



# CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 703, Hartford, CT 06103  
*Bureau of Agricultural Development and Resource Preservation*



## FARMLAND PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD

### MEETING MINUTES

**Thursday, March 17, 2022**

**9:00 – 10:50am**

#### BOARD MEEMBERS PRESENT:

- Robin Chesmer (Chair), Jiff Martin (Vice Chair), Robert Chang, Ben Freund, Joan Nichols, John Hall, Terry Jones, Elisabeth Moore, Jason White

#### DOAG STAFF PRESENT:

- Cam Weimar, Jaime Smith, Holly Lalime

#### PUBLIC PRESENT:

- Chelsea Gazillo (Working Lands Alliance), Kip Kolesinskas (Connecticut Farmland Trust)

Meeting Called to Order at 9:03AM by Chairman Robin Chesmer

Inspirational Message provided by Kip Kolesinskas and Jiff Martin about the Gunther Farm in Vernon/Tolland.

Guest Presentation on Buy-Protect-Sell and the Connecticut Green Bank: Chelsea Gazillo, Working Lands Alliance.

*\*Please note that this presentation was given in lieu of the presentation originally scheduled\**  
As a product of the Governor's Council on Climate Change Phase One Report, the Governor signed into law; *House Bill 6441 Expands Green Bank Mission to Include Environmental Infrastructure*. This bill will allow the Connecticut Green Bank to invest in environmental infrastructure and improvement projects. The Working Lands Alliance and the Connecticut Green Bank recently met to discuss opportunities for the Green Bank to invest in Buy-Protect-Sell projects.

Motion to approve March meeting minutes by Joan Nichols. Seconded by Terry Jones.

Agency Update by Jaime Smith.

- The Farmland Restoration Grant Program is now live. Applications are due by April 12<sup>th</sup>. New to the program this year is a guidance document available to the public through the department's web page which includes project scoring criteria. All applications will now be submitting online through the department's grant portal. Also new is a webinar presentation being hosted by the department on March 29<sup>th</sup>.  
<https://portal.ct.gov/DOAG/ADaRC/ADaRC/Farmland-Restoration-Grant>
- A PDR application will soon be submitted to the State Properties Review Board. This is the first application to be submitted in 2022.
- The application process and scoring rubrics for the traditional Farmland Preservation Program and the Community Farms Preservation Program are being revised keeping in mind current and future regulations. The department will have more details on that in the coming months.
- Ag Day will be taking place at the Connecticut Armory on Friday March 25<sup>th</sup>.

PDR Programs Report by Cam Weimar

- The department is slated to close on its first PDR project of 2022 later this month with another closing occurring in early April.
- The RCU program recently submitted 13 PDR projects with an estimated value of over three million dollars to the NRCS for their 2022 ALE application round.
- Department staff and the board briefly discussed the department's role in evaluating and preparing feedback to the Connecticut Siting Council on solar array projects greater than 2 megawatts that are proposed to be located on Prime Farmland Soils.

Public Comment:

- No public comment.

OLD BUSINESS:

OPAV.

No comments were given on this topic by department staff. Chairperson Robin Chesmer noted that the agenda item will carry over to the May meeting.

NEW BUSINESS:

### Community Farms Preservation Program.

- Jaime Smith provided information to the board about how projects are chosen for either the traditional Farmland Preservation Program or the Community Farms Preservation Program. All projects are first scored using the traditional program's scoring criteria. If the farm does not qualify under that program, it is then scored using the community farm's scoring criteria.
- Cam Weimar gave a presentation to the board showing the impact of the Community Farms Preservation Program in bringing the PDR program into towns that previously had little or no protected farmland.
- The board relayed their concerns regarding the types of projects that are being entered into the Community Farms Preservation Program – larger farms are being entered into the program that are in rural areas. There were questions of whether those farms reflected the purpose of the program and if the farms being protected through the program are accessible for new, beginning, and socially disadvantaged farmers.
- The department responded stating that all projects are first scored through the traditional program before being considered for the Community Farms Program. It was noted that the scoring criteria for the Farmland Preservation Program is over thirty years old and no longer reflects many of the farmland applications that are being submitted.

Chairman Robin Chesmer adjourned the meeting at 11:54PM