

NYASCOE Full Board Meeting

February 18, 2011, The Galleries, Syracuse, New York

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 am by President Laurie Fuess. Introductions were made and the following were present:

Laurie Fuess- President and Legislative Conference Attendee

Steve Ropitzky-Area V Director

Dean Pendergast-Past President and Legislative & NAFEC Chair

Scott Harrison-Membership Chair

Jennifer Rossetti-Benefits Chair and Legislative Conference Attendee

Colleen Wolfanger-Legislative Conference Attendee

Mary Jane Scoville-Area III Director

Kate Hemstreet-1<sup>st</sup> Vice President

Cecelia Karashay-Area IV Director

Dianne Button-Legislative Conference Attendee

Jean Davis-Area I Director and Scholarship Chair

Annette Hyman-NASCOE Secretary

Jamie Earl-Area II Director and Legislative Conference Attendee

Lorri Dandignac-2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President

Rob Gallinger-NE Area Legislative Chair and Legislative Conference Attendee

Dave Holck-Legislative Conference Attendee

A motion to approve the December 3, 2010 meeting minutes was made by C. Karashay and seconded by D. Pendergast. Motion carried.

Correspondence- A letter from Executive Officer Dennis to CED Bosley regarding temporary shared management between Clinton Essex and Franklin Counties was reviewed. The temporary shared management will begin February 14, 2011 and tentatively end in August. (The current COTs are scheduled to interview for vacancies on August 8, 2011.) This temporary shared management arrangement will be longer than permitted per 27-PM, par. 53 as it will exceed 120 days and a waiver has been requested from DAFO. As part of this arrangement CED Bosley will be provided with a government vehicle.

Area Reports are attached.

The attached Treasurer's report was reviewed along with the bills submitted at the meeting. A motion was made by L. Dandignac, seconded by J. Earl to approve the report and pay the bills. Motion carried.

#### Old Business:

Potential negation items-Training needs, specifically, HELC/WC. Telework. Centralized purchasing arrangement. SCIMS and Queries. (Phil Morehouse is retiring. Who will develop queries in the future?) Members are encouraged to submit potential negotiation items to a member of the NYASCOE Executive Board.

#### New Business:

A PowerPoint presentation produced by Kristen Dandignac was viewed. The presentation was intro to discussion regarding New York hosting the 2013 National Convention on Long Island. After discussion a motion was made by S. Ropitzky, seconded by J. Earl to prepare a bid for hosting the 2013 convention. Motion carried. A motion was made by D. Pendergast, seconded by D. Holck to approve travel expenses for L. Dandignac and another member to preview the proposed hotel prior to submitting the bid package to NASCOE.

The Northeast Area Rally, April 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>, in Maryland was discussed. A motion was made by J. Earl, seconded by K. Hemstreet to offer NYASCOE members 2 night's lodging and the registration fee be reimbursed by NYASCOE as incentive for members to attend the Rally. Motion carried.

The National Convention, August 10<sup>th</sup> through 13<sup>th</sup>, in Texas was discussed. Registration is due June 15<sup>th</sup> and early registration is encouraged as there will be rooms at two hotels and early registrants will be at the "main" hotel. A motion was made by J. Davis and seconded by J. Earl to offer members 3 nights lodging, registration and banquet fees as incentive for members to attend the Convention. Additionally, NYASCOE will pay travel expenses for two members to attend to promote our bid for the 2013 Convention.

#### General Discussion Items:

Budget, specifically the lack of an approved one. There has been discussion about a potential furlough. STO has been filling positions. No action can be taken or decisions made without a budget from Washington. Recommendation for members is to keep themselves informed and prepare for the worst case scenario.

A HELC/WC joint NRCS and FSA teleconference is scheduled for March, 21, 2011.

Recent barn collapses have led producers to review their insurance policies. In some cases producers with all peril insurance are not covered without a snow load rider. Members are encouraged to publicize this information to their producers. One county had a grain bin under FSFL cave in and that structure was not covered as the insurance was, per program provisions, simply all peril.

Feedback from employees indicates the trainings that are presented in a "workshop" format are more effective than the lecture format.

Service computation dates for employees who bought back time- these have changed again for some employees. Members are encouraged to make sure their dates are correct.

