

**Lancaster County Agricultural Preserve Board
Meeting Minutes**

Present: Mr. Daniel Zimmerman, Vice Chairman
Mr. Jeffrey Frey, Secretary
Commissioner D' Agostino
Mr. Daniel Fox
Mr. Edward Goodhart
Mr. Jered Hess
Mr. Andrew Lehman

Absent with Regret: Mr. Roger Rohrer
Mr. Matthew Young

Staff: Mr. Matt Knepper Director
Mrs. Denise Alvarez, Administrative Assistant
Mr. Kevin Baer, Farmland Preservation Specialist
Ms. Noelle Fortna, Farmland Preservation Specialist
Ms. June Mengel, Farmland Preservation Specialist
Mr. Garland Treese, Farmland Preservation Specialist

Guests: Tyler Snavelly, preserved farm owner, Rapho Township
Amanda Groff Harbor Engineering
Jeb Musser Lancaster Farmland Trust

- I. **Call to Order-** Mr. Daniel Zimmerman called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.
- II. **Review of Mission Statement-** Mr. Daniel Zimmerman read the Mission Statement: "To forever preserve the beautiful farmland and productive soils of Lancaster County and its rich agricultural heritage; and to create a healthy environment for the long-term sustainability of the agricultural economy and farming as a way of life."
- III. **Announcements-** None
- IV. **Amendment and Approval of December 18, 2025, Meeting Minutes-** A motion to approve the minutes with the following amendment: insertion of the following guest's names: Dennis Hess, Darlene Hess and Mike Fyock made by Mr. Edward Goodhart and seconded by Mr. Jeffrey Frey. **Minutes approved.**
- V. **Business From Guests-** See Rural Enterprise B2, 0384 Snavelly

VI. **Business-**

A. Subdivision & Land Development- 0088, Meadow Vista Properties LLC

Request for Ag Subdivision of the farm into two tracts of approximately 60 acres with the existing buildings (Farm 1) and 53 +/- acres of bare land that would be assigned the additional residential structure (Farm 2)

There were no subdivision guidelines in place that require Board review and approval of subdivisions, rather the Board determines if the action is consistent with the agricultural conservation easement. If the subdivision does not harm the economic viability, it is permissible. The law defines economic viability with certain standards, such as 50% of the parcel is harvested cropland, pasture or grazing land; 50% of the parcel is Class I-IV soils; the parcel is at least 10 acres in size and located in an agricultural security area. This proposal is consistent with the terms of the ACE and will not harm the economic viability of the farmland.

Motion to approve (deem consistent with the terms of the ACE) the application as submitted and further detailed in the Board Summary with attachments, inclusive of all Conditions of Approval, made by Mr. Andrew Lehman and seconded by Mr. Jeffrey Frey. **Motion Approved.**

B1. Rural Enterprise – 0170, Shellenberger

The Shellenberger's are requesting to have a single campsite on the farm and to provide farm tours to the campers. There will be one spot for an RV or tent, no restrooms; only water is provided. East Donegal Township Zoning Hearing Board approved the activity as a special exception and will only permit one site.

Motion to approve the application as submitted and further detailed in the Board Summary with attachments, inclusive of all Conditions of Approval, made by Mr. Andrew Lehman and seconded by Mr. Jeffrey Frey. **Motion Approved.**

B2. Rural Enterprise – 0384, Snavelly

Tyler and Tessa Snavelly recently became owners of this preserved 17.17-acre parcel from Tyler's parents, Joe and Beulah Snavelly. The parcel is currently bare land and Tyler and Tessa plan to build a house and barn / ag structure.

The request is to utilize 750 square feet of the 3,800 square feet barn for storage for Tyler's excavating business. There would also be some outside storage, for a total area of .085 acres, or 3,738 square feet. There will be no more than 4 non-resident employees, hours of operation are Monday through Friday, 6:30AM to 5:30PM. All business is conducted off-site, no customers come to the property. Both Tyler Snavelly and Amanda Groff (Harbor Engineering) answered questions. They shared that Rapho Township has granted approval of the

proposal and their decision has been provided to the Board as part of the application. Some Board Members expressed concern with the location of the proposed buildings. Mr. Snavelly explained that the reason for the location chosen was due to topography, soil quality and a desire not to be along Breneman Road.

Motion to approve the application as submitted and further detailed in the Board Summary with attachments, inclusive of all Conditions of Approval made by Mr. Jered Hess and seconded by Mr. Andrew Lehman. **Motion Approved**

C. Election of Officers

The County Commissioners Chair designate the Board Chair annually. The Board may make a recommendation for that position. The Board elects a Vice Chair and a Secretary annually.

Motion made by Mr. Jeffrey Frey to recommend that the Commissioners designate Mr. Daniel Zimmerman as Chair of the Board. Seconded by Mr. Ed Goodhart. **Motion Carried.**

Motion made by Mr. Jeffrey Frey to elect Mr. Andrew Lehman as Vice Chair of the Board. Seconded by Mr. Jered Hess. **Motion Carried.**

Motion made by Mr. Edward Goodhart to elect Mr. Jeffrey Frey as Secretary of the Board. Seconded by Mr. Jered Hess. **Motion Carried.**

D. Statements of Financial Interests- Fill out the form for the year 2025. Deadline is May 1st for submission. Members can file it on their own or provide it to Matt Knepper.

E. 2026 Review and Easement Purchase Price Cap

Mr. Matthew Knepper prepared and distributed historical data on farms preserved by the APB from 2019 through 2025.

- In 2025, 15 farms were preserved on over 1015 acres. 7 of these farms were paid the Board's cap of \$4,000/acre.
- Appraised Easement Value of these farms was \$4.9 million but with bargain sales, \$3.7 million was paid.
- There were 13 bargain sales, or 75%, which realized savings of \$1.2 million.
- Over the last 7 years, there has been a dramatic increase in the value of farmland.
- There has been a 66% increase in the market value of the land and a 27% increase in the easement value and we only paid a 5% increase over that time. We have controlled our costs very well. Our bargain sales and our cap are saving us money and letting us preserve more land and more farms for the same amount of resource.

Landowners have been accepting the \$4,000/acre cap. There is a backlog of 156 farms. Should the Board raise the cap to over \$4,000/acre? Raising the cap may realize:

- higher ranking farms may opt to preserve rather than passing on the opportunity
- the program may attract more applications
- less farmland acreage preserved

The Board determined that they needed more information. They would like some form analysis of more recently preserved farms and appraised easement values. They would also like to know if the cap were raised would landowners be more apt to apply. Would they likely preserve?

Mr. Musser offered to facilitate / include APB in an effort that LFT has been pursuing which is to reach out to landowners in person on their “priority” list to see what would stimulate them to seriously consider preserving their farmland?

Motion was made to keep the cap at \$ 4,000/acre for 2026 and continue to research in conjunction with the Lancaster Farmland Trust so an informed decision can be made at next year’s per acre cap discussion. Motion made by Mr. Edward Goodhart and seconded by Mr. Jeffrey Frey. **Motion Carried.**

- VII. Adjourn: Meeting was adjourned at 9:47 am. The next meeting will be held on Thursday February 26, 2026, at the Lancaster County Public Safety Training Center, 101 Champ Blvd. Manheim PA 17545