



County of Burlington

Department of Resource Conservation

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Burlington County Agriculture Development Board

Minutes

September 8, 2022

Meeting held in-person at Burlington County Lyceum, 307 High St., Mt. Holly, NJ

Members in Attendance: Phillip Prickett, Dan Kennedy, Paul Shinn, Randi Rothmel, John Hlubik, Brian Lestini, Pete Johnson, Sherry Dudas, Jeff Tober, Ila Vassallo, Kevin Sparkman, Thomas Stanuikynas, Bill Bamka

(Quorum Established)

Members Absent: Ed Cohen, Stephen Specca, Tom Budd

Staff in Attendance: Brian Wilson, Bradley Hansen, Anthony Drollas (Legal Counsel)

Public in Attendance: Bill Pettit Jr. (Peticote Farm), Wes Johnson (Johnsons Locust Hall Farm)

I. Call to Order

A. Opening Statement and Sunshine Law Compliance

Chairman Phillip Prickett (Chairman, PP) called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM. Brad Hansen (BH) read the Opening Statement and Sunshine Law Compliance statement in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act.

B. Flag Salute

a. PP called for the flag salute.

C. Roll Call

a. PP called for Roll Call and Brian Wilson (BW) read the roll call and indicated that a quorum was established.

II. Minutes of

A. July 14, 2022 (Open Session)

- a. **(Motion) Brian Lestini motioned for approval of the July 14, 2022 Open Session Minutes, John Hlubik seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

III. Staff Update

A. Administrative Update

a. General Items

- i. Nothing to report on this matter.

b. FPP Applications

- i. Brian Wilson (BW) reported that appraisals are underway for the 4 farms with applications submitted for preservation for the 2022 round. He also mentioned that Staff will hopefully be bringing preservation offers for those 4 farms to the Board for their consideration at the November meeting.
- ii. BW reported that the County is hoping to close on the Zimmermann farm (2021 round) in the next month.
- iii. BW reported that the title issue with the Emmons Home and West farms (2020 round) has been resolved and that the County is closing on those farms on 9/9/22.
- iv. BW reported that the Pepper farm (2019 round) which NJCF is taking the lead on and the county is just providing funding towards has still not closed. Still waiting on NJCF.

c. Stewardship/Monitoring

- i. BW reported that the annual monitoring report is typically presented to the Board at the September meeting but that it will be pushed to the November meeting this year.

d. Right to Farm

- i. There was nothing to report on this matter.

B. Relevant Legislation

- a. BW referenced assembly bill #4035, the bill which would give the Governor's office the authority to appoint the Executive Director of the SADC. The bill moved quickly through the assembly but hasn't gone anywhere since. It is likely that bill will go no further. Only 1 other county has submitted a comment on the

bill. BW also referenced Senate bill #S57, Special Occasion Events (SOESs). According to Farm Bureau, it is likely that the Governor will conditionally veto the bill to correct some issues surrounding applicability to exception areas (among other things). BW stated that the Governor has until around Sept. 20th to veto the bill.

C. Communications, Press & Other Items of Interest

- a. There was nothing to report on this matter.

D. Economic Development and Regional Planning

- a. Tom Stanuikynas announced that they have a new Executive Director for Regional Planning and Economic Development, Rob Wells. Tom announced that they are working with the Joint Base and Ocean County to update the Regional Compatible Use Study. BW explained that farms preserved within 5 miles of the joint base (buffer area) are eligible for funding from the federal government as a result of these planning efforts.

E. SADC

- a. Pete Johnson announced that the long-debated Soil Protection Standards may come to a vote at the September SADC meeting.

F. Commissioner Update

- a. There was nothing to report on this matter.

IV. Old Business

A. Mahon (Moran) Farm – Chesterfield - Encroachment

- a. BH reported that the garage encroachment issue affecting the Mahon/Moran preserved farm in Chesterfield Twp. is coming back up sooner than expected. He reminded the Board of their decision at the last meeting to give the landowners 2 years to resolve the encroachment issue. BH reported that on the day following the July CADB meeting, the garage was already moved and the issue resolved.

B. 2022 Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan

- a. BW reported that the Comprehensive Plan has been discussed for the last 2 years. The Plan outlines the goals and methods of the County's preservation

program for the next 10 years and is required by the SADC for state funding for County preservation efforts. He explained that the Plan must be adopted by the County Planning Board, as well as by the CADB. He also reported that BW and BH have been finishing the draft Plan and editing it for the last few months. BW thanked Tom S. for his help with the economic development portion of the plan. BW then gave a recap of Plan highlights that were recommended for inclusion by the sub-committee and endorsed for inclusion by the entire CADB.

