



BERKS COUNTY *agricultural land* **PRESERVATION BOARD**

Berks County Agricultural Center
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www.countyofberks.com/dept/deptofag

County Commissioners:

Christian Y. Leinbach, Chair
Kevin S. Barnhardt
Michael S. Rivera

Board Members:

David L. Phillips, Chair
James R. Coker, Vice Chair
Robert E. Kopfer

Robert B. Ludgate, Sr., PE, PLS
Kimberly J. McGrath
Jeremy R. Meck

Steven C. Mohn
Clyde A. B. Myers
Louise A. Swartley

Ex Officio:

Robert C. Ziegenfus, Ph.D.
Solicitor:
Mark R. Sprow, Esq.

Minutes from the October 28, 2020 Meeting

The Berks County Agricultural Land Preservation Board (Board) held a regular monthly meeting on Wednesday, September 30, 2020 at 7:30 PM via virtual platform “**Microsoft Teams.**” David Phillips, Chair, called the meeting to order. Board members present included James Coker, Robert Kopfer, Kimberly McGrath, Steve Mohn, Clyde Myers, David Phillips, and Louise Swartley. Also, in attendance were Mark Sprow, Esq. Special Counsel for the Board; Amanda Burkard-Sell and Kimberly Fies, Staff and Tami Hildebrand, Executive Director.

- I. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS – None.**
- II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Motion: A motion was made to approve the minutes of the September 30, 2020 meeting, as drafted. (C. Myers, R. Kopfer)

Discussion: None

Vote: Motion approved.

III. STATUS OF RECOMMENDATION UPDATES

- Tami Hildebrand reported that the header for Section N. was updated from when the report was provided to Robert Kopfer to when it was provided to the rest of the Board via email. The initial report identified this section as: “2020 Selection – Awaiting landowner’s response regarding selection” to “2020 Selection – Investigating landowner’s claim of property meeting ag production”.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

A. Update: 75,000 Acres Preserved – PR Event

- Hildebrand updated the Board on her discussions with the County’s Public Relations Officer, Stephanie Weaver and PA Secretary of Agriculture Redding’s liaison, Nicole McCrone. Weaver will work with the Reading Eagle to produce news articles and McCrone stated that she will contact Hildebrand after the Secretary gets approval to attend from the Governor.
- Clyde Myers confirmed that there was not an area for parking or buildings available on the farm that brought the ACE Program to the 75,000-Acres preserved milestone. The Board requested Hildebrand find a location that provided parking and shelter due to the possibility of inclement weather.

B. Update; Settle. #1.0 Kopfer Subdivision

- Hildebrand reported that the State Board of Farmland Preservation approved the Kopfer Subdivision at its October 8th meeting.

V. NEW BUSINESS**A. Welcome David Hunter – Executive Director of the Berks County Planning Commission**

- Phillips welcomed David Hunter to the County and thanked him for joining the Board meeting.
 - Hunter provided a brief biography: he is a native Philadelphian and a graduate of the University of Maryland with a degree in Land Use Planning; he worked for the City of Reading prior to coming to the County; and, he and his family have settled in Exeter Township.
 - Hunter enjoys working with and motivating people, working towards mutually beneficial outcomes, advocating site visits for his employees to understand their surroundings, and is a strong believer in education.
 - Hunter believes in holding joint meetings between the Planning Commission and Boards like the Ag Land Preservation Board and looks forward to scheduling a joint meeting in the future.

B. Conveyance Report

- Under transferred with concerns noted:
 - Settlement # 660.0 – the State Bureau of Farmland Preservation’s position is that the current language of the regulations is unfortunately not strong enough for the State to consider taking any enforcement action; however, future revisions to the ACE Program regulations will require that the deed of easement language be included verbatim in each subsequent property deed. Attorney Sprow agreed that the easement was incorporated by reference and will suffice for this transfer.
- Under transfers resolved:
 - Settlement #594.0 – the incorrect transfer was resolved.

C. PENNVEST – Borough of Shoemakersville Upgrade to Wastewater Treatment Plant

- The Shoemakersville Borough is seeking a \$1.6 million PENNVEST loan to upgrade its Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) that services the Borough as well as neighboring Perry Township.
 - The treatment process was last upgraded in 1995 to an influent comminutor two vertical loop reactors and two final clarifier system that discharges the effluent to the Schuylkill River.
 - ARRO Consulting, Inc. completed an evaluation of the WWTP in 2014, which resulted in 5 major recommended processes to be repaired or upgraded.
 - The Borough has already addressed two recommendations: clarifier roof repairs and pump refurbishment.
 - The Project proposal includes the installation of a vertical screen in a new headworks structure in order to remove rags and debris from the treatment stream so there is less potential for clogging and equipment failure. This screen will help protect the integrity of downstream equipment and reduce labor time and repair costs due to clogging and failures that the plant is currently experiencing.
 - The proposal also includes the installation of new controls, compaction and conveyance of screenings into a dumpster from transferring solids, and minor piping and electrical modifications to accommodate the new equipment.
- Due to the WWTP’s geographic location in addition to the information provided, the Board’s review of the WWTP proposal determined that there was no impact upon agricultural land.

Motion: A motion was made to recommend the Shoemakersville Borough's Wastewater Treatment Plant Project for PENNVEST funding. (J. Coker, K. McGrath)

Discussion: None

Vote: Motion approved.

D. Review of three (3) Appraisals in Executive Session

- The Board will review Appraisals for Dockets listed under L. on the Status of Recommendations report.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion: A motion was made to offer the cap of \$2,500 per acre to Dockets #1016, #2016, and #2017, after clarification with the landowner regarding the exclusion. (J. Coker, R. Kopfer)

Discussion: None.

Vote: Motion carried unanimously.

VI. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

A. State Board of Farmland Preservation Statistics of October 8, 2020 Meeting

- Total number of farms approved-to-date for preservation: 5,781;
- Total number of acres approved-to-date for preservation: 589,109
- Total number of farms preserved-to-date in Berks County: 778
- Total number of acres preserved-to-date in Berks County: 75,284

B. Reinstatement of the BCALPB Subcommittee

- After prior discussion with Phillips, Hildebrand conveyed the need to reinstate the Board's Subcommittee.
 - The objective of the Subcommittee is to formalize consistency in the procedures and approaches that the Staff has instituted for the last few years for situations that have been presented to and supported by the Board on a case-by-case basis.
 - Because these topics are somewhat involved, they deserve thorough discussions with formal outcomes and therefore, a Subcommittee is warranted rather than utilizing Board meeting time.
 - The Board members that volunteered to serve were Jim Coker, Kim McGrath, Dave Phillips, and Louise Swartley.
 - Hildebrand will survey the members via email for their availability to meet virtually.
 - Staff will provide background information to the Subcommittee prior to the meetings; Staff will be present for the meetings, as well.
 - Attorney Sprow will review the formalized outcomes to ensure compliance with the ACE Program guidelines and regulations.

VII. CITIZEN COMMENT / BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR – None

Motion: A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 9:11 PM.

(R. Kopfer, L. Swartley)

Respectfully submitted,

Signature on file.

Tami S. Hildebrand, Executive Director