

Lancaster County Agricultural Preserve Board
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, August 27, 2020

Present: Mr. Jeffrey Frey, Chairman
Mr. Gary Landis, Vice Chairman
Mr. Edward C. Goodhart, III, Secretary
Commissioner Ray D'Agostino
Mr. Jered Hess
Mr. Andrew Lehman
Mr. Roger Rohrer
Mr. Daniel Zimmerman

Absent: Mr. Matt Young

Staff: Mr. Matthew Knepper, Director
Mr. Kevin Baer, Farmland Preservation Specialist
Ms. Noelle Fortna, Farmland Preservation Specialist
Ms. Jessica Graham, Farmland Preservation Specialist
Ms. June Mengel, Farmland Preservation Specialist
Mr. Garland Treese, Administrative Assistant

Guests: Jeb Musser, Lancaster Farmland Trust

I. Call to Order

Mr. Jeffrey Frey called the meeting to order at 8:20 a.m.

II. Review of Mission Statement

Mr. Edward Goodhart read the Mission Statement: *"To forever preserve the beautiful farmland and productive soils in Lancaster County and its 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

- A. The Agricultural Preserve Board met in Executive Session on August 27, 2020 at 7:15 a.m. to 8:15 a.m. discuss real estate transactions and litigation, including the Quarryville Resorts/Fryberger matter.

IV. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the July 23, 2020 meeting made by Mr. Edward Goodhart and seconded by Mr. Daniel Zimmerman.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

V. Business from Guests

- VI.** Jeb Musser provided an update on current and prospective farmland preservation opportunities. In addition, he shared that rather than their annual Pedal to Preserve fundraiser, there would be at least 3 "on your own" bike rides that riders can choose to ride on their own. There will be no train ride at the Strasburg Railroad. And, the Annual Dinner on October 21st, will be an on-line event.

There will still be the silent auction and the auction for acres. A tiered level of registration for the event will be available, but the event will be open to the public.

VII. Business

A. Request for Subdivision/Land Development - None

B. Request for Rural Enterprise – None

C. Discussion of Farmland Ranking System

D. Discussion of Minimum Criteria for Subdivision/Lot Add-On

Mr. Matthew Knepper opened a discussion with the Board about some proposed changes to the ranking system and associated minimum criteria. Mr. Knepper reminded the Board that the Ranking System is largely a function of the Statute (Act 43, Agricultural Area Security Law) and the promulgating Regulations (138e). And, before an application can be ranked, it must meet certain minimum criteria. As with the Ranking System, there are specific minimum criteria that are required by State Law and then counties may add their own minimum criteria.

Last year, the Board decided that starting in 2020, a Conservation Plan is a minimum criterion for application. There was also legislation that recently passed that allows an application to forgo/relinquish the right granted within the Agricultural Conservation Easement to construct an additional residence.

The current Ranking System could be modified to account for these recent developments. Should points be awarded for Stewardship (conservation plan) only if a landowner submits a verification form which guarantees that the farm not only has a conservation plan (minimum criteria now) BUT also has it implemented? And then should points that are not being used in this category be transferred to a new line item that would award points for those applications that have relinquished the right to construct an additional residence?

The Ranking System serves to objectively evaluate applications and decide in which order they should be preserved.

The Ranking System is split between 4 categories, with mandatory minimum scores for each: Soils, Development Potential, Farmland Potential and Clustering Potential. Some factors within each category are required and Counties have discretion with some. For example, Lancaster use a two tiered soils component with standard soils points and alternate soils points. If a farm has a Conservation Plan (which is assumed to be implemented), the application receives the alternate soils points, which reflect the fact that there is a conservation plan.

In the beginning, Lancaster's ranking system placed more emphasis on development pressure and subsequently that particular category was weighted more heavily. A number of years ago, the Board decided that it was more important for farms to be preserved that were near and/or adjacent to other preserved farms in order to build critical mass. So, emphasis (points) were reduced from the Development Potential component and transitioned to the Clustering category.

Mr. Daniel Zimmerman voiced concern at decreasing any points in the Stewardship category. Mr. Knepper wondered if the decision was made to award points only for those applications that have submitted proof of implementation of their conservation plan – how such proof would carry forward? Would an applicant have to resubmit every year? It could become labor intensive (and costly) for the applicant and the APB to monitor this in the annual application cycles.

Giving up the right to construct an additional residence should be worth at least as much as the line item of “Deeded Acres” in the Farmland Potential Category.

The Board agreed that both a landowner giving up the right to build an additional house was AS important as having an implemented Conservation Plan for different reasons. Mr. Andy Lehman suggested that maybe the relinquishment of the house right could replace the deeded acres line item?

Board Members encouraged Mr. Knepper and staff to develop some options to be reviewed.

VII. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 9:27 a.m.

The next scheduled meeting of the Agricultural Preserve Board

Thursday, September 24, 2020, at 8:00 a.m.

Lancaster County Public Safety Center

101 Champ Blvd. Manheim, PA 17545