within the district within 45 days.

The included AEB response letter indicates the Board's finding that the proposed solar project and public utility use variance would have a detrimental impact on the viability of the 1,300 acres of nearby farmlands preserved with NYSDAM purchase of development rights (PDR) farmland preservation implementation grant funding and those enterprises relying on owned and rented land designated by the Town Comprehensive Plan for agricultural preservation in this area.

The NOI response letter was circulated as a draft, revised to exclude SEQR concerns since the Canandaigua Planning Board as lead agency issues its finding of no significant adverse impact on July 8, 2025 and submitted the signed letter to NYSDAM on July 17, 2025.

F. Member reports and other business

G. Next meeting

November 3, 4, 5, or 6

H. Adjournment



ONTARIO COUNTY Agriculture Enhancement Board

Frank Fessner, Chairman

MINUTES

Ontario County Agriculture Enhancement Board Wednesday March 26, 2025

Members Present

Frank Fessner
Lisa Fitzgerald (A 6:20)
Tom Harvey
Tucker Kautz
Dennine Leeson
Fred Lightfoote
Jared Martin

Jacob Maslyn
Joann Rogers
Fernando Soberon
Andrew Wickham

Members Excused

none

Staff

Linda Phillips

1. Call to order – Chair Frank Fessner called meeting to order at 6 pm.
2. Introductions including new member Fernando Soberon, of dairy consulting firm Standard Nutrition and also a member of Town of Canandaigua Agricultural Advisory Committee and a small farmer and returning member Fred Lightfoote, now serving as an active farmer member affiliated with Lightland Farms.
3. Approval of minutes of 1/22/25 meeting: Motion made by Drew Wickham and Seconded by Tom Harvey. Approved. Attached revised minutes include motion to recommend to Board of Supervisors inclusion of requested property in OC Agricultural District #1 omitted from draft minutes.
4. New business
 - a. Reviewed property characteristic and a sample letter of support for 3 Proposed Farmland Protection Implementation Grant (FPIG) program applications for Purchase of Development Rights (PDR)/Conservation Easement (CE). Motions to draft, circulate for review, and submit FPIG application letters of support.
 1. Sadler Brothers Farm
Farm consists of 10 parcels is 3 locations in northern Farmington. Three properties in 2 locations are proposed for inclusion in Conservation Easements.

All properties proposed for inclusion in Conservation Easement are zoned A-80 and in Ontario County Agricultural District #1. Most adjacent Ontario County properties, except as noted, are also in OC Agricultural District #1.

Areas proposed for inclusion in Conservation Easement

- a) CE 1: 171 acres in 2 parcels on south side of Fox Road (purple outline on map) east of Sheldon Road

Soils include prime farmland including Ontario loam and Palmyra gravelly loam and some areas of 8 to 15 percent slope that are farmland of statewide important. Adjacent land use includes residential uses to the east and west along Fox Road, to the north across Fox road, and to the east. To the west and south are lands used for field crops and to the south is

- b) CE 2: 75 acre parcel on the north side of Allen Padgham Road west of CR 8

Soils include prime farmland Palmyra gravelly loam, Palmyra gravelly sandy loam, areas with 8 to 15 percent slope designated as farmland of state wide importance, some Carlisle muck, and some additional areas of not prime farmland.

There is adjacent residential development along the frontage of Farmington Road and Sheldon Road to the west not in OC Agricultural District #1. Land use to the south across Allen Padgham Road includes agricultural fields and a wetland and floodplain area associated with Trap Brook. There is a small area of wetland extending north from Allen Padgham Road on the inclusion parcel near the western property boundary. Residential properties along CR 8 to the east are in OC Agricultural District #1. Properties to the north in Wayne County appear wooded or in agricultural use in OnCor.

Motion to draft, circulate for review, and submit FPIG Letter of support for Sadler Farms. Motion made by Jacob Maslyn. Seconded by Fred Lightfoote. Approved.

2. Fresh Ayr Farm

Farm consists of 6 parcels east and west of CR 28 south of SR 96. Two properties with 174 acres are proposed for inclusion in conservation easement. All properties are zoned A-80 and in Ontario County Agricultural District #1. Soils are prime farmland Schoharie silty clay loam 0 to 3 and 3 to 8 percent slope. Adjacent land uses include residential and agricultural uses to the west and north along SR 96, and off CR 28 to the south. There is a golf course to the east.

