



# 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, May 19, 2022**

**9:00 – 10:50am**

#### BOARD MEEMBERS PRESENT:

- Robin Chesmer (Chair), Jiff Martin (Vice Chair), Robert Chang, Ben Freund, John Hall, Elisabeth Moore, Jason White, Will O'Meara

#### DOAG STAFF PRESENT:

- Cam Weimar, Jaime Smith, Holly Lalime, Bryan Hurlburt, Kayleigh Royston

#### PUBLIC PRESENT:

- Chelsea Gazillo (Working Lands Alliance)

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

#### **Approve March Meeting Minutes:**

Ben Freund made a motion to approve the March meeting minutes with two grammatical changes. Jason White seconded the motion. Board voted to approve March meeting minutes.

#### **Discuss Chair and Vice Chair leadership:**

Ben Freund made a motion to request that Robin Chesmer and Jiff Martin create a set of bylaws regarding chair leadership. John Hall seconded the motion. Board voted to approve the motion.

#### **PDR Programs Report and update on appraisal issues:**

Cam Weimar:

- The 400<sup>th</sup> PDR farm was recently protected. The Department is close to reaching 50,000 acres preserved.

- There are currently 52 active applications for the program.
- 2022 Farmland Restoration Program grant round – a review panel meeting was held this week. Their funding recommendations will go to the Commissioner this week.
- Appraisal issues – the Department isn't getting enough responses for appraisal RFP's.

Jaime Smith:

- The State Properties Review Board (SPRB) recently had an 8-week turnaround for a project submitted in late March. There is great energy/momentum.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Legislative Session Review:**

Kayleigh Royston:

- This was one of the shortest legislative sessions.
- The five DoAg bills were combined into one bill - Public act 22-5. The bill reconstitutes the Governor's Council on Agricultural Development into the Governor's Council on Agricultural Development and Innovation, makes conforming language changes for service animals, updates the definition of aquaculture to include long lines, and forms a working group with CT DoAg and the Town Clerks Association to develop a plan to create an online dog licensing portal.
- Budget wins for the Department included an allocation for the CT Grown for CT Kids Grant program of \$500,000 for FY 23, \$14 million to invest in climate smart agriculture and forestry practices, additional funding for grants for food resource organizations for capital improvements, funding to implement a farm manure management system, and funding to support the care of seized animals.
- Bills that didn't pass include the SPRB bill and a livestock processing bill.

Next steps:

- 2023 legislative session package – due to OPM and governor's office in early October.

### **Guest Presentation on tools to increase farmland access (Jeffrey Everett, Deputy Executive Director, State Agricultural Development Committee, New Jersey Dept. of Agriculture)**

Buy-Protect-Sell (State Direct Acquisitions): New Jersey sells its BPS properties at auction (sold with or without the opportunity for housing). All housing opportunities allow for 3,500 sq. ft. of living area.

Buy-Protect-Sell (Grants to Non-Profits): New Jersey provides fee simple grants to nonprofits for 50% of the fee simple price.

Buy-Protect-Lease (Long-Term Lease): Control of land as an eligibility for farm bill money. New Jersey began offering long term lease agreements in order to improve access for farmers who can't afford to buy in fee while improving soil and water conservation practices. There is a two-year initial lease. If the tenant farmer gets into an NRCS conservation program the option for an additional five-year lease extension is offered. From there, new conservation practices trigger lease extensions. The goal is for farmer to return the land better than they found it using federal dollars. The lease fee is \$50 per acre.

Bridge Loan on Before Value (aka Critical Farms Program): Allows a prospective farm buyer to use conservation easement proceeds to purchase the fee value of the farm.

Financial Self-Sufficiency (aka no Federal Funds): New Jersey does not use USDA ALE funding for projects in order to make the preservation process more efficient. New Jersey is the number one state for investment in farmland protection.

**Commissioner update on the PDR program and OPAV (Bryan Hurlburt, Commissioner, CT Dept. of Agriculture):**

- The Department has been thoroughly reviewing its internal processes for all of its grant programs and our contracting processes.
- The Department's goal, by statute, is to reduce FPP closings by 50%. Strategies to accomplish this goal include revising program regulations (the current regulations are outdated), reengaging the SPRB, engaging with the FPAB for additional strategies and input, and shoring up the entire program process.

Chairman Robin Chesmer adjourned the meeting at 11:57PM