

GREENE COUNTY FARMLAND PRESERVATION BOARD
MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 15, 2010

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Bill Cree at 10:45 a.m. in the Mezzanine Conference Room, 19 South Washington Street, Waynesburg, Pennsylvania. Those present were Bill Cree, Chairman; Dave Shipman, Vice Chairman; Rick Thistlethwaite, Treasurer; Archie Trader, Commissioner; Corbly Orndorff, Director; Lisa Snider, District Manager, Greene County Conservation District; Laurel Rush, Ag Technician, Greene County Conservation District; and Becky Salosky, Fiscal Officer, Greene County Conservation District.

II. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no Public Comments.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Corbly Orndorff to approve the Minutes of the August 25, 2010 meeting. Dave Shipman seconded. (Motion Passed)

IV. TREASURER'S REPORT

Treasurer Rick Thistlethwaite read the attached report as follows:

Checking Account - \$3,474.25

Easement Funds – Dept. of Agriculture and County of Greene - \$96,794.00

A motion was made by Dave Shipman to accept the Treasurer's Report as read. Corbly Orndorff seconded. (Motion Passed)

V. CORRESPONDENCE

- a. Lisa distributed a copy of the letter from the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Farmland Preservation that was mailed to the County Commissioners. The letter requests their continued commitment and support of the Farmland Preservation Program.
- b. Lisa announced that a State Board Meeting and Roundtable discussion will be held on October 6th at 10:00 a.m. in Harrisburg. The meeting will include a demonstration of "PA FARMLAND", a software program that will allow all necessary documents for an easement to be submitted electronically.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

- a. Lisa reported that Laurel mailed 116 letters requesting funding to administer the Farmland Preservation Program. The requests were sent to oil and gas, coal, and related industries. Ten of the letters were returned by the postal service due to insufficient addresses. They will be corrected and mailed again. Lisa spoke to Joe Cerenzia of Consol and officials from Alpha Coal who indicated that they will pass the information on to the proper officials for consideration. Chairman Bill Cree reported that his contact with Eastern America seemed very promising, although the contact with Halliburton did not.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

- a. The first item under New Business was a proposed revision to the By-Laws to establish the development potential of an applicant's farm as a stronger component for the ranking criteria. Lisa distributed copies (attached) of the proposed changes to the board. She and Laurel both recommend these changes in the ranking system for an easement purchase. She displayed the "Development Potential Map", from the 2008 Greene County Comprehensive Plan, which corresponds with USDA's "Soil Classification Map" that is currently being used to rank all potential

easement farm applications. The USDA's "Prime Farmland Soils" map will be used to create a "Greene County Farmland Preservation Areas of Importance" map. Parcels that fall within the shaded yellow area on the county's "Development Potential Map" would be awarded a higher ranking during scoring, due to close proximity to sewage, water, and developable terrain and soils. Farms located outside of the "Development Potential" areas would not be excluded from consideration, but from here forward, farms within the development areas would receive additional points in the ranking formula. The current ranking system awards 20 points to parcels located in an Agricultural Security Area, a standard requirement based on PA Department of Agriculture regulations. Lisa will be working with the County's GIS Coordinator to develop a single map which will include all the pertinent information. It will then be presented for the FLP Board's review and approval.

Doug Wolfgang, Executive Director of Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Farmland Preservation, has suggested that the Board make small changes in the "weighted" values of the Land Evaluation Site Assessment System (LESA). Consequently, a 10 percent reduction was made to the land evaluation component and 10 percent was added to the development potential under the site assessment component.

The application period was also changed to April 15th through June 15th. This has occurred to provide the FLP Board sufficient time to work with a second ranked farm prior to the expiration of the current funding year, should the first ranked applicant decline an easement offer. A suspension clause was added to provide the Board the ability to suspend an application period (to not seek or accept new applications) for a defined period of time, at their discretion. State approval will be required in order for the FLP Board to suspend the application period.

Due to rising costs, the appraisal fee required from the applicant was increased from \$1,500 to \$2,000.

A motion was made by Dave Shipman to approve the By-Law changes. Rick Thistlethwaite seconded. (Motion Passed).

Lisa noted that these changes will be effective upon approval from the State.

- b. During a phone conversation last week, Mr. Milesky informed Lisa that he wishes to withdraw his application.

A motion was made by Dave Shipman to withdraw the Milesky application. Rick Thistlethwaite seconded. (Motion Passed)

- c. Term expiration and reappointments were the next item discussed. The terms of Township/Borough Member, Corbly Orndorff and Commercial/Industrial/Residential Contractor member, Charles Day both expire on October 20, 2010. Both are interested in continuing to serve on the Farmland Preservation Board.