Areas proposed for inclusion in Conservation Easement:

90 acres on east side of CR 28 with 15 acres frontage designated as future farmstead

84 acres on west of CR 28 with 14 acres including CR 28 frontage & 12 acres including SR 96 proposed for future development area

Discussion regarding grant requirement for designation of farmstead area if such does not exist on conservation easement property and encouragement to designate rural enterprise area for non-farm development such as home occupation that does not meet definition of farm. Discussion of Round 20 timeline. Expect funding announcement in May 2025, allocation of western NY designated regional funds within 2 week, and likely funding of additional projects from pooled funds not allocated by other regions.

Motion to draft, circulate for review, and submit FPIG application letter of support for Fresh Ayr Farm. Motion made by Fred Lightfoote. Seconded by Tucker Kautz. Approved.

3. Brocklebanks Farm/Bzdick-Kinsella property

Option to buy 272 acres south of Canandaigua-Farmington Townline Road and east of New Michigan Road they have leased and place in Conservation Easement. The property is zoned AR-2 Agricultural Rural Residential and in Ontario County Agricultural District #1. Most soils are prime farmland if drained Odessa silt loam and Odessa silty clay loam. Properties to the east and to the north of Canandaigua Farmington Town Line Road are developed with residential uses. The residentially developed subdivision to the east off Staplegate Drive is still in OC Agricultural District #1. To the south is farmland under conservation easement held by Finger Lakes Land Trust.

Motion to draft, circulate for review, and submit FPIG application letter of support for Brocklebanks Farm. Motion made by Fernando Soberon. Seconded by Fred Lightfoot. Elizabeth Newbold, as representative of FLLT, abstained from voting and left room for vote. Approved.

Excerpts from NYS AG & MKTS FPIG Guidance

The 2018 Guidance document: *Developing a Land Plan for an Agricultural Conservation Easement* provides the following information regarding the land plan and conservation easement:

- Provide opportunities for active, economically viable Farm Operations on protected farmland now and in the future.
- Establish adequate flexibility for farmers operating on protected farms to grow, adapt and change to new market conditions.
- Create opportunities for farmers to own protected farms with the ability to develop housing for farm families and farm labor, agricultural buildings and structures that support rural businesses compatible with agriculture.
- Reduce the likelihood of conflicts between farmers operating on protected farms and their non-farm neighbors.
- Facilitate the protection of natural resources in a manner compatible with commercial Farm Operations, consistent with the provisions of the Agricultural Districts Law and reasonably within the stewardship capacity of the conservation easement holder.

The guidance document also includes the following:

- “proposed [conservation easement] projects are not *unreasonably restrictive* of Farm Operations in contravention of the Agricultural Districts Law.
- Defined use areas include the Farm Area, Farmstead Area, and New/multiple Farmstead Area, and Resource Protection Areas.
- The model easement allows up to 5 percent of the Farm Area to be used for agricultural buildings and other impervious agricultural improvements without permission of the conservation easement holder. Permission is required for future development for agricultural purposes of an additional 5 percent of the Farm Area.

The full guidance document is available here:

<https://agriculture.ny.gov/land-and-water/farmland-protection-implementation-grants-program#:~:text=The%20Farmland%20Protection%20Implementation%20Grants,farmland%20protection%20plans%2C%20including%20those>

- b. FY 2026 Mini-grants solicitation materials distribution by March 27, 2025
 Circulate application, guidelines, flyer, and evaluation criteria updates with June 16, 2025 submission deadline . In the past, application materials have been distributed via CCE and SWCD newsletters, directly to other ag support orgs (OC Ag Society, Farm Bureau, etc.) to all school district superintendents, and to those individual school staff teaching about or with interest in agricultural education. At the request of a supervisor on the Board of Supervisors Planning and Environmental Quality Committee which approves mini grant contracts before they go the Board of Supervisors, this year the mini grant application materials will also go to all supervisors.

Discussion – Send directly to Supervisors, not as info item in Board packet.

Motion to authorize distribution of AEP implementation grant materials for FY 2026 funds. Applications due June 16, 2025.