## Committee Reports:

Awards- F. Bender emailed the following information regarding awards: NYASCOE has submitted 3 awards to the NE Area for judging; they are in the categories of Service to NASCOE, Service to Community and Service to Agriculture.

Publicity- T. McKay emailed the following: Friday, March 4 is the deadline for items for The Waggin' Tongue. I'll be sending out a final reminder the beginning of next week. If you forward reports, etc. from this meeting I can include them in the March issue. There are no longer Area Publicity Contests. I've forwarded the newsletters and articles for the National Contest. Those winners are to be announced at a later date. Because I'm able to do everything through email now (even the Publicity Contest) there hasn't been any cost for The Waggin' Tongue. I want to encourage everyone to send items in. I don't like blank spaces much so even a short joke or a random picture is really appreciated.

Benefits-J. Rossetti reported on new NASCOE benefits at Shamu Club, Club Busch Gardens and Club Sesame Place.

Membership-S. Harrison reported on current membership levels, around 83%. We have some employees who were not members for many years who have recently (re)joined NYASCOE. We appreciate all members showing their support for the association.

Legislative-D. Pendergast and R. Gallinger reported on the upcoming Legislative Conference. The conference has many unknowns at this time due to the budget situation in Washington. Attendees were instructed to prepare for the conference by studying the budget proposals, FSA history and programs and representative backgrounds. The position papers delegates will be presenting will be prepared just prior to making actual visits as there are many, many variables at this time. A motion was made by C. Karashay, seconded by L. Dandignac to issue travel advances to attendees. Motion carried. Additional legislative topics-There have been a number of Cap Wiz alerts, members are encouraged to act promptly as many of the alerts are very time specific. Offices are encouraged to mail their representatives their newsletters.

NAFEC-CEDs need to send D. Pendergast the name and address of the COC member who is most likely to make best use of the NYASCOE paid NAFEC membership. If a name is not submitted, Dean will select a member. New CRP provisions greatly reduce the COC's role in administering CRP. Motion made by L. Dandignac, seconded by K. Hemstreet to reimburse travel expenses for Dean to attend NAFEC Legislative Conference in Washington, DC. Motion carried.

Scholarship-J. Davis discussed the upcoming scholarship deadlines. One application from New York has been received to date. Although submissions are now electronic, they are still to be submitted to the State Scholarship Chair prior to being submitted to the NE Area.

The next meeting will be held prior to the negotiation session with the State Committee, which will be scheduled to coincide with the STC meeting date after the Legislative Conference.

President Fuess adjourned the meeting at 3:05p.m.

## AREA 1 Report

Report submitted by Jean Davis, Director

### Area 1 Report

Congratulations to Colleen on winning the Legislative Trip. This is a great example of having nominal dues pay off in a BIG way. We hope it inspires other new employees to join NYASCOE!

Everyone is anxiously waiting to hear how FSA is going to handle the budget cuts.

Employees are very upset about the negative publicity going on concerning Federal Employees; They feel that the upcoming Legislative Conference is an excellent opportunity to educate on what FSA does; how hard we work; that we are not overpaid; that we are a “can do agency” and to providing positive facts.

SURE signup: Worksheets are being run for the SURE program; but only a few are coming up with an actual payment due.

The new software change for CARS is awesome; able to add predominant code and a bulk submit option.

Concerns: CARs handling nationwide crop reporting

Counties are very anxious for The Patch and are keeping fingers crossed that it will solve our Citrix problems and allow us to finish up our 2011 recons and have more accurate records as we sign up producers for DCP and prepare for acreage reports.

Counties are working on DCP and crop reports for hay only, CRP, fruit trees and vineyards. Many producers have not finalized the acreage that they will be using and what farms will be planted to F&V.

Counties do not like the DCP enrollment report; seems to be more of a negative than positive influence

Concern: HELC/WC. It still feels like as a state we aren't all on the same page. More training in this area is needed.

Wyoming and Cattaraugus have had several barns, a greenhouse and other farm structures collapse due to the heavy snow. A farmer from Wyoming County made the 6:00 pm local news. He had his barn collapse on approx 170 dairy cows. All of the cows were uncovered; only 5 had injuries but were able to walk out of the debris. It was expressed that when sometime like this happens, farmers come from all over to help.

