



BERKS COUNTY *agricultural land* PRESERVATION BOARD

Berks County Agricultural Center
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County Commissioners:

Christian Y. Leinbach, Chair
Kevin S. Barnhardt
Mark C. Scott, Esq.

Board Members:

David L. Phillips, Chair
James R. Coker, Vice Chair
Wilson M. Balthaser
Robert E. Kopfer
Robert B. Ludgate, Sr., PE, PLS
Jeremy R. Meck

Ex Officio:

Steven C. Mohn
Clyde A. B. Myers
Robert C. Ziegenfus, Ph.D.

Minutes from the March 27, 2019 Meeting

The Berks County Agricultural Land Preservation Board (Board) held a regular monthly meeting on Wednesday, March 27, 2019 at 7:30 PM at the Berks County Agricultural Center. David Phillips, Chair, called the meeting to order. Board members present included Wilson Balthaser, James Coker, Robert Kopfer, Robert Ludgate, Sr., Clyde Myers, Steven Mohn and David Phillips. Also in attendance were Mark Sprow, Esq. Special Counsel for the Board; Tami Hildebrand, Executive Director; and Kimberly Fies, ACE Technician.

I. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS – None.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: A motion was made to approve the minutes of the February 27, 2019 meeting, as drafted. (W. Balthaser, R. Kopfer)

Discussion: None.

Vote: Motion approved unanimously.

III. STATUS OF RECOMMENDATION UPDATES

- The Board reviewed the previously distributed Status of Recommendations. There have been no changes since its distribution.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

A. Five-year Outreach Activities Plan – Status of Projects

- C. Myers presented draft copies of the proposed sign for review. The Board discussed the specifics of the sign and offered potential changes to the format.

Motion: A motion was made to select “sign A” with the modification of splitting up “A Farm and Forever” and making the colors darker. (C. Myers, J. Coker)

Discussion: None

Vote: Motion carried (R. Kopfer and R. Ludgate dissented)

- C. Myers reported that the most recent article in Berks Country featuring preserved farms highlighted Dove Song Dairy and had also included information submitted by Myers and T. Hildebrand that described the return on investment section that was printed with the article.
- The Board discussed a Letter to the Editor submitted by R. Ludgate that praised the work of the students who submitted essays for the National Ag Day Essay Contest.
- T. Hildebrand informed the Board that BARN had donated \$720 to the PA Farm Bureau Friends of Agriculture Foundation, which allowed volunteers to read a farm to table book about agriculture to 55 classes of kindergarten through second graders.

- C. Myers reported that the letter to the landowners of preserved farms should be mailed in the next week.
- The Board discussed concerns about how the signs will be hung. Suggestions for hanging will be distributed with the signs. The Board also discussed the size of the signs and whether changes need to be made. R. Ludgate will request that his son develop a method to hang the sign.
- C. Myers distributed copies of letters that will be submitted to the next round of businesses to solicit funding for the sign project and requested help from the other Board members in making follow-up contacts. Myers also discussed updates from the Townships that had not responded to previous requests. The Board discussed sending a follow-up letter.

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. Review of Conveyance Report

- The Board reviewed the Conveyance report. Settlements #204 and #389 had transferred correctly, Settlement #586 is still outstanding but will be corrected when ownership transfers from the Bank and, Settlement #280 has been corrected.

B. 2018 ACE Program Inspection Report

- K. Fies discussed her annual inspection report that is submitted to the State. In 2018, Fies inspected 397 of the possible 745 farms; she anticipates needing to visit 503 in 2019. R. Ludgate suggested using a drone to assist with inspections. Fies discussed her inspection process with the Board and how a drone would or would not be a benefit. Fies elaborated that the most time consuming part of the inspections was the paperwork involved. The Board further discussed the issue of the time involved and whether staffing changes need to be made.

C. PENNVEST application for Broad Street Sanitary Sewer Improvement for the Borough of Sinking Spring

- T. Hildebrand reported that the Borough of Sinking Spring will be revitalizing its business district and making other improvements, including replacing a 10" sewer line with a 15" line on Reedy Road to accommodate the increased growth. Hildebrand added that the Borough has applied for PENNVEST funding for the \$1,588,000 project. The project is just over one mile away from a preserved farm and will have no significant impact on the agricultural land.

Motion: A motion was made to recommend that the Borough of Sinking Spring apply for PENNVEST funding for its Broad Street Sanitary Sewer Improvement Project as submitted. (J. Coker, R. Kopfer)

Discussion: None.

Vote: Motion carried. (R. Ludgate abstained).

D. Results of the 2019 LESA Ranking (Round 45)

- T. Hildebrand discussed the 2019 LESA ranking, which scored 108 applications, 17 of which were new. Hildebrand reminded the Board that the total funding available is \$3,275,763.00 for easement purchases; utilizing all of the funding available, the Board can select up to and including farm #18 with a cut-off score of 50.50. Hildebrand added that there may be additional funding remaining from 2018, but she is not comfortable forecasting that at this time since many are still in process and final acreage and expenses