- c. Draft Notice of Intent for solar project near northeast corner of New Michigan Road and CR 30 (Tax Parcel # 69.00-1-54.410)

Proposed property is in Padelford Greenway and near 1,300 acres of permanently preserved farmland and several other proposed solar projects that have been reviewed unfavorably by Town of Canandaigua Agriculture Advisory Committee. -Property is zoned AR-2 Agricultural Rural Residential -2. The . Canandaigua defines 4 tiers of solar energy systems. Tier 1 and Tier 2 systems, with a capacity of up to 1 MW AC used on-site and not more than 8 acres of facility area, are allowed by special use permit in the AR 2 district. Commercial and larger Tier 3 and 4 solar systems also require a special use permit and are only allowed in the I Industrial and CC Community Commercial zoning districts or as part of an Incentive Zoning proposal. The Town of Canandaigua has received a use variance application to consider the solar energy system as a public utility, which has different standards than other types of use variances.

Since AEB meeting, I received correspondence from NYS Ag & Markets Senior Environmental Analyst regarding their comments on the draft NOI and the AEB received e-mail comments from member Tom Harvey on the draft site plan.

AEB will have 30 days from when NYS Ag & Markets deems NOI complete to provide formal response letter.

- 5. Old business - none
- 6. Member reports and other business

Lisa Fitzgerald – Excited for warm weather.

Fernando Soberon – Glad for opportunity to serve. Has grazing contracts at 3 solar farms in West Bloomfield and had one contract canceled when project changed hands as it proceeded through approval/construction/operation phases. Grazing only viable within solar project fence. Typical contract requires commitment to keep grass less than 16". Has had some difficulty with operator improperly seeding for grazing. Use for grazing likely to require some weedwacking to control invasive species in initial years. Projects vary in size; in some cases can keep a flock rotating on a parcel for a full season and in other cases the animals need to be moved from site to site to avoid overgrazing.

T. Canandaigua solar law requires decommissioning plan with decommissioning bond though not explicit inflation escalator for bond.

Fred Lightfoote – Glad for opportunity to serve.

Drew Wickham – Nothing to report.

Jacob Maslyn – Scheduling spring field days. Emma Wilson and Amy Prya in 50 classrooms for Agriculture Literacy week. Working on OC Emergency Management Plan section re household and farm animals and other ag related preparation, response, and recovery planning. Plan to attend Ontario County Fair July 22-26, 2025 and NYS Fair August 20, September 1, 2025 Cornell AgriTech 2025-2030 Strategic Plan

<https://cornell.app.box.com/s/lbpqcd9d5srcd5fm9sgca032c0xpe0uh>

Elizabeth Newbold – Prepping applications for Farmland Protection Implementation Grant Round 20; expect announcement in May 2025.

Tom Harvey - If lease ends before decommissioning, responsibility would fall to landowner/farmer, not solar operator. County Planning working on County Emergency Management Plan and Continuity of Operations Plan. Two of 3 farm labor housing projects done; thirds to be complete by end of year. Working on RFP for Black Brook watershed modeling to assess how to reduce flooding of agricultural lands along Black Brook in Canandaigua, Farmington, and Manchester. OC Economic Development secured \$200,000 advanced grant funds in conjunction with vacant rental property program to allow timely reimbursement of owner expenditures on vacant rental unit rehabilitation.

Joann Rogers - Dairy margin cover now available; continuing with crop reporting; emergency commodity assistance for 2024 crops available even if didn't crop report. Subject to federal hiring freeze with current open positions; best to call and check on availability of staff before visiting.

Jared Martin – Nothing to report.

Tucker Kautz - Federal funds through inflation reduction act on hold. Planning for use of \$8-9 million for storage covers/methane flare and finalizing allocation of OC portion of eastern finger lakes grant funds for Ontario County. Submitted 11 water quality improvement grants. New employee Jeremy Paris, experienced tech.

Dennine Leeson – Court case February 2025 NYS model for assessing solar developments ruled unconstitutional due to systematic underassessment based on discounted cashflow which did not count state grants as income. Unsure whether NYS will develop new model or leave assessment to individual local assessors.

Tucker/Tom – Problems with NYS DEC implementation of new wetland regulations including long backlog of jurisdictional determinations and on-going potential overreach related to removing land from agricultural production as a result of requests for on-site riparian zone water quality practices.

