



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

Berks County Agricultural Center
1238 County Welfare Road,
Suite #260, Leesport, PA 19533
(610) 378-1844 Fax (610) 378-7983
www.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
Louise A. Swartley

Ex Officio:

Robert C. Ziegenfus, Ph.D.

Solicitor:

Mark R. Sprow, Esq.

Berks County Agricultural Land Preservation Board Meeting May 27, 2026, 5:30 p.m. MINUTES

A regularly scheduled meeting of the Berks County Wednesday, May 27, 2026, at 5:30 p.m.

Board members present: Jim Coker, Gregg Eshelman, Kim McGrath, Jeremy Meck, Steve Mohn, Clyde Myers.

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

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

Public: None.

Gregg Eshelman called the meeting to order at 5:32PM.

I. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS — None.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: A motion was made to approve the minutes of the April 29, 2026, meeting. (J. Meck, S. Mohn)

Discussion: None.

Vote: Motion carries.

III. STATUS OF RECOMMENDATION UPDATES

- A. Burkard-Sell stated that since the dispersal of the Board materials, there have been a couple of updates.
- Under letter B, docket #0714 settlement is scheduled for June 9th.
- Under letter D, docket #2410 settlement was held on May 6th.
- Under letter H, only one farm is scheduled for the June 11th board meeting, which is docket #2512.
- Under letter I, docket #2515 is now scheduled for August State Board meeting.
- Under L, staff received a response from a new 2026 selection, which means there are now 14 new farms in progress.

IV. OLD BUSINESS — None.

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. Conveyance Report

- A. Burkard-Sell noted the top three settlements under Letter A have transferred in compliance: #821, #839, and #847.
- Under letter B, settlement #448 is still outstanding, and the letter of violation has not been sent out by staff as of this meeting. Settlements #425 and #443 are in process of being corrected

B. 2026 LESA Ranking Update

- A. Burkard-Sell states that staff were able to select 4 additional farms.
- Staff are still waiting for responses from landowners in the second selection.

C. Easement Modification Request — L.P.558.0 — Action Required — Addition to Existing Residential Structure — As- Built

- K. Fies explained that the addition to the existing residence was within the curtilage and used the existing well and septic. The request meets the terms of the guidelines.

Motion: A motion was made to approve the addition to the existing residential structure. (D. Phillips, J. Meck)

Discussion: None.

Vote: Motion carried.

D. Easement Modification Request — L.P.610.0 — Action Required — Replacement of Existing Residential Structure

- K. Fies noted that the existing residence will be replaced within the existing curtilage and use the same well and septic. This request meets the terms of the guidelines.

Motion: A motion was made to replace the existing residential structure. (J. Meck, J. Coker)

Discussion: None.

Vote: Motion carried.

VI. DEPARTMENTAL REPORT

A. PFPA Conference Review

- A. Burkard-Sell and E. Goense attended the annual Spring PFPA Conference along with other state-wide County administrators.
- The conference was held in Centre County, with 23 attendees in-person, as well as many others virtually.
- Speakers included someone from Penn State Dickinson Law, as well as speakers from the USDA NRCS office and State Bureau of Farmland Preservation.

- K. Fies noted that Berks County is one of the few standalone preservation departments, many others are part of their Planning offices.
 - 58 out of 67 counties have a land preservation program.
- B. Easement Modification Request — L.P.558.0 — No Action Required — Newswanger — Ag Structure
- K. Fies notes that the request is for a 70' x 72' equipment storage and farm shop building. This is an ag structure which meets the terms of the guidelines.
- C. Upcoming Events
- Jim Coker was featured in Lancaster Farming.
 - Dinner in a Field is coming up on Sunday, May 31st, hosted by Jeremy Meck at his farm, fundraiser for Berks County Farm Bureau and Friends of Agriculture foundation.
 - Berks County Pop-Up Farm Market on Saturday, June 13th.
 - All About Ag Night at the Reading Phillies on Tuesday, June 16th.
 - Ag in the Classroom on June 10th and 11th, hosted by C. Myers and S. Bond.
 - On June 5th, Conservation District Legislation Breakfast at Reading Water Authority's pump plant.
 - A. Burkard-Sell and K. Fies attended Louise Swartley's service on Monday. The department did order an arrangement from the Board and staff.

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

RESUMPTION OF REGULAR MEETING

Motion: A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 6:34 PM. (J. Coker, S. Mohn)

Discussion: None.

Vote: Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Rachel Painter
Office Support IV