

Luzerne County Farmland Preservation Board

Meeting Minutes – April 16, 2021

The Luzerne County Farmland Preservation Board met via conference call Friday, April 16, 2021 at 8:30 a.m. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the meeting was held virtually. Anyone interested in attending the meeting had the opportunity to email or call the Conservation District prior to the meeting. At that time, they would have been given the meeting log in information. Documents discussed during the meeting were available on the Conservation District website.

Attendance: The following members were in attendance: Linda Thoma, Board Chair; Jon Lucas, farmer; Rich Yost, municipal; Matt Balliet, farmer; Jennifer Lauri, program administrator; Bryan McManus, commercial; Nancy Snee, at-large.

Meeting Minutes:

Linda Thoma called the meeting to order at 8:40 a.m. The meeting was recorded for minute taking purposes as well as availability if requested. The meeting can be found at <https://transcripts.gotomeeting.com/#/s/c3439602187933b03d3a9f643d9e5e3222509d501cd10629266cf88fed8aebc9>.

The meeting minutes for April 17, 2020 were presented for approval via email prior to the meeting, and were also available on the Conservation District website. Linda Thoma suggested minor changes to the minutes. Matt Balliet made the motion to approve the minutes as amended. Rich Yost seconded it. Motion passed. Minutes for this meeting will be signed at the next physical meeting.

Jennifer shared pictures of the most recent farms preserved, Gary & Cathy Moyer, and Richard and Susan Larock. The photo for the Kashubski farm and Gans farm will be taken at a later date. An informative overview of the Benjamin Smith farm was provided.

Jennifer discussed the balance of the 2021 funds, \$607,156.44. The current 2021 waitlist was presented and reviewed by the Board. Information was provided for the next farm at the top of the waitlist, LDF Holdings. The second farm is Matt Balliet. A motion was made by Matt Balliet to move forward with LDF Holdings. Motion was seconded by Rich Yost. Motion passed.

Matt Balliet raised the question to move forward with the next farm in the que which is his farm. Matt participated in the discussion but excluded himself from the Board's decision to move forward with his farm. Jon Lucas made the motion to also move forward with Matt Balliet's farm. Rich Yost seconded the motion. Motion passed. Matt Balliet abstained from the vote.

Jennifer shared that, the State Board approved our Bylaws and Guide changes on August 20, 2020. Our program was recertified as of August 20, 2020.

The state-imposed waiver for inspections was lifted October 2020. Inspections will begin again soon. Twenty-five farms will need to be inspected in 2021.

The Farmland Preservation Board received a request from WVSA asking for a letter of support from the Board for a PENNVEST grant. WVSA is seeking funding to implement various green infrastructure projects in Luzerne County as part of the MS4 regulations. Bryan McManus shared his experience with MS4 mandates and his understanding of the request. The Board discussed the request and their understanding of the request. Rich Yost made a motion to send a letter of support. Matt Balliet seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Matt Balliet proposed discussion of an existing preserved farm and subdivision. He named a case of a farm requesting to subdivide their farm in half to split between two of the sons. The farm will remain preserved but divided between two owners. The State has denied the subdivision based on the Luzerne County Farmland Preservation Guide. After further discussion amongst Board members and referencing the Luzerne County Farmland Preservation Guide all members present agree to Matt reaching out to the landowner and request, that they submit a detailed request for subdivision to the Board for further review.

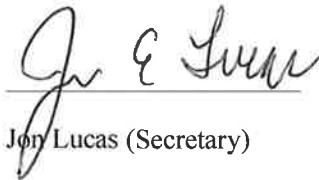
Rich Yost made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:47 a.m. Jon Lucas seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Prepared By:

For:



Jennifer Lauri



Jon Lucas (Secretary)