7. Next meeting Tuesday August 12, 2025
8. Adjournment Motion made by Tom Harvey. Seconded by Fred Lightfoote. Approved.

**High School &
Middle School**
Eric Pasho, *Principal*
4100 Baldwin Road
Rushville, NY 14544
(585) 554-6441



MARCUS WHITMAN CENTRAL SCHOOL

GORHAM-MIDDLESEX CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Dr. Christopher R. Brown, *Superintendent*
(585) 554-4848

Gorham Elementary
Ms. Jennifer Taft, *Principal*
2705 Route 245
Stanley, NY 14561
(585) 526-6351

Middlesex Valley Elementary
Mrs. Karissa Schutt, *Principal*
149 Route 245
Rushville, NY 14544
(585) 554-3115

www.mwcsd.org

June 16, 2025

Ontario County
Ontario County Agricultural Enhancement Board
20 Ontario Street
Canandaigua, NY 14424

Subject: Grant-Continuing to Create GreenThumb's

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to express our sincere interest in applying for this grant to support the purchase of lumber to update and improve the existing benches in our school greenhouse. This hands-on project will engage students in both the design and construction of the new benches, reinforcing skills in planning, measurement, and tool use while fostering ownership of their learning environment. The updated benches will enhance the functionality of the greenhouse and provide lasting infrastructure to support horticultural education and sustainability efforts.

Thank you for time and consideration. We genuinely appreciate your support. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Mary Coolbaugh, mcoolbaugh@mwcsd.org.

Sincerely,

Christopher R. Brown, Ph.D.
Superintendent

ONTARIO COUNTY
Agriculture Enhancement Board

Frank Fessner, Chairman

Ontario County Agricultural Enhancement Plan
FY 2026 Mini-Grant Application
Application deadline is June 16, 2024 at 4 PM

The Ontario County Board of Supervisors makes available funds for small projects that implement the strategies included in the Ontario County Agricultural Enhancement Plan (AEP). Click here to view the Full Plan and mini-grant materials including Plan Implementation Strategies, Grant Guidelines, and Flyer: <https://ontariocountyny.gov/1784/Agricultural-Enhancement-Plan> . Project review and selection will be completed by the Ontario County Agriculture Enhancement Board (AEB).

Eligible applicants: Ontario County agencies, their program partners, schools, and related organizations.

Total grant funds available: \$5,000. Applicants can request up to \$5,000 per application. However, it is recommended that projects are broken out into stand-alone, small (approximately \$500) elements or tasks that could be funded on their own if the total cannot be funded.

Submission requirements: Fill in this form and submit it to aeb@ontariocountyny.gov by June 16, 2025 at 4 PM. Please include a brief cover letter signed by the applicant's authorized official.

1. Project title*

Continuing to Create Greenthumbs

2. Applicant Information (organization, name, address, primary contact person, phone, and email)*

Marcus Whitman, 4100 Baldwin Road Rushville NY 14544
Mary Coolbaugh, 585-747-3559, mcoolbaugh@mwcsd.org

3. Project sponsors and partners. Required if other sources of staffing or funding* If not applicable, N/A.

N/A

4. Statement of need, including an explanation of ~~how~~ the project addresses AEP strategies and recommended actions (available at link above), sustainability, and how project builds on previously funded project successes or lessons learned (if applicable)

In our rural district, some students are invested in agriculture either through production agriculture at a family farm, or through internships or part-time jobs within the agriculture industry. Yet, many students don't know that there are alternatives to production agriculture besides dairy, crop or beef production. Our aim is to ensure that students have as many hands-on, technology-based lessons as possible available to them, so that they gain real-world experiences to expand their knowledge and skills to be college and career ready, especially to pursue the agricultural industry. Our project is uniquely suited for our school district as we have a growing number of students interested in the plant systems pathway.

See attached for more

a. Please list the individual AEP implementation strategies and recommended action items (1.a., 1.b., etc.) your project addresses.*

6c

5. Project description: brief scope of work outlining who, what, where, and how. *

Our overall goal is to continue for students to produce, promote, and distribute various vegetables within our school district and cafeteria. This will be a project will be the responsibility of our Greenhouse Class at the High School, made up of students in 10th - 12th grade.

The project is expected to increase student awareness of and skills in agri-business through vegetable production, greenhouse management and promotion of locally grown produce. Students will learn the process and best practices of designing and building greenhouse benches to best suit the space in the greenhouse. With the design of these benches, students will maintain them and create a space to grow various vegetables on the benches. This will be an ongoing project that will allow the students to learn how to grow vegetables from seed to table, along with the importance of maintaining a greenhouse.

a. If funds requested are part of a larger project, please explain. If not applicable N/A.

