

**ADDITION OF VIABLE AGRICULTURAL LANDS  
NEW YORK STATE CERTIFIED AGRICULTURAL DISTRICTS  
ONONDAGA COUNTY**

February 2019

A Report to the Onondaga County Legislature

prepared by the

**ONONDAGA COUNTY AGRICULTURE AND FARMLAND PROTECTION BOARD**

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## INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings of the Onondaga County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board's (AFPB) 2019 review for the addition of viable agricultural land to agricultural districts in Onondaga County. The Onondaga County Legislature formally designated by Resolution 71 on April 5, 2004 an annual 30-day period in January when landowners can request that their land be added to an agricultural district.

Viable agricultural land, as defined in NYS Agriculture and Markets Law, Article 25-AA, Section 301, sub.7, is "...land highly suitable for a farm operation..." and a farm operation as defined in sub.11 is "...the land and on-farm buildings, equipment, manure processing and handling facilities, and practices which contribute to the production, preparation and marketing of crops, livestock and livestock products as a commercial enterprise... Such farm operation may consist of one or more parcels of owned or rented land, which parcels may be contiguous or noncontiguous to each other."

The requested additions were, therefore, examined primarily for the presence and characteristics of onsite and adjacent agricultural operations, agricultural production opportunities, location relative to existing agricultural districts, nearby development trends, and natural features.

## LANDOWNER REQUESTS

Landowners have requested that the following parcels be added to agricultural districts within Onondaga County. (Note, this report does not include parcels requested for addition which have been found to be currently enrolled in a certified agricultural district.) All of the proposed 2019 additions occur within Agricultural District 3.

2019 REQUESTED ADDITIONS				
DISTRICT	TOWN	OWNER	PARCEL	ACRES*
3	ELBRIDGE	ROBERT & DIANA SLEIERTIN	029.-03-14.2	6.87
3	LYSANDER	KARIN REEVES & DAVID BOWERS	032.-01-11.0	5.59
3	LYSANDER	REEVES FARMSLAND HOLDINGS LLC	032.-02-18.0	0.93
3	LYSANDER	REEVES FARMSLAND HOLDINGS LLC	032.-02-19.0	0.92
3	LYSANDER	REEVES FARMSLAND HOLDINGS LLC	032.-02-21.0	4.80
3	LYSANDER	REEVES FARMSLAND HOLDINGS LLC	032.-02-33.0	4.23
3	LYSANDER	REEVES PROPERTY RENTALS LLC	029.-01-12.0	4.04
3	LYSANDER	REEVES PROPERTY RENTALS LLC	032.-02-32.1	3.90
3	VAN BUREN	SALVATORE MONDELLO	054.-01-05.1	52.42
3	VAN BUREN	SALVATORE MONDELLO	054.-01-05.2	1.85
<b>District 3 Total</b>				<b>85.55</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>				<b>85.55</b>
* Calculated using a Geographic Information System, not Real Property Services (RPS) data.				

The following is a description of the properties requested to be added to Onondaga County Agricultural Districts, including aerial photography showing the proposed property, existing enrolled Agricultural District properties (shaded green), and area context.

### DISTRICT 3 REQUESTED ADDITIONS

ELBRIDGE (SLEIERTON): The owner of 980 Schaap Road in the Town of Elbridge requested the addition of a 6.87-acre parcel, as well as an adjacent parcel which she noted is in the process of being sold to the applicant. The Agriculture & Farmland Protection Board is only contemplating addition of parcel 029.-03-14.2 at 980 Schaap Road at this time. The second parcel is not being considered, as it is not owned or controlled by the applicant at this time.

The picture below on the left indicates Agricultural District enrollment in the area of the proposed parcel, generally on lands occurring south of Peru Road. The photo on the right includes layers indicating the presence of state (yellow) and federal (green) wetlands, and FEMA flood plains (pink). Wetland boundaries encroach slightly onto portions of the site.



