



BERKS COUNTY *agricultural land* PRESERVATION BOARD

Berks County Agricultural Center
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County Commissioners:

Christian Y. Leinbach, Chair
Kevin S. Barnhardt
Mark C. Scott, Esq.

Board Members:

James R. Coker, Chair
David L. Phillips, Vice Chair
Wilson M. Balthaser

Victoria Kintzer
Robert E. Kopfer
Lolly Leshner

Robert B. Ludgate, Sr., PE, PLS
Clyde A. B. Myers
Charles R. Seidel

Minutes from the February 27, 2019 Meeting

The Berks County Agricultural Land Preservation Board (Board) held a regular monthly meeting on Wednesday, February 27, 2019 at 7:30 PM at the Berks County Agricultural Center. David Phillips, Chair, called the meeting to order. Board members present included Wilson Balthaser, Robert Kopfer, Jeremy Meck, Steven Mohn, Clyde Myers, and David Phillips. Also in attendance were Mark Sprow, Esq. Special Counsel for the Board; Tami Hildebrand, Executive Director; and Amanda Burkard-Sell, staff.

I. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS – None.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: A motion was made to approve the minutes of the January 30, 2019 meeting, as drafted. (W. Balthaser, R. Kopfer)

Discussion: None.

Vote: Motion approved unanimously.

III. STATUS OF RECOMMENDATION UPDATES

- The Board reviewed the previously distributed Status of Recommendations. There have been no changes.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

A. Five-year Outreach Activities Plan – Status of Projects

- C. Myers reported on the status of the current projects. The Board reviewed the status of the outstanding request sent to the Townships.
 - C. Myers: Albany – no answer, Heidelberg – may have been discussed at a meeting, Bern & Longswamp – information had been re-sent; Lower Heidelberg – will donate \$500, maybe more next year; Marion – had its meeting and Myers will follow up; Penn & Windsor – will not donate;
 - D. Phillips – will follow up with Jefferson, Ruscombmanor, & Washington;
 - R. Kopfer – will follow up with Maiden creek & Maxatawny;
 - W. Balthaser – will follow up with Tilden & Upper Bern;
- C. Myers added that the next round of letters will be sent to butchers, egg and poultry companies. Myers requested help from Board members in making follow up phone calls.
- C. Myers reported that the Board had secured a \$2,400 grant from the Berks County Community Foundation for the Sign Project. T. Hildebrand added that the Berks County Department of Agriculture will donate the remaining \$3,000 necessary to purchase the first 300 signs.

- C. Myers informed the Board that the previously discussed letter to owners of preserved farms will be sent in the next week. Myers added that the *Reading Eagle - Berks Country* will have an article featuring the Sign Project once the first sign is ready to be placed. Myers discussed having the event on R. Kopfer's farm, since it was the first to be preserved. Kopfer is agreeable.

Motion: A motion was made to have the *Reading Eagle - Berks Country* public relations article on the Sign Project feature the placing of the first sign on the Kopfer farm (C. Myers, W. Balthaser).

Discussion: None

Vote: Motion carried unanimously.

- C. Myers discussed the need to recognize the supporters of the Sign Project, possibly through an ad in *Berks Country*. T. Hildebrand reported that there is money in the budget for advertising. The Board considered the size of the ad and whether it was important to list the level of each supporter's donation. The Board determined that a half page ad listing the levels of support will be published in *Berks Country* when the article about the Sign Project is featured.
- B. Update to Proposed Review Criteria for ACE Program Applications in Rural Conservation Areas of the Comprehensive Plan**
- T. Hildebrand reported the subcommittees for the Board and the Berks County Planning Commission had met on February 6, 2019. As a result of the meeting, the Planning Commission staff will be reviewing all of the parcels in Rural Conservation areas that are within the previously identified buffer areas. Those parcels conducive to development will be changed to a Future Growth designation; those undesirable for development will be left as Rural Conservation and able to be preserved. Slope, zoning, and natural heritage criteria will be used for the review. Hildebrand added that Shannon Rossman, Director of the Planning Commission had informed her that the process was moving slowly and that in two to three weeks the staff would be able to review the parcels. C. Myers requested that the subcommittee members be invited to attend. Hildebrand clarified that since there will be no change to the minimum criteria, approval from the State Board of Farmland Preservation will not be required.

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. Review of Conveyance Report

- The Board reviewed the list of ownership transfers. Settlement #586.0 is still outstanding, but the deed will be corrected when the property transfers.

B. 2019 State Allocation of Funds

- T. Hildebrand reviewed the 2019 State Allocation of Funds sheet that had been distributed at the February 21, 2019 State Board of Farmland Preservation meeting. Hildebrand highlighted that the \$1,052,757 that Berks County had certified to the State had been matched with \$2,223,006 for a total of \$3,275,763 available for easement purchases in 2019. Hildebrand added that these funds will preserve about 1,300 acres.
- T. Hildebrand discussed Berks County's ranking in the State and nation in terms of preserved farmland. As of the most recent state statistics that were distributed in the Board packet, Berks is still the top ranking county in the State as far as the State and

County Program. Hildebrand clarified that unfortunately the Farmland Preservation Report is no longer published, so national statistics are only compiled by state, not by individual counties. Hildebrand added that Pennsylvania, California and Maryland are the top three states. Hildebrand also discussed that various funding sources that different states use for their programs.

VI. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

- T. Hildebrand highlighted the contents of the Board packet, which included a “Save the Date” card with information on events and meetings of the Berks Ag Resource Network (B.A.R.N.), the State statistics following the February 27, 2019 State Board meeting, and an updated Board member directory.
- T. Hildebrand reminded the Board that for those who were members in 2018, the Statement of Financial Interest is due by May 1, 2019.
- The Board discussed the location of the 2019 B.A.R.N. Farm Tour, which will be in the Washington and Hereford area on October 12, 2019.
- T. Hildebrand added that the review of the proposed agreement on the Szarko farm that had been on the original agenda had been postponed, as both the prospective buyer and his attorney were unavailable.

VII. CITIZEN COMMENT/BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR – None

EXECUTIVE SESSION – None

Motion: A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 8:20pm. (R. Kopfer, J. Meck)

Respectfully submitted,

Signature on file.

Amanda K. Burkard-Sell
ACE Program Coordinator