N/A

b. If the project involves professional or contract services, provide a description of tasks to be performed, final products, etc. If not applicable N/A.

N/A

c. If the project only involves purchase of equipment, supplies, etc., detail what is included and its purpose. If not applicable N/A.

Lumber, screws and drill will be used to design and build greenhouse benches for the current greenhouse. These bench frames have not been up updated since 2002, the tops were updated with a previous grant.

6. Project timeline (*number of months to complete the project and preferred start/end month*) *

See attached

7. Expected outcomes and/or benefits. *

The project is expected to increase student awareness of and skills in agri-business through greenhouse management and plant science production and promotion. Students will learn how to design and construct greenhouse benches, in return adding to the management skills of our curriculum. Students will also learn promotional, marketing, and networking skills through local community and regional networks including media. An important part of this project is the sustainability and continuation of the high school plant science curriculum. Students will gain experience in best practices and management styles.

8. Project budget (*cost breakdown for direct labor, contractual services, supplies equipment, materials, printing, etc. directly related to the project*) The project budget should be clear, reasonable, and indicate how mini-grant funds will be applied to the project. *

Supplies/Materials (Priced out at Lowes)
Lumber for frame of bench = \$1000
Plastic top for bench = \$0 (Grant funded in 2022 by Incentive Grant)
Screws: \$75
2 pack DeWalt Drill: \$170
Total: \$1,245

a. Identify any matching or in-kind funds. If not applicable N/A.

N/A

Questions: Contact the Ontario County Planning Department at 585-396-4455.

Additional Information: *Continuing to Create Greenthumbs*

Marcus Whitman, 4100 Baldwin Road Rushville NY 14544

Mary Coolbaugh, 585-747-3559, mcoolbaugh@mwcsd.org

Statement of need continued:

This project aligns well with your AEP strategies, including: Support activities to increase sales of Ontario County local food products through networking events, training, and public outreach initiatives. This project is important and timely to our students and the plant science industry and the local economy for several reasons.

First, with the recent addition of the hydroponic systems, student interest has increased over the last several years. This addition has led to lettuce and other vegetables being accessible to be include on school menus or offered for sale to our staff and community.

Second, many students are four generations removed from production agriculture as a means of earning a living and their understanding of agriculture is narrowly tied mainly to animal agriculture.

Third, with an increasing world population and only 20% of the American workforce connected to agriculture, we must engage and motivate students in projects that will extend and increase their agricultural literacy so that they can be prepared for the exciting and varied careers within agriculture, especially within our local economy. Through plant production on our campus, students will produce, promote, and market various vegetables that are grown hydroponically. We expect that this project will help "grow" continuing generations of students in this rewarding industry.

Project Timeline:

Upon obtaining the grant: Design the benches, and order the materials for the benches. Begin seeds, implement math and science labs with students related to germination, photosynthesis etc.

Throughout the year: Build benches with Greenhouse class. Reseed/start plants as needed. Harvest lettuce, cucumbers etc. to use at the cafeteria.

May 2026: Aside from growing vegetables for consumption at school, students are seeding and caring for hanging baskets, bedding plants and vegetable starts that will be sold at the annual plant sale. The benches that are being built from this grant funding allow students to gain real world skills to learn about greenhouse management and the process of running a successful greenhouse.

June 2026: Reports to funder and Board of Education.



ONTARIO COUNTY
Agriculture Enhancement Board

Frank Fessner, Chairman

July 17, 2025

Bradley Geroux, Senior Environmental Analyst
NYS Ag & Markets, Division of Land & Water Resources
10B Airline Drive,
Albany, NY 12235

Dear Mr. Geroux:

**RE: Final Notice of Intent to Undertaken an Action within an Agricultural District
New Michigan Road, T. Canandaigua, Ontario County Agricultural District # 1.**

Pursuant to Agricultural and Markets Law (AML) section 305(4), the Ontario County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board/Agriculture Enhancement Board (AEB) has completed its review of the Final Notice of Intent (NOI) filed with the Department of Agricultural and Markets (NYSDAM) by NYSERDA on behalf of Canandaigua CSG 1 LLC solar project dated 6/20/25.

