



BERKS COUNTY *agricultural land* PRESERVATION BOARD

Berks County Agricultural Center
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County Commissioners:

Christian Y. Leinbach, Chair
Michael S. Rivera
Lucine E. Sihelnik

Board Members:

Gregg Eshelman, Chair
David L. Phillips, Vice Chair
James R. Coker

Morgan A. Firestine
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 April 26, 2023, Meeting

The Berks County Agricultural Land Preservation Board (Board) held a regular monthly meeting on Wednesday, April 26, 2023, at 7:00 PM at the Berks County Agricultural Center and via virtual platform “**Microsoft Teams**.” Gregg Eshelman, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Board members present included Gregg Eshelman, Louise Swartley, Morgan Firestine, Clyde Myers, Steven Mohn, James Coker, and David Phillips. Also, in attendance were Mark Sprow, Esq. Special Counsel for the Board; Staff: Emily Wangolo, Executive Director; Amanda Burkard-Sell, Agriculture Program Manager.

I. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS – None.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: A motion was made to approve the minutes of the March 29, 2023, meeting, as drafted. (J. Coker, S. Mohn)

III. STATUS OF RECOMMENDATION UPDATES

- A. Burkard-Sell highlighted several items on the Status of Recommendations: Dockets #1706, #1238, #1339, and #2201 were approved by the State Board on April 13, 2023. Dockets #2202, #2204, and #2208 will be submitted to the State Board in June. The remaining farms are in process.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

A. Settlement #432.0 Swinsinski – ACE Program Violation

- No status update at this time.

B. Guideline Review Update

- A. Burkard-Sell reported the minor wording changes and terminology that was submitted to the State Board at their April meeting, was approved. Work continues as some of the more substantial changes will be submitted at the June meeting. Changes are being submitted gradually because the Board accepts and/or rejects the Guidelines as a whole, therefore if a single item is rejected, the entire submission is rejected.

C. 2023 LESA Ranking – Second Selection

- A. Burkard-Sell reminded the Board that at the March 29, 2023 meeting farms #1 - #13 had been selected and of those thirteen (13) selected, seven (7) landowners have withdrawn. This allowed the selection to continue, and letters were sent to the landowners of #14 to #23 as funding allowed. Staff is waiting for responses for those selected in the second round.

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. Conveyance Report

- A. Burkard-Sell reported on the transfers of ownership:
 - Section A: Transferred in Compliance – Settlement #227.0, #551.0, #515.0, #711.0, #199.0, and #306.2.
 - Section B: Transferred with Concerns Noted – Settlement #670.0, the deed of easement was not attached when recorded; attorney working to correct.
 - Section C: Outstanding Violations - None to report.
 - Section D: Transfers Resolved – Settlement #1.0 and #604.0 have been resolved with a corrective deed recorded.

B. PENNVEST Application: County View Mobile Home Park

- E. Wangolo reported receiving a request on behalf of County View Mobile Home Park in Longswamp Township for a modification of a public water supply. The owner is applying for a PENNVEST Small Projects Guidance loan to change the treatment type and storage ability.
- E. Wangolo informed the Board that all PENNVEST applications must be reviewed and approved by the Board to ensure there is no impact on agricultural land preservation and any impact to surrounding agricultural practices.

Motion: A motion was made to recommend the proposed PENNVEST application for the modification of the public water supply for the County View Mobile Home Park as submitted (J. Coker, L. Swartley).

Discussion: None

Vote: Motion carried unanimously.

VI. DEPARTMENT REPORT

- E. Wangolo updated the board on several completed and upcoming events:
 - The department partnered with the Berks Business Education Coalition's Students Interacting with Business program in hosting 9th grade students from the Exeter Senior High School at Weavers Orchard. The program introduced students to career opportunities in agribusiness with Berks County.
 - The department hosted the spring *Pennsylvania Farmland Preservation Association Conference* in the auditorium of the Agricultural Center to discuss business, issues that counties are facing, pending legislation, etc. The Association is comprised of County Administrators as well as staff from the State, the Bureau of Farmland Preservation, and USDA NRCS.
 - Staff are attending the annual *WeConserve* Conference being held in Reading as well as sessions at agribusinesses in Boyertown. The department co-hosted this conservation education event with the Berks County Planning Commission, Berks Nature, and the Berks County Conservation District.
 - The department partnered with the Reading Climate Corps and Berks Latino Workforce Development Corporation to host a *Sofrito Make-n-Take Container Garden Workshop* in May. Participants were given pots, soil, cilantro and peppers plants to grow their own ingredients for a Latino sauce.

- The department will be hosting a 3-day tour of the agricultural industry in Berks County for educators in June. *Ag in the Classroom* offers teachers continuing education credits to incorporate ag education and careers into their classrooms.
- The Board was reminded the Statement of Financial Interest for members on the Board in 2022 were due to the County’s Chief Clerk, by May 1, 2023. Please forward your document to Emily Wangolo.

VII. CITIZEN COMMENT / BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR – None.

- L. Swartley announced she has not received the information she requested from the County GIS staff that K. Fies was to pursue. K. Fies will follow up.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

RESUMPTION OF REGULAR MEETING

Motion: A motion was made to allow Docket # 2306 to amend their application with the understanding that it will be re-ranked (D. Phillips, J. Coker)

Discussion: None.

Vote: Motion approved.

- L. Swartley questioned when the next Subcommittee meeting will be held; members agreed the discussions will resume in May as decided at the January 2023 meeting.

Motion: A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 7:55 PM. (J. Coker, D. Phillips)

Discussion: None.

Vote: Motion approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Leigh Smilko
Office Support