



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, March 16, 2023

9:00 – 10:30am

BOARD MEEMBERS PRESENT:

- Will O’Meara (Chairperson), Jiff Martin (Chairperson), Benjamin Freund, Joan Nichols, Ellie Angerame, Robin Chesmer, Terry Jones, Elisabeth Moore

DOAG STAFF PRESENT:

- Holly Lalime, Jaime Smith,

PUBLIC PRESENT:

Meeting Called to Order at 9:03AM by Chairperson Will O’Meara

Approve February Meeting Minutes:

- Ellie Angerame made a motion to approve the February meeting minutes, Terry Jones seconded the motion. Board voted to approve the meeting minutes.

OLD BUSINESS

Update on Board Vacancy:

- After board members voted, the following rank was sent to Kayleigh Royston for appointment: Emily Cole, Mark McPhail, Chris Laughton. Kayleigh will work with appointing authority on this.

Update from Will O’Meara and Jiff Martin on Buy Protect Sell options through CT Greenbank:

- CT Greenbank sees Buy Protect Sell (BPS) as a good fit for their business model and mission. They plan to set up a small team to explore and launch such a program. They are looking to follow a model used in Washington State for a template (<https://www.wshfc.org/farmranch/index.htm>).

- A stake holder meeting will take place in the spring where they will ask for feedback on this tool.
- Equity is at the heart of Greenbank's mission, which means that if State money is going to be part of BPS, there has to be something, like OPAV, that ensures equity for access to that land.

Review revised decision tree for the use of ALE funds for PDR:

- Board reviewed the revised ALE decision tree. There is ongoing discussion on how expensive a project needs to be to trigger applying for ALE funds and how much added staff time (administrative costs) there are with ALE funded projects.
- There is a huge range within the State for the value of development rights on farmland. Factors that play into the value are location, farm size, site conditions and zoning requirements.
- The importance of taking advantage of these federal funds for preservation projects was discussed.
- The board discussed looking at total project costs versus per acre cost when determining if ALE funds should be applied to a project.

NEW BUSINESS

Discuss current and future staffing needs for stewardship within the Farmland Preservation Unit:

- The Massachusetts's farmland preservation program has four staff members solely dedicated to stewardship.
- Board discussed having a dedicated staff person for stewardship, a dedicated staff person for Community Farms, and an assistant to Cam for PDR closings.
- Joan Nichols made a motion that the FPAB pursue additional staffing to handle the growing needs of the Farmland Preservation Unit. Ellie Angerame seconded the motion. Jiff Martin modified the motion to say that the FPAB strongly recommends the addition of staffing within the Farmland Preservation Unit for stewardship purposes. The Board voted in favor.

Discuss PDR project admin costs and staff needs between ALE and non-ALE projects:

- Department staff discussed that the number one administrative cost for ALE projects is staff time.

Other new business:

- Jaime Smith discussed the possibility of Connecticut becoming a certified USDA ALE State. It could potentially reduce staff time for ALE administration by 5-10%.
- Update on OPAV: there is another DOAG brainstorming session coming up. There is also a need for a strategic partner to make this happen and CT Green Bank could potentially be that partner. The board also wants to be more intentional and involved with DOAG legislative policies.

- Robin Chesmer discussed concerns over PDR building envelopes and the idea of created “floating envelopes” for PDR Farms.

Public Comment:

- No public comment

Jiff Martin made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Joan Nichols seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 10:28am.