

Thomas E. Boldin, Chair
Thomas Songer III, Vice-Chair
Dennis E. Buffington
Cindy B. Harding
James Heckman



Ronald J. Hoover, Secretary
Ralph Wheland, Treasurer
Diane Homan
Joseph Homan
Diana Griffith, Coordinator

CENTRE COUNTY AGRICULTURAL LAND PRESERVATION BOARD

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MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF APRIL 28, 2022

Members Present: T. Boldin; T. Songer; D. Buffington; R. Wheland; D. Homan; J. Homan

Members Absent: C. Harding; J. Heckman; R. Hoover

Staff Present: Diana Griffith; Stacy Mann; Raymond Stolinis

Others Present: None

1. Call to Order – Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Boldin welcomed board members and guests, and called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m., announcing that the meeting was being recorded.

2. Additions to the Agenda

None.

3. Introduction of Guests and Opportunity for Public Comment

None

4. Approval of Minutes

On a motion by Mr. Songer and seconded by Mr. Homan, the Board voted to approve the minutes of March 24, 2022 meeting. Motion carried.

5. Old Business

- a. **Follow-up on Request for ALPB Support for ROW Relocation:** Ms. Griffith reported on the Pennsylvania Bureau of Farmland Preservation's follow-up to Mr. Ed Dunkelberger's request for assistance. She presented a map showing the location of the telephone poles on Mr. Dunkelberger's farm and their distance from the road. In addition, she shared a letter of support that Bureau Director Douglas Wolfgang sent to Mr. Dunkelberger, followed by a summary of the email Mr. Wolfgang sent to her explaining West Penn Power's response. The email thread noted that West Penn Power agreed the power lines could be moved, but relocating them would have to be at Mr. Dunkelberger's expense. The West Penn Power engineer indicated that even if relocated, the poles would still be in the agricultural field.
- b. **Review of Bylaws:** Will be proposed for discussion at the May 26th meeting.

c. **Board Orientation:** Will be proposed for discussion at the September 22nd meeting.

6. **New Business**

a. **Survey Bids for the David G. Burket Farm:** Ms. Griffith opened and presented two bids received for the Burket Farm Survey:

GeoTech Engineering - \$5,950

Land Services Group - Cunningham Surveys - \$3,500

On a motion by Mr. Songer and seconded by Mr. Wheland, the Board voted to award the bid to Land Services Group for the price of \$3,500 for the Burket Farm in Ferguson Township. Motion carried.

b. **Review the Top Four Applicants on the 2022 Ranked PACE Waitlist**

Ms. Griffith reported that 2022 evaluations of our PACE applicants have been completed, and the board has received the complete PACE Ranked wait list with 36 currently active applicants. Four top applicants have been identified and are being presented to the board this evening.

i. **Cynthia Barker Farm in Potter Township**

77.7586 acres with a final score of 79.696

On a motion by Mr. Songer and seconded by Mr. Buffington, the Board voted to move forward to preserve the Barker Farm in Potter Township. Motion carried.

ii. **Larry, Suzanne and Dawn Harpster Farm in Ferguson Township**

101.932 acres with a final score of 75.075

Mr. Wheland questioned a discrepancy in the conservation plan, noting it omits field 15 from the parcel proposed for preservation. Ms. Griffith agreed to reach out to the landowner to clarify and update with NRCS.

On a motion by Mr. Songer and seconded by Mr. Buffington, the Board voted to move forward to preserve the Harpster Farm in Ferguson Township pending clarification on the NRCS Conservation Plan covering all farmland. Motion carried.

iii. **Leo and Bernard Corl Farm in Benner Township**

152.367 acres with a final score of 74.269

On a motion by Mr. Songer and seconded by Mr. Buffington, the Board voted to move forward to preserve the Corl Farm in Benner Township. Motion carried.

iv. **Strickler Living Trust Farm in Walker Township**

77.0442 acres with a final score of 73.949

On a motion by Mr. Buffington and seconded by Mr. Wheland, the Board voted to move forward to preserve the Strickler Farm in Walker Township, pending having the NRCS conservation plan on file. Motion carried.

7. **Correspondence**

None.

8. Coordinator's Report

Encumbered Funds

Ms. Griffith addressed a question raised at the last board meeting about how to avoid losing encumbered funds, and a suggestion by Mr. Wolfgang to start approving farms as early as April if possible. She revisited that discussion to explain the reason for the lost funds, how staff communicated this unusual circumstance (according to the State's records, it previously occurred in 2002, 2003, and 2012), and how staff plans to deal with it now and prevent it from happening in the coming years.

She noted the following:

- The loss of encumbered funds was explained to the Centre County Commissioners during our request for Certification of 2022 funds as an unusual circumstance – in that the acreage on these farms are smaller than average, and no other top ranked PACE applicant met County Board requirements in time to meet our encumbering deadline.
- Mr. Wolfgang and the Commissioners understood that this can happen because of late timing issues, should applicants not be able to meet requirements, or change their minds about moving forward. A detailed description of this development was provided to the ALPB.
- With those facts in mind, our plan – as suggested by Mr. Wolfgang – is to present applicants as early as possible in the year to allow sufficient time for any unexpected circumstances to be resolved. We have taken the first step in that plan by presenting four applicants to the board this evening.
- Having committed \$288,518 of encumbered 2020 funds to spend, the balance that was not encumbered – \$222,602.69 – will be distributed to other Pennsylvania counties in 2023. However, that figure is only an estimate, as the State will also reimburse the County for incidental costs on both the Burket and Miller agricultural conservation easements. Therefore, the amount we are unable to use will likely be smaller than that.
- As of April 21, according to the Bureau, we have at our disposal all of our 2021 (\$505,650) and 2022 (\$534,693) State allocated funds, for a total of \$1,040,343. In addition, we have \$701,385 remaining in our County funds, for a total of \$1,741,728. This will be enough to fund three and as many as four additional agricultural conservation easements in 2022.

State College Connector Project

Ms. Griffith also reported that she met with preserved farm landowners and with PennDOT's consultants at the second round of public meetings on the State College Connector Project. Two routes would significantly impact our preserved farms. The one through Earlstown Road and Brush Valley Road would cut a swath through the Donald and Teresa Grove and Edgar Leightley/Mary Resides farms. An option through Route 322 would impact a multitude of preserved farms as well as CREP enrolled farms. Skelly and Loy consultant Eric Bruggeman said he is optimistic that upgrading the existing highway would be the most likely option. There would still be collateral damage but it would not have as great an impact on our preserved farms.

9. Items for the Good of the Order

None

10. Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. Songer and seconded by Mr. Buffington, the meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m. Motion carried.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Board is scheduled for May 26, 2022 in Room 146 of the Willowbank Office Building beginning at 7:30 p.m.

Adjournment

Submitted by,

Diana Griffith
Recording Secretary