

# AGRICULTURAL ENHANCEMENT BOARD

November 5, 2025 at 6:00 PM

20 Ontario Street

Economic Development Conference Room 122A, Mezzanine Level  
Canandaigua, NY 14424

## 1. Call to Order

### a. Call to Order — Chair Fessner

The 11/05/2025 meeting of the Ontario County Agricultural Board was called to order at 20 Ontario St, Canandaigua, NY 14424 with Chairperson Frank Fessner presiding at 6:00PM.

## 2. Introductions

### a. Call for introductions — Chair Fessner

Upon roll call, the following members were:

#### Present:

Farmer Frank Fessner

Alternate for M. Tidball Jacob Maslyn

Sr. Planner - Alternate for T. Harvey Linda Phillips

Director of Real Property Tax Dennine Leeson

Alternate for M. Webster Tucker Kautz

Farmer Fred Lightfoote

Agribusiness Fernando Soberon

#### Present Not Voting:

Erin Holley

#### Absent:

Farmer Lisa FitzGerald

Ag Land Preservation Elizabeth Newbold

Supervisor to Ag Board Andrew Wickham

Farmer Jared Martin

Present, Voting 7, Present, Not Voting 1, Absent 4, Excused 0

#### Guests:

Joann Rogers

## 3. Approval of Minutes

### a. Motion to approve the August 12, 2025, minutes

Dennine Leeson motioned to approve the minutes of August 12, 2025. The motion was seconded by Jacob Maslyn. The motion passed.

#### 4. New Business

a. Informational - Appointments/Reappointments - N/A

b. Notices of Intent Correspondence

N/A

c. AEP Implementation Grants

Update - 2025 Implementation grant - Marcus Whitman CSD has purchased hydroponic grow towers and has been reimbursed. At the Middle School, students are learning about the importance of mineral blends and pH levels in the hydroponic system. They are able to harvest food to serve to students. At MWCS D high School, students are primarily growing a variety of lettuce mixes and experimenting with cucumbers. The addition of grow lights has made a significant difference and allows harvest every 21 to 30 days.

Canandaigua CSD Primary-Elementary Schools held their Farmers Market on Oct. 7, 2025.

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Canandaigua CSD Primary-Elementary Schools held their Farmers Market on Oct. 7, 2025. 1,300 students and 100 staff attended. All received voucher to purchase an item such as a gourd, pumpkin, apples, peaches, potatoes, carrots, or juice. Parents also received a flyer about the participating farms and a link to the FLVC website for more information on purchasing local foods and participating in farm-based events.

d. Informational - Requests for Grant Support Letters - N/A

e. Agricultural District Open Enrollment

Informational - Open enrollment - The Annual Open Enrollment period is Nov. 1 to 30, 2025. A request for inclusion form is posted on the website. Public Notices submitted for publication Oct. 25 in the Finger Lakes Times and Oct. 26 in the Canandaigua Messenger. A press release was distributed to print, radio, and broadcast media outlets on Oct. 27, 2025.

The Annual Open Enrollment period is Nov. 1 to 30, 2025. A request for inclusion form is posted on the website. Public Notices submitted for publication Oct. 25 in the Finger Lakes Times and Oct. 26 in the Canandaigua Messenger. A press release was distributed to print, radio, and broadcast media outlets on Oct. 27, 2025. The story has run on Finger Lakes Daily News. <https://www.fingerlakesdailynews.com/local/ontario-seneca-wayne/ontario-county-opens-enrollment-for-agricultural-district-no-1/>

As requested by Board, open enrollment form and information was sent directly to all supervisors and to Farm Bureau and Agricultural Society. S

f. Nominations for Chair

Informational - Nominations for Chair to Ag board in 2026 -

Frank and Tucker accepted nominations to continue as chair and vice chair of the Ag Board.

**Board Motion:** To Approve block nomination of Frank Fessner as chair and Tucker Kautz as Vice Chair for the Ag Board in 2026 Motion made by:Fernando Soberon, **Seconded by:** Fred Lightfoote. **Vote:** Yes 7, No 0, Abstained 0. **The Motion:** Passed

g. Website Updates

N/A

h. Informational - Communications -

Informational - Ontario County 2 Grow - NY Finalists -

Ontario County 2 Grow - NY Finalists - meeting / award will be presented next week Jacob Maslyn will be attending.

