



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 June 24, 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, June 24, 2026, at 5:30 p.m.

Board members present: Jim Coker, Gregg Eshelman, Morgan Firestine, Kim McGrath, Jeremy Meck, Steve Mohn and Dave Phillips.

Staff present: 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 5:34 p.m.

I. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS — None.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: A motion was made to approve the minutes of the May 27, 2026, meeting.
(S. Mohn, J. Coker)

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 B, docket #0714, settlement occurred on June 9, 2026.
- Under letter H, docket #2512, farm was approved at the June State Board meeting.
- Under letters C, E, and I, dockets #0156, #2507, and #2515 respectively, staff are looking to prepare for the August State Board meeting.
- No appraisals were received in time for the Board meeting; staff are looking forward to having them ready for next month.
- Under letter M, dockets #0131 and #2610 have been added since distribution of this document.
- Under letter G, docket #2412 withdrew from the program, as they are unwilling to do what is necessary for the required conservation plan.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

A. 2026 LESA Ranking Update

- A. Burkard-Sell noted that list is not different from last month's distribution, however, Kim Fies pointed out that farms #34 and #35 had the same score, and therefore both needed to be selected.
- Staff are waiting on one response from the second round of selections, and two responses from the third round of selections.

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. Conveyance Report

- Under letter A, settlements #8 and #224.0 transferred in compliance.
- Under letter B, settlements #425.0 and #443.0 are still outstanding and in the process of correction, staff are not asking for any action at this time.
- Settlement #448.0 is still in process of correction and has been for almost 3 years. Staff are asking that M. Sprow send a letter to landowner, as they feel it will have more gravitas coming from him.

B. BCALP General Member Suggestions

- A. Burkard-Sell reminded the Board that the vacancy left by the late Louise Swartley needs to be filled as soon as possible.
- Commissioner Rivera asked staff or Board had any suggestions as to who could fill the seat.
- Names raised as suggestions to fill the seat were Laura Leshner, Sherry Fuhrmann, and Scott Hausman.
- A. Burkard-Sell asked that suggestions be given to staff as soon as possible.
- A. Burkard-Sell noted that final decision will be made by Commissioner Rivera; he has the right to go with a staff choice, or one of his own.

C. BCCD Farmer Director Nomination

- A. Burkard-Sell reminded the Board of a letter they received via email last week that is also in their packets tonight that the Berks County Conservation District is looking for nominations for a Farmer Director position on their board.
- The current seat holder, Joseph Rosenbaum, is seeing renomination.

Motion: A motion was made to support the renomination of Joseph Rosenbaum to the Farmer Director seat on the Berks County Conservation District's Board. (J. Meck, K. McGrath)

Discussion: None.

Vote: Motion carried.

D. Easement Modification Request — L.P.569.0 — Action Required — Ag Structure — As built

- A. Burkard-Sell reminded the Board that construction of agriculture structures is permitted, however, this building raises the question as to whether or not it is an ag structure.
- Building is 30'x70', and permit was issued by township in 2025.
- Landowner says use is for hay farming and the equipment related, however, they do not currently own any farming equipment, and do not currently do any hay farming.
- A. Burkard-Sell noted that the predominant question is, is this an ag structure where ag equipment will fit, or is it for personal use?
- M. Firestone asked whether staff went into buildings at times of inspection. A. Burkard-Sell noted that no, they do not, unless invited by landowner.
- K. McGrath asked for the definition of an ag structure, and A. Burkard-Sell noted that the definition is as follows:

- The construction or use of any building or structure for agricultural production or a commercial equine activity. Before construction, renovation, or modification of structures, the landowner is required to submit documentation to the County Office. Such documentation shall include the size, location, and use of the structure, as well as the proposed date of construction.

Motion: A motion was made to have staff inspect the building inside and out before Board decides on the easement modification request. (J. Meck, M. Firestine)

Discussion: None.

Vote: Motion carried.

E. Easement Modification Request — L.P.569.0 — Action Required — Addition to existing residential structure — Outside Curtilage

- A. Burkard-Sell reminded the Board of the terms and conditions on a deed of easement, with regards to construction or renovation of buildings, in that the renovation or modification of an existing residential structure, or an addition to an existing residential structure, is permitted if it would not increase the curtilage of the residential structure.
- Owners would like to extend current residence with a 30'x40' addition, which will extend outside of their curtilage.
- Owners claim they cannot put it anywhere else due to existing well and septic location.
- A. Burkard-Sell noted that in the past, extending beyond the curtilage has meant giving up the right to a second residential structure.
- There is currently no exemption in the deed of easement language for extending beyond the curtilage.

Motion: A motion was made to notify the landowners that extending their current residence beyond the curtilage would count as their allowed second residential structure and approve the addition with the caveat or allow the landowners to modify their request. (J. Meck, K. McGrath)

Discussion: None.

Vote: Motion carried.

VI. DEPARTMENTAL REPORT

A. Easement Modification Request — L.P.648.0 — No Action Required — Heiter — Replace ag structure with larger ag structure

- Farm was preserved in 2013.
- Landowner wants to replace existing ag structure with a 70'x176' ag building for their ag equipment and shop. This is an ag structure which meets the terms of the requirement.

B. Upcoming Events

- A. Burkard-Sell noted that she and K. Fies will be attending Doug Wolfgang's retirement party on Thursday, June 25, 2026. Doug retired as the Executive Secretary of the State Conservation Commission.
- The Berks County Fair is being held on July 8th through the 11th.
- Staff are attending a Field Day at the Rodale Institute on July 17th.
- The Berks County Conservation District is having it's 80th birthday party soon and is looking for donation.
- A. Burkard-Sell noted that there are no specific plans in place as of yet, only that they are holding it on November 19, 2026, at the Warehouse of Hamburg.
- Board members asked if they could use remaining 80K Celebration funds to donate, and A. Burkard-Sell advised that they could use the funds for whatever they wanted.

- A rough estimate of \$18,000 is left in the bank from the event, A. Burkard-Sell did note she will get a more recent, accurate figure for the Board.
- Board asked to table the discussion until next month, when hopefully the event has taken more of a shape.
- J. Meck also suggested donating some of the funds to the Berks County Fair, with G. Eshelman agreeing and saying that's a thought for 2027.
- A. Burkard-Sell noted that staff are working with the Berks County Conservation District and the Berks County Planning Commission on more municipal outreach.
- Staff have a strategic planning meeting with Economic Development in July.
- A. Burkard-Sell made mention of the September Pop-Up Farm Market and the Agricultural and Natural Resources Career Fair in November.

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

RESUMPTION OF REGULAR MEETING

Motion: A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 6:37 p.m. (J. Meck, J. Coker)

Discussion: None.

Vote: Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Rachel Painter

Rachel Painter
Office Support IV