The site is located in a transitional rural area with a mix of land uses. Surrounding land uses include wooded, vegetated and wet land, scattered agricultural uses, a former landfill and roadside residential. Zoning of the parcel and its surroundings is primarily agricultural, mixed with nearby municipal and rural residential zoning.

Another adjacent land use is the Erie Canal, which borders the northern edge of the parcel. The Erie Canal is a historic waterway, along which the State and local communities are currently partnering to establish and improve a statewide Empire State Trail (Canalway Trail) system, intended to attract recreation and tourism.

Per aerial photography, the site itself is developed at its frontage, with the remaining approximately five acres being flat, wooded land. The front of the parcel includes a house and detached garage, partially tarped due to a house fire in 2016. Surrounding the house and garage are areas of outdoor storage of household items and debris, and a temporary tent building. On open lands adjacent to the house, it appears that in recent years, various small areas of fencing and small structures have been added to the site.

Aerial photography does not show obvious agricultural use of the land. Per the Agricultural District request form, the nature of agricultural production associated with this land include (or is to include) a “small goat herd used for ‘pest weed’ land clearing; used for bee hives/honey production by apiary; small animals used for agricultural education and therapy; may expand back into garlic farming (small farm stand sales); want to include chicken flock for fresh eggs”.

Both the applicant and Town Code Enforcement Office indicated the property has been the subject of conflict for several years. The applicant expressed to Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency (SOCPA) staff that she would like Agricultural District protections in part to help defend against complaints by the Town and neighbors. The Town Code Enforcement Office provided information regarding a number of citations in recent years, in relation to the uninhabitable house resulting from fire damage, newly constructed accessory and temporary structures in violation of zoning code, unlawful storage of garbage, vehicles and refuse on the site, and numerous domestic animals on site.

In reference to the animals, a 2017 letter from the Code Enforcement Officer noted that town code prohibits the use of the land for its current “zoo” and animal shelter, and the current use is not agricultural, and as such, does not fall under NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets laws and definitions. A 2018 Code violation cited numerous animals on the property in which the occupants appear to be conducting animal boarding, an unlawful use of land in an Agricultural zoning district.

Per the Code Enforcement Officer, while various animals are housed on site, including several dogs and other non-agricultural related animals (presumably related to the former MaxMan Reptile Rescue operation), he has not witnessed any goats or other farm animals on site.



LYSANDER (REEVES): A combination of landowners and parcels, all affiliated with the Reeves Farms in Lysander, are requesting addition of a total of 24.41 acres on 7 parcels to Agricultural District 3.

Reeves Farms is a fourth-generation wholesale, retail farm stand and pick-your-own fruit and vegetable farming operation west of the Village of Baldwinsville. Reeves farm encompasses over 1,000 acres of tillable land and employs a seasonal workforce of 50-60 people (*reevesfarms.com*). Each of the parcels being proposed for addition is noted to be contributing to the overall farm operation. The related parcels include the following:

REEVES FARMS AFFILIATED PROPERTIES REQUESTING ADDITON				
DISTRICT	TOWN	OWNER	PARCEL	ACRES*
3	LYSANDER	KARIN REEVES & DAVID BOWERS	032.-01-11.0	5.59
3	LYSANDER	REEVES FARMSLAND HOLDINGS LLC	032.-02-18.0	0.93
3	LYSANDER	REEVES FARMSLAND HOLDINGS LLC	032.-02-19.0	0.92
3	LYSANDER	REEVES FARMSLAND HOLDINGS LLC	032.-02-21.0	4.80
3	LYSANDER	REEVES FARMSLAND HOLDINGS LLC	032.-02-33.0	4.23
3	LYSANDER	REEVES PROPERTY RENTALS LLC	029.-01-12.0	4.04
3	LYSANDER	REEVES PROPERTY RENTALS LLC	032.-02-32.1	3.90

\* Calculated using a Geographic Information System, not Real Property Services (RPS) data.

