



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

Berks County Agricultural Center
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www.berkspa.gov/departments/agriculture

County Commissioners:

Christian Y. Leinbach, Chair
Michael S. Rivera
Dante Santoni, Jr.

Board Members:

Gregg Eshelman, Chair
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Jeremy R. Meck

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Clyde A. B. Myers
Louise A. Swartley

Ex Officio:

Robert C. Ziegenfus, Ph.D.

Solicitor:

Mark R. Sprow, Esq.

Berks County Agricultural Land Preservation Board Meeting May 28, 2025, 5:30 p.m. MINUTES

A regularly scheduled meeting of the Berks County Agricultural Land Preservation Board was held at the Berks County Agricultural Center on Wednesday, May 28, 2025, at 5:30 p.m.

Board members present: Gregg Eshelman, Jim Coker, Clyde Myers, Kim McGrath, Morgan Firestine, Dave Phillips, and Steve Mohn via phone call.

Staff present: Kim Fies, Executive Director, Amanda Burkard-Sell, Deputy Director, Mary Shah, Agriculture Program Manager, and Rachel Painter, Office Support IV.

In attendance: Mark Sprow, Esq. Special Counsel for the Board.

Public: Erin Masuoka, private citizen.

Gregg Eshelman, Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m.

I. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS — None.

II. CITIZEN COMMENT / BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR – Erin Masuoka, private citizen, spoke about the Kurtland Farms biodigester, also known as Elverson AD1, and wanted an update on the Board’s review of the project. The Board stated that they need the most final submission before making a final decision. K. Fies also stated that the Board is waiting to hear from the State for guidance on this issue.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: A motion was made to approve the minutes of the March 26, 2025, meeting, as amended. (J. Coker, K. McGrath)

Discussion: None.

Vote: Motion carried unanimously.

IV. STATUS OF RECOMMENDATION UPDATES

- A. Burkard-Sell noted under letter A, docket #0939 is going to be prepared for submission to the State at the August Board meeting.

- Under letter C, docket #1623, under letter G, #0607, and under letter J, #2406 will be presented at June State Board meeting. It was also noted that farm #2406 is the 80,000 acre farm.
- Under letter M, there are 14 farms in process from 2025 selection.
- Clyde stated all of the current 2025 selection have had baseline site visits with the exception of docket #0939.

V. OLD BUSINESS

A. 80,000 Acre Milestone Celebration Update

- K. Fies stated that we have surpassed the 200-ticket mark that was paid for with the hall rental and cup giveaway.
- There is roughly \$10,000 to cover any additional banquet ticket requests.
- K. Fies also stated that there will be additional door prizes, as staff anticipated having 40 baskets.
- The Board was also made aware that the billboards were up, letting the community know that the Department of Agriculture was celebrating 80,000 acres preserved in Berks County.
- Other topics discussed were the program for the event, the maps that display the number of preserved farms, and having the attending representatives say a few words.

B. 2025 LESA Ranking Selection Update

- A. Burkard-Sell let the Board know that since the last meeting, staff was able to select one additional farm. Staff is still waiting on a response from a farm that was part the second selection round.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. Conveyance Report

- A. Burkard-Sell stated that all settlements under letter A, settlements #430.0, 28.0, and 363.0FD, have transferred in compliance.
- All settlements listed under B, settlements #322.0, #199.0, #49.0, #50, #79.0, and #271.0RS, are still awaiting corrections. Settlement #322.0 has been referred to Mark Sprow, Esq., as part of the larger violation.
- Under D, both settlements, #749.1 and #749.2 have been recorded.

B. Review of PENNVEST Application — Robesonie Wernersville Municipal Authority

- A. Burkard-Sell let the Board know that they are tasked with reviewing applications for PENNVEST loans, to either recommend or not recommend, as part of their process in an effort to make sure it does not affect the Board's easements.
- Robesonie Wernersville Municipal Authority owns the land, which is 13.2 acres, and it is the current site of wastewater treatment plant.
- PENNVEST loan is for the upgrade of their plant; there will be no increase in capacity, or treatment efficiency, no additional tanks, and no land acquisition.

- A. Burkard-Sell stated that within a two-mile radius 2,736.7 acres are preserved, 3,661.6 acres are within an ag security area, and property is in effective ag zoning.

Motion: A motion was made to recommend the proposed PENNVEST project to upgrade the Robeson Wernersville Municipal WWTP. (J. Coker, K. McGrath)

Discussion: None.

Vote: Motion carried unanimously.

VII. DEPARTMENTAL REPORT

A. Upcoming Events

- K. Fies let the Board know that the June State Board meeting is on June 12, 2025, and inquired if any members of the Board wanted to attend, and that the 80,000 acre farm will be presented at this meeting.
- Ag in the Classroom is June 25th and June 26th.
- Staff attended a PFPA (Pennsylvania Farmland Preservation Association) conference in Gettysburg, the State is working on a one-page review as how digestors relate to the ag security law. K. Fies reminded the Board that in ag security law, an ag defined commodity is that 50% of the inputs must be produced on the farm; which would apply to digesters as well.

EXECUTIVE SESSION — None.

Motion: A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 6:50 PM. (K. McGrath, J. Coker)

Discussion: None.

Vote: Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Rachel Painter
Office Support IV