



## 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, May 16, 2024**

**9:00 – 10:30am**

#### BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

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

#### DOAG STAFF PRESENT:

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

#### PUBLIC PRESENT:

- None

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

#### Approve Meeting Minutes:

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

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

- DOAG has preserved 20 farms during fiscal year 2023 which will be wrapping up in June.
- DOAG is nearing 50,000 acres preserved (about 214 acres to go).
- \$9,000,000 spent during this fiscal year (20 projects) with over half coming from partners (mostly USDA).
- All but one project used USDA ALE funds.
- Stewardship continues to be taking up a considerable amount of staff time.

#### Department of Agriculture Updates (Jaime Smith):

- Defined the Area of Concern (AOC) letter and its purpose
- There are currently 10 AOC's being worked on and 10 Applications to Construct (ATC's)

**Elisabeth Moore:** 1) When violations aren't immediately addressed, they set precedence and a larger issue. 2) DOAG easements need to have clear language in the deed stipulating and

outlining regulations and approval processes for construction. 3) CFT is willing to work with DOAG on easement language.

- DOAG is facing hiccups getting the FarmLink RFP posted. DOAG is working with OPM and DAS to release the RFP.
- The Land Capital Market Access Group is now meeting regularly.
- SPRB timelines are continuing to happen very quickly. The turn around time for the latest project put before them took 2.5 weeks.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### **Option to Purchase at Agricultural Value (OPAV) Update (Will O'Meara):**

- A bill was introduced by the Working Lands Alliance and the Environment Committee to do OPAV in this session. Representative Gresko was very supportive. It passed out of the environment committee. There were language/definition and funding issues that prevented the bill from moving forward.
- Rep. Gresko intends to put together a working group this summer to workshop OPAV language with DOAG, farmers and partners.

### **Chair Vacancies (Will O'Meara):**

- One response from a person interested in filling Ellie's seat. Open to suggestions for two other names to put forward.
- Still waiting for a response to the names put forward to fill the agricultural lender seat.
- It would be appropriate to find a replacement for the seat held by a Representative from the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities. Will to reach out to the current board member in that seat.

### **PDR Appraisal Reports Update (Cam Weimar):**

- DOAG reached out to the appraisers that it regularly works with asking if 1) they felt comfortable with the PDR applicant being an intended user and 2) if they felt comfortable with the report being provided to the applicant. The majority of the appraisers did not feel comfortable with either.

### **Buy-Protect-Sell (BPS) Update (Will O'Meara):**

- There is a working group on this being championed by Amy Patterson at CLCC.
- BPS was taken out of the farm bill which creates a funding challenge.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Post-closing Package for Farmland Owners (Jaime Smith):**

- What can the agency be providing to PDR landowners post-closing? Currently DOAG isn't providing any type of closing package to the landowner.
- Full appraisal reports, BDR report, ATC form, copy of the deed, soil health and conservation planning materials, land succession and transfer planning, farm viability services.

### **Update on Buy-Protect Sell Work by CLCC**

- Will discuss at next meeting.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

- No public comment

Joan Nichols motioned to adjourn the meeting. Jiff Martin seconded. Meeting adjourned at 10:32 a.m.

**\*The next meeting is scheduled to occur on September 19, 2024\***