

Thomas E. Boldin, Chair
Thomas Songer III
Ronald J. Hoover



Joseph Homan
Cindy B. Harding
Dennis E. Buffington
Diana Griffith, Coordinator

CENTRE COUNTY AGRICULTURAL LAND PRESERVATION BOARD

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MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF JANUARY 27, 2022

Present: T. Boldin; T. Songer; J. Homan; R. Hoover; D. Buffington; R. Wheland; C. Harding

Staff: Diana Griffith (Centre County Planning Office)
Stacy Mann (Centre County Planning Office)
Raymond Stolinas (Centre County Planning Office)
Allyson Ulsh (Centre County Conservation District)

Public: Diane Homan, Ed Dunkelberger

The meeting was called to order by Chair Boldin at 7:30 p.m. The meeting was held in Room 146 of the Willowbank Office Building and was recorded for future reference.

Introductions

Guests introduced themselves. The Board introduced themselves to Diane Homan, who has submitted an ABC application for appointment to the Board to fulfill her late husband Carl Homan's term.

Public Comment

Mr. Dunkelberger, who recently purchased the preserved Hartle Farm on Buffalo Run Road (Route 550), made the board aware of an issue he has with a power line that parallels Route 550 approximately 150 feet into his farm fields. He contacted West Penn Power about relocating the nine poles and was quoted a cost of \$10,000 a pole. Because this farm will be in agriculture forever, he is looking for an affordable way to relocate the poles. Asking the Board for support is his first step before consulting with the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, Centre County Commissioners, and Pennsylvania legislators. Ms. Griffith advised that Mr. Dunkelberger had informed her of this issue during his fall inspection, and that she had followed up by consulting with the Pennsylvania Bureau of Farmland Preservation. Bureau Director Doug Wolfgang advised Ms. Griffith he agreed that the poles present an obstacle and said he supports Mr. Dunkelberger's intent to remove them; however, the Bureau can offer no financial assistance. Mr. Wolfgang also consulted with Deputy Agriculture Secretary Cheryl Cook, who said Mr. Dunkelberger could consider moving the poles underground or apply for REAP program assistance as part of a larger-picture energy project. Mr. Dunkelberger indicated he was not interested in either of those options and asked the board for support. Chair Boldin stated that Mr. Dunkelberger's request would be added to the February 24, 2022 agenda.

Moment of Silence for Carl Homan

Approval of Minutes

On a motion by Mr. J. Homan and seconded by Mr. Songer, the Board voted to approve the minutes of the September 23, 2021 meeting. Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

Board Reorganization

Vice-Chair is currently Mr. Songer; Mr. Wheland nominated Mr. Songer; Mr. Buffington closed the nomination, and all voted to retain Mr. Songer as Vice-Chair. Motion carried.

Secretary is currently vacant; Mr. Hoover nominated himself; Mr. Songer closed the nomination, and all voted to appoint Mr. Hoover as Secretary. Motion carried.

Treasurer is currently vacant; Mr. Buffington nominated Mr. Wheland; Mr. Hoover closed the nomination, and all voted to appoint Mr. Wheland as Treasurer. Motion carried.

Approval of 2022 Meeting Schedule

A meeting schedule was presented for 2022. On a motion by Mr. Songer and seconded by Ms. Harding, the Board voted to approve the meeting dates as presented. Motion carried.

Opening of Farm Appraisal Bids

Ms. Griffith presented the board with one bid packet. The packet was opened and presented the board with the rate of \$1,750 for a standard State appraisal and \$2,500 for a Federal appraisal. A motion was made by Mr. Songer and seconded by Mr. Hoover to approve Brian Pedrick of Agrarian Associates for a period of two years, with the option to retain for a third year.

Chair Boldin asked if there was discussion on the motion. Mr. Wheland stated that he and Ms. Harding have discussed the appraisal process. He said when his farm was selected for an appraisal, he read the law and interpreted it as requiring the appraisal to compare farmland that was sold and remained farmland with farmland that was sold for development. Mr. Wheland made the statement that Mr. Pedrick does not appraise that way, saying his comparables are farms that have retained their rights, compared to farmland that has changed hands having sold their development rights. Mr. Wheland made the statement that he advised Mr. Pedrick that is not what the law says, and said Mr. Pedrick replied that he knows this is the case “but that is the way we do it.” Mr. Wheland stated he made the same observation to former agland preservation coordinator Sarah Walter and stated that Ms. Walter replied she had the same reaction and agreed with Mr. Wheland. He also stated that Ms. Walter contacted the state bureau and was told, “Yeah we know that is what the law is but that’s the way we do it.” Mr. Wheland stated “everybody has said, ‘Yeah we know what the law is but that is the way we do it.’”

Ms. Griffith stated that Mr. Pedrick compares farms to any that have recently sold – either farms that retain their development rights (but remain active in ag operations) or farms that have been preserved. She added that when no comparable sales have recently taken place in the county, the appraiser is permitted to use out-of-county comparables, provided that the county board is informed of this limitation and approves. She cited an email from her predecessor, Norm Lathbury, which informed the board when this was the case.

After a lengthy discussion, the board tabled action on the motion until the state can verify that farms are being appraised consistent with the law. On a motion by Mr. Songer and seconded by Ms. Harding, the Board voted to table any action until clear verification can be obtained from the state. Motion carried.

Review of Conservation Plan Requirements

Ms. Ulsh presented the board with a presentation of the similarities of the NRCS and Ag E&S/Manure Management plans that were recently prepared for the Burket Farm. After board discussion on the content of both plans, the board requested comparable information from other counties. Ms. Griffith had provided the board with a summary of conservation plan requirements that she compiled from her fellow ag land preservation coordinators around the state. On a motion by Mr. Hoover and seconded by Mr. Buffington to table any action, Mr. Hoover asked Ms. Griffith to contact Lancaster County to see whether the Amish are permitted to have only Ag E&S and manure management plans. Motion carried.

Educational Opportunities

Ms. Griffith presented other County bylaws as examples to improve its self-governance and promote its mission. After discussion of whether it is necessary or advisable to review its bylaws, the board tabled any action. The board agreed to revisit the discussion at the next meeting.

COORDINATOR'S REPORT

Certification of 2021 Agricultural Preservation Funds

Ms. Griffith stated that the Board of Commissioners have approved the certification of funds at their January 18, 2022 meeting. The signed certification of funds was then submitted to the Bureau of Farmland Preservation on January 28, 2022.

County Match	\$80,000
Rollback Tax	\$32,659
Municipal Contribution from Ferguson Township	\$2 (\$1 to each of the Burket and Miller farms)
Total	\$112,661

PACE Applicants' Status

Pauline E. Cooper Estate closed on November 19, 2021.

Larry F. and Suzanne M. Harpster closed on January 19, 2022.

The Board is awaiting responses to a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the Nancy A. and Webb C. Miller survey; they are due by and to be opened at the March board meeting.

The David G. Burket farm's enrollment in the Ferguson Township ASA is being resolved and should be completed by February 22.

Education and Communication

The Soil Health Stewardship Plan and Training Presentation and the Farm Inspection Photo Presentation will be presented at a later date.

Ms. Griffith asked everyone to take a save-the-date card for the Soil Health Workshop on September 13 at the Happy Valley Winery and catered by Prospectors.

ITEMS FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Board is scheduled for February 24, 2022 in Room 146 of the Willowbank Office Building beginning at 7:30 p.m.

Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. Buffington and seconded by Ms. Harding, the meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m. Motion carried.

Submitted by,

Diana Griffith
Recording Secretary