

**MONTGOMERY COUNTY
AGRICULTURAL LAND PRESERVATION BOARD**

February 9, 2021 – 3:30 P.M.

[Zoom Teleconference](#)

Meeting ID#: 915 8113 3671

Meeting Password: 707986 (267 831 0333 from phones)

BOARD MEMBERS ATTENDING: Jonathan Rinde; Brett Altman; John Corkum; Stephen Quigley; Marla Hexter

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: None

STAFF ATTENDING: Anne Leavitt-Gruberger; Yvonne Montgomery; Stephen Zbyszinski, Ann Marie Meehan

PRESS: None

GUESTS: Elizabeth Emlen; Terry Bird, Dulcie Flaharty, Abby Reiter

1. Call to Order

The public meeting was called to order at 3:32 p.m. by Jonathan Rinde. Roll was called; as all five board members were virtually present, it was determined that a quorum was achieved. There was no public comment.

2. Minutes of the January 12, 2021 Meeting

ACTION

Mr. Jonathan Rinde called for comments on the minutes of the January 12, 2021 meeting.

A motion was made by Mr. Altman and seconded by Mr. Corkum to approve the minutes of the January 12, 2021 Farm Board Meeting. The motion was approved unanimously.

3. Status of Farmland Preservation Program-2020 Applicants Update

Mr. Stephen Zbyszinski said the 5 farm applications from the 2020 round moving forward with settlement were Black, Lutchendorf, Melanson, Geverd, and AFZ LLC. He has the signed agreements of sale and staff will be presenting them shortly to Ms. Montgomery of the County Solicitor's Office and

Mr. Rinde, Farm Board Chair, for their signatures so they can be submitted to the state prior to March 31, 2021. The grant funds for 2020 must be used up by the end of 2021.

4. 2021 Farmland Preservation Applications Overview

Ms. Leavitt-Gruberger stated that there were five new applications and two reapplications (Schoenly and Moser) received for the 2021 Farmland Preservation Program. She provided an overview of each farm under consideration:

a) New Goshenhoppen Church Farm

Located in Upper Hanover Township and adjacent to preserved farmland, the entire 18+ acres parcel of land is farmed by members of the Niehls family where they grow crops. This farm also received the highest desirability rating as assessed by staff.

b) Anna Barndt Spousal Trust Farm

Located in Salford Township, this parcel is less than 10 acres and therefore does not qualify for state funding. Crops are grown on the land; it received a 63.84 ranking by staff.

c) Gwinn Kent Farm

This is a 19.29 acre equine farm (boarding 12-15 horses) in Upper Frederick, and therefore would be a county only purchase). It received a ranking of 51.28.

d) Kenneth Schoenly Farm

Crops and livestock are raised on this 17 acre parcel located in Douglass Township, adjacent to the Moser property.

e) Hidden Creek Stock Farm

Located in Upper Frederick Township, this 47.88 acre farm ranked 37.13 because of poor soil quality, and therefore does not qualify for the preservation program. There is not enough percentage of land in agricultural production and it does not meet our soil standards of having at least 50% of the farm's soils in NRCS classes I-IV.

f) James and Susan Myers Farm

This maple syrup farm on 29.37 acres located in Salford Township received a 30.84 rank due to its soil quality. Excluding a small amount of land from preservation could make this property eligible for state preservation funds.

g) Greg Moser Farm

Located in Douglass Township, this 30 acre farm where crops are being grown is ranked 61.44 is adjacent to other Moser properties

5. Executive Session

Mr. Rinde convened the Board into executive session to discuss its official recommendations for the 2021 applications. The meeting resumed following the executive session.

6. 2021 Appraisal Recommendations

ACTION

Ms. Leavitt-Gruberger said that a public motion should be made to appraise the properties that the Board would like to recommend following the Executive Session discussion.

A motion was made by Mr. Quigley and seconded by Mr. Altman to approve the appraisals of the New Goshenhoppen, Barndt, Kent, Schoenly, Moser, and Myers farms. The motion was approved unanimously.

7. Annual Summary

Mr. Zbyszinski provided a recap of what occurred in the county's Farmland Preservation Program in 2020. The county attained its goal of preserving 10,000 acres of farmland. There were 7 farms with a combined 309 acres preserved in 2020. The farms preserved were: Banyacsky (24 acre crop farm in Perkiomen Township); Frankenfield (18 acres, grain/pumpkin crops in Franconia Township); Latshaw (61 acres in Upper Hanover Township); McKeown (26 acres in Plymouth Township, livestock and crops); Melanson (36 acres, grain in Franconia Township); Stokes (117 acres, grain crops in New Hanover Township); and Tim (30 acres, grain/hay in New Hanover Township).

Mr. Zbyszinski added that the staff produced and hosted a webinar for new applicants, participated in a podcast hosted by PA Environmental County Council, produced one newsletter, two brochure updates, and produced a video on the achievement of the 10,000 acre preserved farmland goal. The 6th Keep Farming Conference that the county staff would have planned was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and will instead be held in early 2022.

8. Next Farm Board Meeting Date: March 9, 2021

Ms. Leavitt-Gruberger announced that the next Farm Board meeting will be held on March 9, 2021

9. Adjournment

A motion was made by Ms. Hexter and seconded by Mr. Corkum to adjourn the public meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Ann Marie Meehan