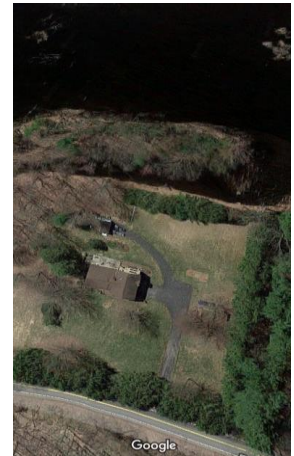
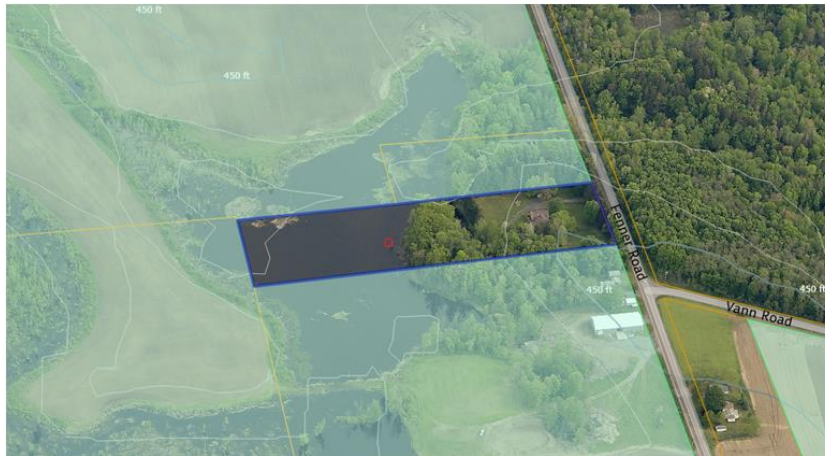


A description of each parcel, starting with the northernmost on the map, follows:

Parcel 029.-01-12.0 is a 4.04-acre parcel along Reeves Road, near the main Reeves Farmstead. The parcel is fully surrounded by both Agricultural District enrolled lands and actively farmed lands. The parcel itself contains a house, outbuildings, two uninhabited concrete block buildings, and a pond area. The request form indicates the parcel contains support land (pond for irrigation) for the farm.



Parcel 032.-01-11.0 is a 5.59-acre parcel on Fenner Road, which contains a single-family house, garage, and a significant portion of a pond, which is noted as used for irrigation for Reeves Farm LLC.



Parcel 032.-02-33.0 is a 4.23-acre parcel at the corner of Fenner Road and Vann Road. The site is surrounded by Agricultural District enrolled lands and contains portions of a large tilled field. The site also contains a single-family house, garage and shed.



Parcel 032.-02-32.1 has frontage along Vann Road, across from Agricultural District enrolled lands, a Reeves Farm barn, and actively farmed fields. The 3.9-acre subject parcel contains open land and a house across from the barn. The request form states the lands proposed for addition are for vegetable and crop production and support land for these crops.



Parcels 032.-02-18.0, 032.-02-19.0, and 032.-02-21.0 are each landlocked, wooded parcels set back from West Genesee Street (NYS Route 370) east of the Village of Baldwinsville. These parcels, with a combined acreage of 6.65 acres, are part of a larger wooded area totaling approximately 65 acres. The relatively flat land area is bound to the north and east by tilled acreage farmed by Reeves Farm. Several parcels enrolled in the Agricultural District surround the parcels being requested for addition. Reeves Fruit Stand is located just south of the subject parcels along NYS Route 370.



