



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, September 21, 2023

9:00 – 10:30am

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

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

DOAG STAFF PRESENT:

- Holly Lalime, Cam Weimar, Jaime Smith, Kayleigh Royston, Lindsay Booth, Glenda Ramirez

PUBLIC PRESENT:

Meeting Called to Order at 9:02AM by Chairperson Will O'Meara

Approve May Meeting Minutes:

- Jiff Martin made a motion to approve the May meeting minutes. Jason White seconded, board voted to approve the meeting minutes. Ellie Angerame abstained.
- June meeting minutes will be approved at the November meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

PDR stewardship staffing needs:

- Should there be staff that are solely dedicated to stewardship only? Is there a benefit to having staff that are only focused on Farmland Preservation to help speed up the PDR process?
- Currently there are four staff members covering all currently preserved farms but there are no staff members whose sole duty is stewardship.
- The board wants a statement from the agency requesting stewardship staffing that they can take to the general assembly.

Follow up discussion from June's special policy meeting:

- Following June's policy meeting, a letter was submitted to Commissioner Hurlburt outlining the Board's policy recommendations.
- Option to Purchase at Agricultural Value (OPAV) – the Board received feedback that there weren't enough details in the letter for OPAV policy and implementation.
- Buy Protect Sell (BPS) – the issue remains of who would hold the land in fee and cover carrying costs. If this tool was to be added into the PDR process, the State Properties Review Board would need to be briefed.
- Urban Working Lands Program – Yaw Darko of Connecticut Farmland Trust has a Contract with the Department of Agriculture to conduct research into urban working lands. The Board will invite Yaw to a future meeting to discuss his findings.
- Beginning Farmer Loan Fund – there at one time was a beginning dairy farmer loan fund that highlights that these programs can be done and have a framework.

Discuss recommended statute language to enable easement co-holders and/or project partners to be reimbursed for due diligence costs:

- What is the specific statute that does not allow this to take place? (C.G.S. section 22-26cc (g)).
- Benjamin Freund made a motion for the Commissioner to edit the current language in C.G.S. section 22-26cc (g) to allow easement co-holders and/or project partners to be reimbursed for due diligence costs. Ellie Angerame seconded the motion. Board approved.

NEW BUSINESS

DOAG staff comments or concerns:

- Cam Weimar gave a brief update on the PDR program. Six farms closed in August including the final easement of the 400 acre Gallup Farm, the Clinton Roberts Farm in Bristol, the Mol Farm in Suffield, two easements along Kickhill Road in Lebanon owned by Graywall Farms, and the Neilson Farm in Suffield. Things are going very well with NRCS under Certified Entity. Community Farms Program is still on hold as we await legislative approval.

Discuss future meeting topics and set 2024 meeting dates:

- **Future meeting topics:**
 - Yaw Darko – urban working lands research
 - Revisit New Jersey farmland preservation tools
 - Readdressing topics in the Board's June policy letter
 - Meeting with Commissioner Hurlburt

- **Future meeting dates:**

- Four meetings in 2024
- February 15
- May 16
- September 19
- November 21
- Robin Chesmer made a motion to approve the above meeting dates. Ellie Angerame seconded. Board voted to approve.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

- No public comment

The meeting was adjourned at 10:29am by Chairperson Will O'Meara.