



## CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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Bureau of Agricultural Development & Resource Conservation

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### FARMLAND PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD

#### MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, August 18, 2022

9:00 – 10:50am

#### BOARD MEEMBERS PRESENT:

- Robin Chesmer (Chairperson), Jiff Martin (Chairperson), Benjamin Freund, Jason White, Will O'Meara, Joan Nichols, Ellie Angerame, Terry Jones, Elisabeth Moore, Robert Chang

#### DOAG STAFF PRESENT:

- Holly Lalime, Martine Kunzika

#### PUBLIC PRESENT:

- Kip Kolesinskas (Working Lands Alliance)

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

#### Discuss Option to Purchase at Agricultural Value OPAV:

- Robin Chesmer reviewed the letter *RE: OPAV Statutory Authorization* that the board submitted to Commissioner Hurlburt in September 2021.
- The board does not believe that it is their role to provide background information or draft legislation on farmland access tools. It is agreed that this is something DoAg staff and OPM should be doing.
- Joan Nichols made a motion to send an additional letter to Commissioner Hurlburt that contains enhanced background information, suggested legislative language from WLA and/or other states, and the perceived role of the advisory board. Ellie Angerame seconded the motion, board approved motion.
- Elisabeth Moore advocated that the following language in the WLA draft OPAV legislation be removed *Sec22-26cc(c) The commissioner may purchase an Option to Purchase at Agricultural Value as part of the acquisitions of development rights and may acquire an Option to Purchase at Agricultural Value Retroactively from a willing landowner on land which the development rights have previously been acquired.*

**Discuss Buy Protect Sell (BPS):**

- Joan Nichols made a motion that the board include BPS in the letter to the Commissioner specifically urging the Department to dedicate time to figure out the BPS process and structure in order to take advantage of this currently underutilized tool. Jiff Martin seconded the motion, board approved motion.
- This will involve dedication from outside partners too.
- The Connecticut Green Bank has a strategic plan involving BPS. This funding should be taken advantage of.
- Joan Nichols stated that the WLA thinks there should be a comprehensive Farmland Preservation Bill put forth. There is a lot of education that needs to happen in the legislature and a comprehensive approach to all of the initiatives is a good strategy. The details will be worked out as the initiatives look like they will be going to fruition.

**Discuss Staffing for smaller and urban farmland preservation projects**

- Joan Nichols made a motion that the board urge the Department to hire additional staff to explore preservation options for small and urban farmland preservation projects. Ben Freund seconded, board approved motion.
- Small and urban farms = parcels that currently are not eligible for the traditional or community farms preservation programs.

**Discuss: PDR subdivision**

- Elisabeth Moore made a motion to include the Board's concern about PDR subdivision in the letter being drafted for the Commissioner. The board wants more information about the intent of this initiative and the possible repercussions before supporting it. Ben Freund seconded, board approved motion.

Joan Nichols made a motion to send a reconstructed letter to Commissioner Hurlburt that includes the subjects discussed at today's meeting. Ben Freund seconded, board approved motion.

**Public Comment:**

Kip Kolesinskas, Working Lands Alliance (WLA):

- Often times agencies do not take on initiatives not because of lack of interest, but lack of staff and a lack of expertise to initiate it.
- The subjects discussed today are very well vetted opportunities to improve land access and affordability. These ideas and tools have already been presented to staff and the Commissioner many times. If the Commissioner does not want to move forward with these initiatives, WLA will move

forward with them regardless. This enhanced letter is a good idea and legislators will require some sort of response from the Commissioner.

Robin Chesmer made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:02pm.