



CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

450 Columbus Blvd, Suite 703 | Hartford, Connecticut 06103 | 860.713.2500

Bureau of Agricultural Development & Resource Conservation

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FARMLAND PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD

MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, January 19, 2023

9:00 – 10:30am

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

- Robin Chesmer (Chairperson), Jiff Martin (Chairperson), John Hall, Jason White, Will O'Meara, Robert Chang, Benjamin Freund, Joan Nichols

DOAG STAFF PRESENT:

- Holly Lalime, Cam Weimar, Jaime Smith,

PUBLIC PRESENT:

- Chelsea Gazillo

Meeting Called to Order at 9:05AM by Chairperson Robin Chesmer

Approve December Meeting Minutes:

- Joan Nichols made a motion to approve the December meeting minutes, Jiff Martin seconded the motion. Board voted to approve the meeting minutes.

PDR Programs Report:

- The Department closed on 9 farms in 2022 covering 652 acres. The Department is still experiencing delays with NRCS ALE, but DOAG staff are working weekly with NRCS to close projects.
- There were 2 PDR closings after December 15th. Orr Fort Hill Farm 4 in Thompson and Green Gate Farm in Lebanon.
- Award decisions and announcements for the 2023 Farmland Restoration Grant will be announced by the end of next week. Approximately \$365,000 requested over 25 projects
- Farmlink update: There were 11 matches made during in 2022, 37 new farmland profiles and 236 new farm seeker profiles. The website has 72 farmland profiles and 393 farmland seeker profiles. A full time with benefits Farmlink Coordinator position will be posted in the coming weeks with an application deadline for the end of February.

- The Farmland Preservation Regulations are expected to be released by OPM in the coming weeks and will then be available for public comment.
- The Climate Smart Agriculture Grant closed yesterday. The Department received 78 applications for over \$75 million. There are \$7 million available for funding. Contracts are slated to be executed in May.
- The Department's first position for the Climate Smart Agriculture initiative has an extended offer that was accepted.

Decision on Chair and Vice Chair Positions:

- Robert Chang made a motion to nominate Will O'Meara as Chairperson and Jiff Martin as Co-Chairperson. Robin Chesmer seconded the motion. Board voted in favor.

Discuss board vacancy

- The board will put together a list a recommended names for the one board vacancy and discuss nominations at the next meeting.

Update on the Farmland Brainstorming Session (OPAV, BPS, PDR Subdivision)

- The latest meeting focused on Buy Protect Sell and PDR subdivision.
- The CT Green Bank would potentially have the ability to use Green Bank money to help fund Buy Protect Sell Projects.
- The ability to do subdivision after closing would reduce staff time needed for PDR projects but would also potentially reduce the value of the conservation easement.
- The Board requested that DOAG make a presentation at the next meeting outlining their reasoning behind wanting to pass subdivision legislation

Discussion regarding strategic use of NRCS ALE program funds:

- What parameters should be used when deciding when to use ALE funds for a PDR project?
 - Farm size, estimated value, project readiness, projects in crisis....

Public Comment:

- No public comment.

Jiff Martin made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Jason White seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 10:32am.