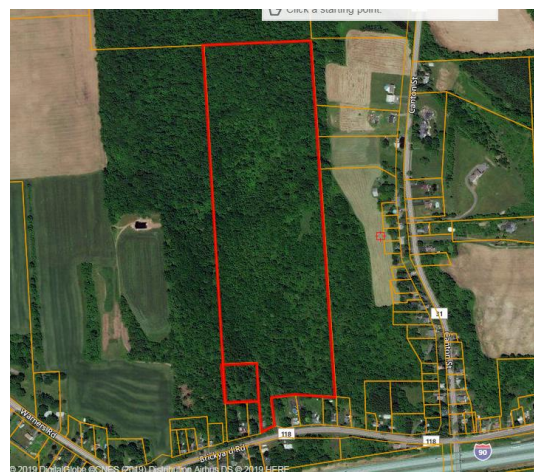
**VAN BUREN (MONDELLO):** Two adjacent parcels under common ownership are proposed for addition in the Town of Van Buren. Per the request form, the land is to be used for “cultivation of the existing fruit plants and apple trees, production of garlic, and for the raising of livestock for meat, and the overall nature of production will be to manage the farm for a commercial profit”.

The combined acreage of the two parcels is 54.3 acres. The site contains an existing house near the approximately 100-foot frontage along Brickyard Road. The remainder of the parcel is largely wooded land.

While aerial photography does not clearly show a distinct area of cultivated fruit trees, the Town Code Enforcement Officer recalled the potential presence of an orchard type of use on the land at one time.

The site is located in an area generally considered rural, although roadside housing is prevalent near the site. The parcel is of adequate size for the proposed uses, and is in close proximity to both agriculturally cultivated land and is surrounded by lands currently enrolled in the Agricultural District.

At its frontage along Brickyard Road, five existing homes abut the proposed parcel, and approximately 25 homes are situated within 500 feet to the south and east of the parcel. Existing tilled lands occur between the site and some of the homes, and wooded areas also provide some buffering.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

The farm sector in Onondaga County is strong and stable and the Onondaga County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan, Onondaga County 2010 Development Guide and municipal planning documents identify protection of agriculture and farmland as an important goal for preserving the character of rural areas.

As mentioned in the Introduction to this report, the requested additions were examined primarily for the presence and characteristics of onsite and adjacent agricultural operations, agricultural production opportunities, location relative to existing agricultural districts, nearby development trends, and natural features.

The requested tax parcel 029.-03-14.2 in the Town of Elbridge does not exhibit existing onsite commercial agricultural operations, nor is the site associated with an existing farm operation. Agricultural production opportunities cited in the request form do not appear at this time to constitute a potential commercial farm enterprise by NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets definitions or typical sales thresholds at this time. As such, this parcel is not recommended to the County Legislature for addition to Agricultural District 3.

The Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board recommends adding the remaining nine requested parcels to Agricultural District 3, as they have demonstrated all or most of the abovementioned desired characteristics.



The total acreage being recommended for addition is 78.68 acres. The Board notes its recommendations to the Onondaga County Legislature in the following table:

<b>ONONDAGA COUNTY AGRICULTURAL DISTRICTS 2019 RECOMMENDED ADDITIONS</b>				
<b>DISTRICT</b>	<b>TOWN</b>	<b>OWNER</b>	<b>PARCEL</b>	<b>ACRES*</b>
3	LYSANDER	KARIN REEVES & DAVID BOWERS	032.-01-11.0	5.59
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3	VAN BUREN	SALVATORE MONDELLO	054.-01-05.2	1.85
<b>District 3 Total</b>				<b>78.68</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>				<b>78.68</b>
One requested parcel was not recommended for addition in 2019 (Elbridge, 029.-03-14.2).				
* Calculated using a Geographic Information System, not Real Property Services (RPS) data.				

## APPENDICES

Resolution - Annual 30-Day

Media - News Release

Form - Annual Additions Request

Resolution - Public Hearing Notice

Notice - Public Hearing Notice

Letter - Public Hearing Landowner

Minutes - Public Hearing

Resolution - Approval

Map – Annual Additions Map

SEQRA - Environmental Assessment Form

# Onondaga County Agricultural Districts 2019 Requested Additions