## 5. Old Business

## 6. Member Reports & Other Business

Tucker Kautz-finishing earthwork and seeding of 7 water storage projects and several manure storage projects. Several projects lost federal funding but SWCD was able to secure replacement funding from NYS. OCSWCD hosted 2 groups of college students from RIT, Genesee, and FLCC at Elvi Farms. American Dairy NE helped with transportation. Create opportunity for conservation and sustainability students to see a farm operation before they become policymakers and water quality researchers. Would like to host such tours annually and to interest students not just in farm/manure-based energy production, but also cover cropping and other conservation practices. Would like to expand to HWS students & FLI researchers. Used to be only 1 beef producer in Ontario County, now there are 6,  
Fernando Soberon-T. Canandaigua denied variances for the solar project on farmland on New Michigan Road. Solar and wind energy development companies must break ground on projects by end of 2026 to be eligible for state and federal incentives; firms may be pursuing 2<sup>nd</sup> tier projects in case others don't proceed.

Linda Phillips-Hopewell revised local law regarding prohibition of sewer sludge spreading and held another public hearing. I will be convening farmland PDR stakeholders, including CCE, SWCD, and 3 Ontario County Land Trusts on Nov. 13, 2025. Goal of discussion is to develop clear pathways for farmers to gain awareness of program, effort, and long timeline; program details sufficient to make a preliminary decision on participation; and clarifying geographic areas and appropriate applicant organizations. Continued County advocacy regarding electric grid investments for Ontario County.

Jacob Maslyn-CCE hosting pumpkin smashing/composting event. Participation in the 4-H Harvest fest cooking demonstration program has doubled. CCE Ontario annual meeting 11/18/25. Have Rooted in Learning grant to work with 5 school districts (Red Jacket, Canandaigua, Geneva, Bloomfield, and Midlakes) to expand agricultural literacy and local food purchases; the grant includes small grants to districts. Attending Grow NY Food and Agritech startup competition finals and summit Nov 12-13 at Hotel Canandaigua.

Fred Lightfoote-He and other Gorham farmers have been approached by wind energy development company, though he had previously been told his land and other higher ground in Gorham was not economically viable for wind energy development. The change may be that now 650' turbines rather than just 400' turbines are used. The financial feasibility of digesters has also changed, and they are now less attractive to investors. Also approached to provide farmer perceptions on solar energy development. At farm, adding a barn to allow the farm to support working and retired generations. The contractor keeps pushing out the completion date.

Joann Rogers – Attending not as USDA representative. The federal government shutdown continuing. She and 1 other USDA employee are working to support only Commodity Credit Corporation-funded programs.

Dennine Leeson and Frank Fessner-nothing to report

General discussion of milk supply expansion needed in New York State to satisfy existing Dairy Federation of America and Upstate customers, as well as new Fairlife plant and 3 Great Lakes Cheese manufacturing plants.

General discussion of regional nutrient balance; may not be enough production land to use all manure from cows following expanded production. It is complicated to involve off-farm

vegetable crop lands in a nutrient management plan. Currently, chicken manure is being shipped to NYS from PA; chicken manure is higher in phosphorus than cow manure and greater use of chicken manure could have water quality impacts. There are currently 5 large chicken barns under construction in Penn Yan area and 1 on Lake to Lake Road in Ontario County. CAFO size for chickens is 26,000 and these barns are for 20,000 birds. Once these are operational, hopefully importing of chicken manure will cease. Frank Fessner — nothing to report

## 7. Next Meeting

- a. Meeting options for January 2026. Please select Wed. 1/21, Thurs. 1/22, Mon. 1/26 or Tues. 1/27. The next meeting will be Thurs. 1/22/26.

## 8. Adjournment

- a. Meeting motion to Adjourn

**Board motion to:** Adjourn. **Motion made by:** Jacob Maslyn, **Seconded by:** Fred Lightfoote, **Vote:** Yes 7, No 0, Abstained 0. **The motion:** Passed. The Agriculture Enhancement Board meeting was adjourned at 7:30PM.