Ted in Monroe County has been previewing DCP/ACRE procedure as part of a Field Directives Team for WDC. He has been in the group for several months now.

Management training was great! Hoping the PT training is just as beneficial!

Training for our trainers. All STO specialists are required to provide training as part of their jobs. It would be money well spent and a benefit for all of us if resources were invested in training our trainers to train.

Today, Western NY is under a flood warning due to warm temperatures and ice jams; and there still is a lot of snow...

## Area 2 Report

Jamie Earl, Area Director

### Offices and Programs

Offices are working on getting producers in to sign up for DCP. Many producers are coming into the offices to get their soil group worksheet done for their ag exemption. Many offices are contacting the MILC producers to get updated paperwork (primarily the CCC-926) for the possible MILC payment for January's milk. The latest estimated price per hundred weight was .08. Offices are working on getting field boundaries and recons completed before the rush of producers in the spring. Unfortunately, a few producers have suffered barn collapses due the heavy snow and ice. A producer in Steuben County was in the barn when the collapse occurred and was lucky to get out unscathed. In situations like these, the county offices have been completing the necessary paperwork in order to get a disaster declaration for possible emergency loans.

### Issues

There seems to be constant problems with the Citrix software. However, all county offices were instructed to stay off Citrix for a couple of days while the new patch was installed. This patch will supposedly fix all the editing errors that county offices are receiving while using Citrix. Another issue that was brought to my attention is the cancellation of the COC meetings. The original COC meetings had the COC members training with STO/DD personnel. Now, it is up to the CED to perform these trainings. A suggestion was that a DD could perform an abbreviated session at a COC meeting.

## Area III Report

-Mary Jane Scoville

Many county offices are focusing on DCP signups and getting any crop reporting done now that they can. The CARS software is slow, but the new upgrade on Wednesday did address some of the issues. The combination of CARS and thin client is just frustrating. Hopefully this 3<sup>rd</sup> patch for thin client will remedy the connectivity and maintenance tool issues that have been plaguing everyone. Offices are also preparing to make MILC payments the beginning of March, as the feed ratio pricing will probably bring about a payment on January production. Issues with sod/swamp are becoming heated. AD-1026's that have been sitting in NRCS offices for 1-3 years are just getting addressed, causing producers to be out of compliance. We're beginning to have several producers questioning their participation in FSA programs altogether. Is this only in our county or are other counties seeing this?

The recent snow storms have collapsed some area roofs and caused structure damage to a few local barns. Grain prices continue to be on the rise, combined with increased fuel and fertilizer prices may make it a tough year for all producers. With that, producers seem to be taking advantage of commodity loans with their low interest rate to help with their spring needs.

CED, Don LaPierre, retired as of January 1, 2011. Congratulations, Don....

## NYASCOE AREA IV Report

Cecelia Karashay, Area Director

Cortland/Chenango, Delaware/Broome, Dutchess/Putnam/Westchester/Ulster, Orange/Sullivan, Suffolk, Tioga/Chemung, \*Columbia/Greene

I didn't hear from a lot of offices.

Bob Almeter has a new grandson. Levi Bud Clark was born at 9:05 pm on 2/11/11, weighing in at 8# 15oz. and 21 inches long. His parents are Julie and Silas Clark and he joins his bother Rowan who recently turned 2.

Dutchess County is very busy. DCP signup is coming along nicely, and NRCS keeps us too busy with eligibility for their producers.

Laura Briggs - I am enjoying my family, taking care of my Dad, teaching Sunday School, and in June I will be the President of the Millbrook Lions' Club, so I continue to spread myself way too thin, but love every second of it.

Cel- I just attended my daughter Rachel's show choir performance at Suny Oswego. They did a great job. It is a new group for the school and they hope to be recognized soon. Take off of the "Glee" popularity.

Many concerns about budget, program cuts, and the rest of that "stuff" that we are hearing each day. Very disappointed with CITRIX and CARS. Hoping that the new Citrix upgrade will improve workability. Offices have been calling all hay producers to come in and complete DCP, AGI & crop reports. Farmers are happy to get everything done at one time and hopefully this will ease our burden later. . Just wish we could do the same with our crop producers. Have warned CAFO's to figure on several trips or to bring breakfast lunch & dinner with them to the office because of CARS, which are not making them or us happy.