The Ontario County Agriculture Enhancement Board values farmland and takes seriously its charge to review notice of intent filings and make findings and recommendations as to the effect and reasonableness of proposed actions involving the advance of public funds.

The Ontario County Agriculture Enhancement Board finds that the proposed solar project, proposed as a public utility use variance, is likely to have a detrimental impact on the viability of the 1,300 acres of nearby preserved farmland.

The applicant indicates 20 acres of the 46 acre parcel will be removed from agricultural use, However, the existing leasee, given their farm operation, the scale of their equipment, and the low quality of the soils on the gas pipeline easement, will lose access to the entire 46 acre parcel and to 5 to 6 acres on the properties to the south.

The proposed property is in Padelford Greenway and near 1,300 acres of permanently preserved farmland and several other proposed solar projects that have been reviewed unfavorably by Town of Canandaigua Agriculture Advisory Committee. The property is zoned AR-2 Agricultural Rural Residential -2. The Town of Canandaigua zoning regulations do not allow commercial and larger Tier 3 and 4 solar systems providing electricity to the grid and offsite users in the AR 2 district. Such solar facilities require a special use permit and are only

allowed in the I Industrial and CC Community Commercial zoning districts or as part of an Incentive Zoning proposal. Town of Canandaigua Comprehensive Plan p. 97 documents availability of 572 acres of vacant I Industrial or CC Community Commercial zoned land including 165 acres that do not have access to both water and sewer making them potentially more affordable for solar development.

The Town of Canandaigua Comprehensive Plan, on page 33 in a summary of the Town's 2016 Agricultural Enhancement Plan, includes a quote from Richard Ball, Commission of NYS Agriculture and Markets and a picture of Fa-Ba Farms, one of several farm operations with permanently preserved agricultural land in the area of the proposed solar project. The quote reads "I commend the Town for its initiative and effort in developing the plan." If NYS Agriculture and Markets finds that the proposed action would not have an unreasonably adverse effect on the continuing viability of farm enterprises within Ontario County Agricultural District #1 or on NYS Farmland preservation policies, that would undermine the Town of Canandaigua agricultural preservation efforts and New York State's substantial investment in nearby PDR projects.

Ensuring the project follows the NYSDAM *Guidelines for Solar Energy Projects –Construction Mitigation for Agricultural Lands* in their entirety will help to ensure that the construction impacts from the project are minimized and that the project could be returned to agricultural use if decommissioned, though that is unlikely, As part of NYSDAM guidelines the site plan sheet C 505 references NYSDAM soil restoration guidelines and should show top soil stockpiles in each disturbed location.

The Ontario County AEB also offers the following comments regarding potential impact to farm operations and agricultural resources:

- The project parcel is 46 acres. The leased facility area includes 22 acres of which 12.5 acres are MSG 3 and 0.8 acres have soils in Mineral Soil Group 2. The loss of these productive farm soils represents a minor impact to agricultural resources in Ontario County. However, the cumulative impact of this and other solar developments in Ontario County represent farmland conversion which may have direct impacts on farm operations and agricultural resources. This area of Ontario County is an active farming area and there is much competition for productive farmland.
- Ontario County comments to NYS on the draft Climate Action Plan identified disproportionate negative impacts on rural and agricultural areas. Half of all farmed land in Ontario County is owned by non-farmers. Losing the ability to lease and cultivate this land would negatively impact the viability of farming operations. Ontario County has also requested that a portion of the impact fee for conversion of prime farmland be returned to local municipalities for furthering their farmland preservation plans and that the impact fee apply to prime if drained land which has in fact been drained. Prime if drained lands account for 20 percent of soils in the Ontario County Agricultural district.

- The AEB and Ontario County Planning Department also note that the applicant /developer should be required to repair any existing field drainage damaged during development to protect the viability of other adjacent farmland.

If you have any questions or require further information, please contact Ontario County Planning Department AEB staff person, Linda Phillips at 585-396-4050 or

Linda.phillips@ontariocountyny.gov

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Frank Fessner".

Frank Fessner, Chair

Ontario County Agricultural Enhancement Board

Cc: Jared Simpson, Town of Canandaigua Supervisor
Development Office and ZBA Chair, Town of Canandaigua for inclusion in public record of
ZBA public utility use variance application