

FPAB June Meeting  
Thursday, June 17, 2021

DRAFT Meeting Minutes (taken by Holly Lalime)

FPAB Members Present: Robin Chesmer (Chair), Jiff Martin (Vice Chair), Ellie Angerame, Robert Chang, Will O'Meara, John Hall, Jason White, Ben Freund, Joann Nichols, Terry Jones, Elisabeth Moore

FPAB Members Absent: None

CT Dept. of Agriculture: Jaime Smith, Cam Weimar, Holly Lalime, Kayleigh Royston

Others Present:  
Chelsea Gazillo, Working Lands Alliance  
Dan Carr

Meeting began 9:07AM- Robin called to order.

Robin provided a review of the Save the Land Conference from June 1999. He acknowledged that the conference was an incubator for the work we see today in CT farmland preservation.

Robin called a vote to approve the meeting minutes from the 4/22/2021 meeting. Board voted to approve minutes.

Cam provided a review of the most recent preservation programs report.

Holly, Will, and Jaime provided updates on the CT FarmLink program.

Ellie inquired about the percentage of active projects that are in urban/peri urban areas and what percentage of the recently allocated CIA funds will go towards urban/peri urban farmland protection.

Cam agreed to send a series of maps and images that show preserved lands throughout the state.

Ellie asked if there's an effort to audit land in urban areas to see which parcels should be targeted.

Ben expressed his concerns about the bandwidth of the department and the amount of projects it can handle.

Jiff reviewed the recommendations within the recently published Land Access Working Group report. [Farmland-Needed---How-Connecticut-Can-Help-Farmers-Access-the-Land-They-Need-to-Succeed.pdf](#)

Cam reviewed the PDR Process and Timeline with the board and spoke briefly on COVID related setbacks.

Robin discussed the formation of sub committees within the board. He opened the floor to discussion about subcommittees.

Elisabeth expressed interest in serving on the Expediting the PDR Process subcommittee.

Joan expressed interested in serving on the PDR Stewardship subcommittee.

Jiff asked if Jaime could speak to the regulations of these meetings.

Jaime answered that these meetings are an extension of the FPAB, so they need to be posted online and be open to the public.

Jiff asked how often the subcommittees would want to meet.

Will O'Meara expressed interest in a subcommittee to draft the OPAV recommendations.

Terry made a motion to; form three subcommittees ( 1) Expediting the PDR Process 2) PDR Easement Stewardship & Enforcement 3) Option to Purchase at Agricultural Value), make those subcommittee's self-sufficient, and have those subcommittees comprised of 100% board members with guests welcome. Robert seconded that motion. The board voted to approve the motion.

Jiff reported back from the June 4<sup>th</sup> meeting with the NRCS about the Option to Purchase at Agricultural Value (OPAV).

Ben asked what changes can be made to the current easement instead of going though OPAV.

Jiff answered saying that nothing in the easement requires a landowner to sell to a farmer.

Jiff motioned to request that the commissioner take up OPAV in its legislative package for next session.

Jaime made the board aware that DoAg's legislative package is due October 1.

Will O'Meara noted that the subcommittee could put a proposal together for the Commissioner.

Robin made the following motion: "The Farmland Preservation Advisory Board (FPAB) recommends the Commissioner of Agriculture initiate the process to develop Option to Purchase at Agricultural Value (OPAV) guidelines utilizing input from expert advisors in the state and region and a completion goal of January 2022. The FPAB further advises the Commissioner to pursue enabling legislation, if needed, to implement OPAV in conjunction with the CT Farmland Preservation Program and Community Farms Preservation Program." Joan seconded that motion. The board voted to move the motion.

Jiff reviewed her notes from a meeting about Farmland Appraisers.

Jiff moved to adjourn the meeting. Terry seconded. Meeting ended at 11:08AM.

June 23, 2021

To: Bryan P. Hurlburt, Commissioner of Agriculture, State of Connecticut  
From: Robin Chesmer, Chair, CT Farmland Preservation Advisory Board  
RE: Option to Purchase at Agricultural Value (OPAV)

Dear Commissioner Hurlburt,

The reactivated Farmland Preservation Advisory Board (FPAB) has been exploring Option to Purchase at Agricultural Value (OPAV) regulations as a potential tool to keep preserved farmland in active agricultural production in Connecticut. OPAV regulations would help maintain preserved farmland in the hands of qualified farmers and their families by restricting the sale to its agricultural value upon future property transfers.

The FPAB, in its advisory capacity, unanimously approved the following motions at the June 17, 2021 FPAB meeting:

1. The Farmland Preservation Advisory Board (FPAB) recommends the Commissioner of Agriculture initiate the process to develop Option to Purchase at Agricultural Value (OPAV) guidelines utilizing input from expert advisors in the state and region and a completion goal of January 2022.
2. The FPAB further advises the Commissioner to pursue enabling legislation, if needed, to implement OPAV in conjunction with the CT Farmland Preservation Program.

The FPAB members, particularly the OPAV sub-committee chaired by Will O'Meara, are willing to assist you and the Department of Agriculture in developing a workable OPAV regulation for Connecticut.

A viable and aggressive Farmland Preservation Program is vital to the future of Connecticut agriculture and FPAB members are honored to be working to advise the Department of Agriculture on how to strengthen the program and fulfill its promise.

Sincerely,



Robin Chesmer, Chair, CT Farmland Preservation Advisory Board