Previously discussed:

- i. Keep targeting criteria the same
- ii. Revise preservation yearly goals to 500 acres/ year
- iii. Recommend the SADC adopt of Formula Value to establish easement values as an alternative option – just like Pinelands – this has been discussed among various states
- iv. Commissioners more likely to adopt a plan that does not call for an increase in funding
- v. Major focus of the update is to prioritize Post-Preservation efforts
- vi. Make declarative statement at beginning
- vii. Burlco was leader in acquisition now lead into post-acquisition
- viii. ‘Economic Development’ ‘Sustainability’ ‘Stewardship’ – Likely unachievable unless farms are profitable
- ix. Agriculture changes over time. Farmland Preservation Easements must be flexible to these changes

Goals section:

- i. Prioritize post preservation issues previously discussed
- ii. Rutgers Ag Development – profitability
- iii. Develop specific metrics to measure post- preservation successes
- iv. Identify specific resource needs at the County – funding / staff
- v. Increase education of post preservation initiatives / opportunities
Newsletters / conferences / emails / monitoring appointments / others?
- vi. Recommend SADC fully implement Farmland Stewardship Program
- vii. Recommend SADC hire conservation planners
- viii. Quantify environmental stewardship practices / benefits

BW announced that the largely-complete draft plan would be uploaded to the website the day after this meeting. He asked that the Board members take the next 2 months to go through the plan and bring any issues/edits/additions to Staff before the November meeting so that the Plan could be voted on for adoption at that meeting. BW reported that the SADC would also be reviewing

the plan before the next CADB meeting, and that he would also be in front of the County Planning Board in October asking for their approval/adoption of the Plan. Pete Johnson (PJ) brought up a question about solar on farms in NJ and net-metering. A Short discussion ensued. Brian Lestini (BL) asked a question regarding the timeline and process for adoption. BL also requested that other Board members take the time to review the plan before the next meeting so issues can be addressed ahead of the meeting if possible. Finally, BW stated that eventually the Plan will also go to the commissioners for adoption.

V. New Business

A. New Jersey Cannabis Regulatory Commission – Cannabis cultivation on preserved farms – (Presentation)

- a. BW presented the following fact sheet from the CRC:
 - i. The CRC has the full authority for regulating Medical Cannabis Program and the new recreational cannabis program
 - ii. Now, no cannabis (for medical or recreational purposes) can be grown on preserved farms
 - iii. Not eligible for Farmland Assessment
 - iv. Even if grown on non-preserved farms they land does not receive Farmland Assessment
 - v. Not eligible for Right to Farm protection as it is still against federal law to grow or sell.
 - vi. Hemp – commonly grown for CBD oil or fiber is permitted as it is not considered a drug due to the low THC content

Bill Bamka stated that hemp producing licenses in the state are plummeting as it does not seem to be a profitable crop for most in NJ right now. Sherry Dudas (SD) brought up a question of the SADC's Cannabis Fact Sheet and where the 'Not eligible for Farmland Assessment' statement comes from. Tony Drollas (TD) stated that it is in state statute and would require legislation to change. There was further discussion regarding the authority of the CRC, SADC, and Dept. of Ag and their roles in Cannabis regulation. There was still a lot of confusion regarding the different local and state regulations for growing cannabis on farms, preserved or otherwise, at the end of the conversation. SD expressed concerns for preserved farm owners and their current inability to produce cannabis and take advantage of related opportunities.

B. 2022 Farm Stewardship Award Nominations – (Presentation)

- a. BH reported that it was time to nominate farms for the 2022 Farm Stewardship Award. Staff had 3 nominations. BW gave a brief introduction/overview of the following nominated farms.
 - i. Croshaw (Foggy Bottom) – Mansfield Twp
 - ii. M&N Farms – Chesterfield Twp
 - iii. Gerickont (Pierson) Farm – Southampton Twp

Chairman Prickett also nominated the Allens for their work on the former Rinaldo farm on Rte. 206. BH and BW stated that they would bring a presentation with more details of each farm to the November meeting before the Board votes on the 2022 winner.

C. County-Owned Agricultural Lease Recommendation – Calmon Farm – Springfield Twp - (Motion)

- a. BW explained that the county owns a number of properties that have been acquired for future parks, trails, or open space use. Some of these properties are already being used for parks but also have space that is still kept in farmland. The Calmon Farm is part of the county-owned Arney’s Mount trail system/park and the current lease has expired and needs to go out to bid to be farmed in 2023. The commissioners look to the CADB for recommendations on the details of the leases. Because NJDEP Green Acres funding was utilized for the construction of the park, there are a number of special conditions that need to be included in the lease. BW explained the details surrounding the previous Calmon Farm lease and offered a staff recommendation for updates to the lease including a recommendation to the commissioners that, for various reasons, a minimum bid of \$20/acre should be utilized for this property. A short discussion ensued. **(Motion) Sherry Dudas motioned to accept Staff’s recommendations for the update to the lease. Dan Kennedy seconded the motion. John Hlubik abstained from voting. The motion passed unanimously.**

VI. Public Comment

- A. Bill Pettit Jr. (Southampton Twp.) addressed the Board advocating for solar on preserved farms.

VII. Closed Session

- A. Closed session was not held.

VIII. Next Meeting

- A. The next CADB meeting will be held on November 17, 2022 at 7:00 pm. The meeting is to be held in-person at the Burlington County Lyceum again.

IX. Adjournment

- A. Chairman Prickett adjourned the meeting at 8:40 pm.