



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

Berks County Agricultural Center
1238 County Welfare Road,
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(610) 378-1844 Fax (610) 378-7983
berkspa.gov/departments/agriculture

County Commissioners:

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

Board Members:

Gregg Eshelman, Chair
Jeremy Meck, Vice Chair
James R. Coker

Morgan A. Firestine
Kimberly J. McGrath
Dave Phillips

Steven C. Mohn
Clyde A. B. Myers

Ex Officio:

Robert C. Ziegenfus, Ph.D.

Solicitor:

Mark R. Sprow, Esq.

Berks County Agricultural Land Preservation Board Meeting July 29, 2026, 5:30 p.m. MINUTES

A regularly scheduled meeting of the Berks County Land Preservation Board was held at the Berks County Agricultural Center on Wednesday, July 29, 2026, at 5:30 p.m.

Board members present: Jim Coker, Gregg Eshelman, Morgan Firestine, Kim McGrath, Jeremy Meck.

Staff present: Kim Fies, Executive Director, Amanda Burkard-Sell, Deputy Director, Rachel Painter, Office Support IV, and Emily Goense, Agriculture Program Coordinator.

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

Public: None.

Gregg Eshelman, Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:36 p.m.

I. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS — None.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: A motion was made to approve the minutes of the June 24, 2026, meeting.
(J. Coker, K. McGrath)

Discussion: None.

Vote: Motion carries.

III. STATUS OF RECOMMENDATION UPDATES

- A. Burkard-Sell noted that there were no major changes since the distribution of the document.
- Under letter C, docket #2403 settlement is scheduled for August 18th.
- Under letters D and G, dockets #2407, #2507, and #2515 are being prepared for submission to the August 20th State Board meeting.
- Under letter L, dockets #2502 and #2603 appraisals are to be reviewed in Executive Session.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

A. 2026 LESA Ranking Update

- A. Burkard-Sell noted that staff were able to select an additional 2 farms, #36 and #37.
- Farm #36 has responded, and staff are still waiting on a response from farm #37, with A. Burkard-Sell noting that farm is still within their time frame to respond.

B. 80K Funds

- K. Fies let the Board know that BARN is holding in a special account is \$31,122.36 left over from the 80,000 Acre Celebration last year.
- K. Fies and A. Burkard-Sell went over the language in the documents and found no specific language to direct the use of funds.
- K. Fies stated she does not feel there is any need to hurry and use the funds — BARN has no issue holding the funds for the Board.
- Various discussions were held about having another milestone celebration. G. Eshelman noted that he would like the funds to be used for something the sponsorships donated the money for, which would be a celebration of some type.
- K. Fies floated the idea of a scholarship fund for ag-interested individuals. J. Meck suggested doing another on-farm dinner using the funds.
- K. Fies noted she will get some prices/options/ideas together for the Board.

C. General Member Suggestions

- K. Fies discussed the open seat left by the late Louise Swartley, which was a general seat. Fies stressed the importance of filling the seat with a general member, rather than a farmer, to preserve the diversity of the Board.
- K. Fies suggested Scott Hauseman.
- K. Fies noted that Scott was an ag lender for a number of years and comes from a farming background. He is a proponent of the program and agriculture, always willing to speak at events about being an ag lender and being employed in agriculture. Also a certified farm transition expert.

Motion: A motion was made to nominate Scott Hauseman for consideration to Commissioner Rivera. (J. Meck, K. McGrath)

Discussion: None.

Vote: Motion carried.

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. Conveyance Report

- Under letter A, settlements #207.0 and #39.0 transferred in compliance.
- Under letter B, settlement #443.0, was transferred incorrectly, but staff heard from attorney and corrective deed was recorded on Monday.
- Under letter C, settlement #448.0, landowner received his letter and made an appearance in the Department office, and staff gave him a copy of his deed of easement to provide to his attorney.
- Under letter D, settlement #425, corrective deed was files.

B. PENNVEST – Aqua Pennsylvania, Inc. – Southcentral PFAS Remediation

- A. Burkard-Sell reminded the Board that it is required to review PENNVEST applications and comment on their effect as it relates to agriculture.
- Project is located west of I-176, in Flying Hills.
- Well locations will not be changing and will maintain the current rate of 600 gallons per minute, located on existing well locations.
- In Cumru Township, there are 0 acres of farmland preserved by the Board, but there are 86 acres in a Berks Nature easement, and no Ag Security Areas. No additional land will be acquired.

Motion: A motion was made to recommend the proposed PENNVEST project of PFAS remediation in Cumru Township. (J. Coker, M. Firestine)

Discussion: None.

Vote: Motion carried unanimously.

VI. DEPARTMENTAL REPORT

A. Easement Modification Request — L.P.747.0 — No Action Required — Bolton — Replace Ag Structure with Larger Ag Structure.

- K. Fies reminded the Board that no action is required, this is simply to get the request in the minutes.
- Landowner wants to replace existing ag structure (bank barn) with a 80'x120' ag building for hay and equipment storage in Greenwich Township.

B. Upcoming Events

- K. Fies let the Board know about the Bountiful Berks website, Instagram, and Facebook, which will be launching soon.
- K. Fies let the Board know about the baseball game on August 2, 2026, at 5:15PM.
- Kutztown Fair is upcoming, sponsored by the department.
- K. Fies is taking some teachers out on ag tours.
- K. Fies is attending Ag Progress Days with Commissioner Leinbach and some students.
- K. Fies and R. Painter are attending Maiden Creek Food Truck Friday to promote agriculture.
- Discussion was had about Penn Electric wanting to run high-powered lines through several preserved farms for data centers, and the ramifications therein regarding preserved land and landowner's decisions.
- K. Fies let the Board know about the pop-up Farm Market on September 12, 2026.

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

RESUMPTION OF REGULAR MEETING

Motion: A motion was made to approve offering the cap of \$2,800 an acre to docket #2502 and #2603 (J. Meck, M. Firestine)

Discussion: None.

Vote: Motion carried unanimously.

Motion: A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 6:40 p.m. (J. Coker, J. Meck)

Discussion: None.

Vote: Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Rachel Painter

Rachel Painter
Office Support IV