



CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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Bureau of Agricultural Development & Resource Conservation

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DRAFT - FARMLAND PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD

MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, October 3, 2024

9:00 – 10:30am

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

- Will O'Meara (Chairperson), Jiff Martin, Jason White, Robin Chesmer, Terry Jones, Robert Chang

DOAG STAFF PRESENT:

- Holly Lalime, Cam Weimar, Jaime Smith, Glenda Ramirez

PUBLIC PRESENT:

- None

Meeting Called to Order at 9:05 AM by Chairperson Will O'Meara

Approve Meeting Minutes:

- **Motion:** Will O'Meara made a motion to approve the May 2024 meeting minutes. Jiff Martin seconded the motion. All voted in favor, motion carried.

Farmland Preservation and Community Farms Program Update (Cam Weimar):

- DOAG has preserved a couple of farms since the last meeting including Windswept Farm in Preston/Griswold and Trusz Farm in East Granby/Windsor
- Working on submitting 3 farms for USDA ALE money before the October 4 deadline; the next deadline is December 20 which we are working on submitting another seven to eight applications
- Catherine Wang (Connecticut Farmland Trust) has been helping our staff with new applications that have been coming in by contacting landowners to make sure that all application materials are completed. We have received about 8 applications that need to be reviewed.
- Completed the Stewardship reporting by the USDA's deadline
- Shannon Lance has retired so we are working on refilling his position as well as hiring two additional staff members for stewardship

Department of Agriculture Updates (Jaime Smith):

- Met for the first with the Land Capital Market Access Advisory Committee. Presented a drafted structure of the program.
- Received clarification from DAS legal on appropriate agreement to move forward with FarmLink. Looking to have executed agreements by December 1, 2024.
- Things are going well with SPRB. Their turnaround time continues to be very responsive.
- There is an open RFP for Real Estate Attorneys that closes on October 18. The open RFP is being managed by OAG.
- USDA ALE: first batch date is tomorrow October 4 and we have three projects being submitted. The second batch date is December 20, 2024.
- A recent vacancy at USDA NRCS will impact turnaround from NRCS.
- Currently negotiating a scope of work with the Council on Soil and Water to enable PDR landowners to establish/update their Conservation Plans in a timelier manner.
- Received full approval for one of three new hires for Farmland Preservation Stewardship. Anticipate more good news soon.
- Review of standardize docs with OAG, completing now and looking to get on a standard cycle that aligns with the Farm Bill and USDA deed requirements.
- NCLC and RC&D recently held events highlighting their subgrants. A lot of good work coming from all awardee relationships.
- Soil scientists wrapping up Farmland Restoration and Climate Resiliency Plans.
- DEI Working Group Annual Connect: October 17 from 6:30 – 8 p.m. for those interested.
- Future 50,000-acre celebration! More to come.

OLD BUSINESS

Option to Purchase at Agricultural Value (OPAV) and BPS Updates (Will O'Meara):

- No updates on BPS. Work on the CLCC and Working Alliance slowed down during the summer. Will provide updates as they come.
- OPAV – after last session with OPAV, passing through the Environment Committee, things stalled at the General Assembly. Rep. Gresko called a couple of meetings to discuss OPAV language. Meetings pivoted to an alternative proposal from the DoAG to create a grant program using bond funds to be used broadly for access-oriented projects.

PDR Appraisal Reports Update (Jaime Smith, Cam Weimar) – New Jersey appraisal method update

- For the first time in history the agency is in receipt of two appraisals within \$10,000 of each other and have a six-figure development rights appraisal. This is a reality, and we need to have a discussion around what things look like for the longevity of the program. Presented a couple of

questions for thought and consideration that could be brainstormed. The statute right now is capped at \$20,000 per acre.

- Discussed article from Lancaster Farming regarding New Jersey legislature adopting a new appraisal method to get closer to fair market value.

NEW BUSINESS

- No new business

PUBLIC COMMENT

- No public comment

Will O'Meara motioned to adjourn the meeting at 10:24 a.m.

The next meeting is scheduled to occur on November 21, 2024