Future meeting times (day vs evening) was also discussed. Bill Cree added that he spoke to Charles Day, who indicated that he would like to continue to serve, but due to his work schedule, he could not attend day meetings until the winter months. He also indicated that a 1:00 PM meeting would be better for him. After discussion, it was the consensus of the Board that a start time of 1:00 PM would be better for everyone, except for the October meeting which will be held at 10:30 AM. If the daytime meetings do not work in the spring or summer months, the meeting time can be evaluated and adjusted as needed. Lisa indicated that the advantage of daytime meetings is that Laurel Rush and Becky Salosky to are able to attend.

Chairman Bill Cree noted that Carl Biddle called to inform him that he would be unable to attend today's meeting. As directed by the Chairman, Lisa recently sent a letter to Mr. Biddle regarding his absenteeism. The letter explained that as required by the By-Laws, he has not met the attendance requirements (60 percent of the meetings). Chairman Bill Cree said that Mr. Biddle is willing to resign, if that is the Board's wish. It was noted that Mr. Biddle's term will expire on October 20, 2011, and if he is replaced, that individual would serve the remainder of that term. In order to keep Chairman Bill Cree apprised of staff activity, Commissioner Trader recommended that Mr. Cree receive copies of all future outgoing correspondence.

A motion was made by Dave Shipman to make a recommendation to the Commissioners to reappoint Corbly Orndorff and Charles Day to the Farmland Preservation Board. Rick Thistlethwaite seconded. (Motion Passed)

Discussion continued on the attendance requirements and the By-Laws were referenced. Lisa read portions of them as follows: “the Board Members shall attend a minimum of 60 percent of all Board meetings, whether regular or special meetings. Any member that is unable to attend a meeting should notify the Chairman prior to the meeting.” It also states that “any Board Member may be removed from the Board for malfeasance or nonfeasance in the office or for other just cause by majority vote of the Greene County Commissioners, but only after the Board Member has received 15 days of advanced notice of intent to take such a vote. A hearing shall be held in connection with the vote if the Board Member shall request it in writing.” The Board expressed their appreciation of Mr. Biddle’s valuable input at the meetings; they miss his attendance, and encouraged his return. However, per the By-Laws, the matter will be deferred to the County Commissioners.

Dick Belding and Harley Gapen were individuals presented by the Board who may be interested in serving on the Farmland Preservation Board.

Mr. Orndorff commended Commissioner Trader and fellow Commissioners for their support and interest in this program as well as other programs.

- d. The next item of business discussed was the application period. Lisa distributed a “timeline” that calls for the application period to be re-opened from September 20th through October 5th. She said that letters are ready to be mailed to approximately 60 landowners located in the Ag Security Areas. The application period will also be advertised in the newspaper, on the radio, and on the website.

A motion was made by Rick Thistlethwaite to re-open the application period from September 20, 2010 to October 5, 2010. Dave Shipman seconded. (Motion Passed)

A motion was made by Rick Thistlethwaite to advertise the application period in the newspaper, radio, and website and, if necessary, pay for any associated costs. Dave Shipman seconded. (Motion Passed)

- e. Lisa spoke to Appraiser, Scott York, who indicated that he would need about 30 days to complete an appraisal. He requested the landowner information, but did not quote a price for the appraisal. Laurel added that she spoke to another appraiser, Joe Chico of Morgantown, and he also said that until he received additional information, he could not quote a price. He indicated the fee could be anywhere from \$2,000 to \$5,000, depending on the requirements.

A motion was made by Dave Shipman to obtain price quotes from Scott York and Joe Chico, ensuring that the deadline of November 15th can be met for completion of the appraisal, and poll the Board with the quotes before the next meeting. Corbly Orndorff seconded. (Motion Passed)

- f. Engaging an Attorney to complete the Easement purchase was the next item discussed. In the past, Attorney Greg Hook completed the title commitment; however, he cannot issue the Title Commitment Policy. The Title Commitment Companies have revised their policy requiring attorneys to transact a minimum amount of acreage per year and Mr. Hook does not meet those requirements. After discussion, the board suggested that the staff check with Kirk King and Brandon Meyers.
- g. Lisa distributed draft letters addressed to Representative DeWeese and Senator Stout, in support of a severance tax on natural gas extraction with a portion of the tax being allocated to impacted municipalities, the affected counties and to Conservation Districts.

A motion was made by Dave Shipman to approve mailing the letter signed by Chairman Bill Cree. Rick Thistlethwaite seconded. (Motion Passed)

VIII. DISCUSSION OF STAFF REPORTS

There was no discussion of staff reports.

IX. NEXT MEETING

A motion was made by Dave Shipman to suspend the meeting until October 5th, at 10:30 a.m. Rick Thistlethwaite seconded. (Motion Passed).

By that time, the applications will be available for ranking by the Board.

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca K. Salosky
Fiscal Officer
Greene County Conservation District