Latest improvement to CARS is welcome and should ease some frustration.

Offices are busy but we feel frustration as when you say you are busy it is rebuffed. I would think that anyone would be pleased that our offices are busy – it is not a complaint, but a fact. Another thing you can share is that there is absolutely no reason to do a good job anymore. There are no awards, no certificates of appreciation for a job well done.....Our CED can put us in for TOA for our performance, but it gets stopped by our DD. We are only doing our job. BUT!!!! We are doing a damn good one. We happen to be proud of our work, and it

would be nice to have some acknowledgement of that. Yes, it is our job, but we could also be doing a stinky job doing it. Morale, I think, is at the lowest point that I have seen in my almost 28 years. We don't even know each other anymore, since there is no money to travel and have joint meetings or state-wide training. We are just alone in our little offices, doing everything that we should be doing, and that is it. In the same breath, I am thankful to have my job and be employed. I'm just saying that a little more encouragement and appreciation from the higher-ups would be very nice, don't you think?

## Area 5 Report

Steven A. Ropitzky

The big news in Area 5 counties are the number of barn collapses that have occurred in the first 2 weeks of February due to excessive snow load on barn and green house roofs. Saratoga and Rensselaer counties had approximately 20 barns/greenhouses in each county collapse due to snow load. Washington/Warren county had about 35 barn/greenhouse collapses. The most dramatic of the incidents was at STC Chairperson's farm, King's Ransom Farm LLC where a 60 x400 ft. section of a barn collapsed on the evening of February 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Approximately 35 cattle were killed by the collapse. Neighbors and friends responded quickly and were able to remove debris and rescue some of the other cattle that were trapped. Total cattle losses are estimated to be in the 70 to 80 head range. The barn housed around 225 dry cows and young stock. The other half of the barn (another 60 x 400 ft. section) collapsed on February 5<sup>th</sup> due to rain on top of the snow covered roofs. No cattle lost in the second collapse and no personal injuries throughout this disaster to anyone in the King family or their workforce. In Washington county approximately 10 cattle were lost due to dairy barn roof collapses. As of Wednesday an Administrator's designation had been made for Saratoga, Rensselaer and Washington counties as primary counties and triggered the availability of EM loans. We are working with the King's on a LIP application and the same is going on in Washington county. The network of friends and neighbors that responded to both events in Saratoga and Washington counties was both amazing and appreciated by the farm families who were affected.

Steve Ropitzky and COT Sandra Ferry attended Congressman Gibson's Agricultural Advisory Committee meeting on February 4<sup>th</sup> in Ballston Spa. Congressman Gibson and his staff think very highly of FSA and the agency's ability to implement farm programs.

Tom Della Rocco attending Senator Gillibrand's agricultural listening session in Cobleskill on February 18<sup>th</sup>.

Rensselaer County has hired a new Program Tech to replace Tara Quackenbush who went to work for the milk marketing administrator in Albany in December. Maureen Failing will start on February 28<sup>th</sup> in Rensselaer county. She is a Cornell University graduate, shows milking short horns and was working at Farm Credit East in Orange county before accepting the job with Rensselaer FSA.

Janelle Moore, Temporary PT in Saratoga County is expecting and will be out for maternity reasons starting April 12<sup>th</sup>.

Schoharie/Schenectady county FSA office is moving the first week of March from Cobleskill to a site on route 30A in the town of Schoharie near route 88.

Karen Burke of the Montgomery/Fulton/Hamilton FSA office will be retiring sometime in May 2011.

Bill Gibson's father-in-law passed away in the last week.

Steve Ropitzky, Dave Holck, Neal Needleman and FSA retirees Anne Prouty and Bob McCarthy attended Don LaPierre's retirement part on January 16<sup>th</sup>. The party was well attended by 100 plus people and NYASCOE presented Don with an appreciation award.

There are 2 COT's in our area training- Sandy Ferry in Saratoga and Tina McManus in Washington-Warren.

All offices are busy with programs and maintaining records in the thin client environment. Most offices are taking 2011 hay reports when producers come in to sign up for DCP.

There has been a concern expressed about our performance program that does not give us any guidance on what it take to exceed so we as Managers can share that with our employee's. It is coming up on Mid Term reviews and that is when we should be able to give them that information so they and we could be gathering the necessary documentation for doing this.

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