

Luzerne County Farmland Preservation Board

Meeting Minutes – September 8, 2023

The Luzerne County Farmland Preservation Board met virtually September 8, 2023, at 9:00 a.m. Anyone interested in attending the meeting had the opportunity to attend as it was announced a week prior in the Citizen's Voice newspaper.

Attendance: The following members were in attendance: Linda Thoma, Board Chair; Rich Yost, municipal; Jennifer Lauri, program administrator; Nancy Snee, at-large; Bryan McManus, developer; Blakslee Masters, farmer; and Matt Jones, Luzerne County Planning and Zoning.

Meeting Minutes:

Linda Thoma called the meeting to order at 9:01 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/1040a0833a39dadba3a0f7a856d1611ce193d7a0a304284225c56cc688e346a3>

The meeting minutes for January 18, 2023, were presented for approval via email prior to the meeting. Rich made the motion to approve the minutes. Brian seconded it. Motion passed.

Jennifer provided an update on the UGI pipeline planned to pass through preserved farms as well as the proposal of a regulation station proposed on the Hilliard farm. Jennifer reported that it is permissible and expected that the utility company, UGI shall compensate the owner of the land in fee and to the owner of the easement. Bryan questioned the current value of the land that will be removed from production, 6.14 acres. A discussion was held around the importance of an appraisal for the value of the land. Jennifer will inquire with the state to verify who would be responsible for paying for the appraisal and the proceedings for this situation.

Jennifer updated that the changes proposed to the guide were submitted to the state for review. The state has provided comment back suggesting changes be made with moving items within the guide and clarification on items. These items will be addressed and re-submitted for approval to the state.

Jennifer provided information on the 2023 allocation of funds. Luzerne County will receive a total of \$618,450 in state and county funds for 2023. Collectively the 2023 waitlist was reviewed and discussed exactly how the scores for applications are generated. The balance of 2022 funds after LDF Holdings is preserved is \$336,691.53. This balance will need to be encumbered by December 31, 2023. The next farm on the waitlist to be preserved is the Burger Farm. Nancy made a motion to move forward with the Burger Farm preservation. Brian seconded it. None opposed. Motion passed.

Jennifer informed the board that the next two farms, Bloss Farms and Michael and Kathy Maylath have both requested to be skipped over this year. Jennifer requested information for other counties and how they handle applicants requesting to be passed over. The group discussed the suggestions from other counties and determined the best course of action would be to have the applicants complete a withdraw form and then proceed with the next farms on the waitlist. Bryan made a motion to request the applicants not interested in proceeding complete a withdraw form and re-apply with a new application and pay the application fee again. Rich seconded this motion. Motion passed.

The next applicants on the waitlist Kevin Drasher and Dabashinski Farm are ready and willing to move forward with the easement process. Nancy made a motion to move forward with preliminary work for these farms. Blakslee seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Jennifer opened a discussion regarding a farm survey completed for the Richard and Nancy Yost farm. Rich as the landowner provided his version of the survey disagreement between himself and his neighbor and background information. Rich was then dismissed from the discussion and the meeting. The board discussed the pertinent details of the survey, the deed and chain of title. It seems clear that the surveyor did not interpret the deed accurately. Bryan made a motion to question the accuracy of the completed Yost survey. Blakslee seconded the motion. Motion passed. Bryan will examine the documents made available, deeds, chain of title, survey and exhibits mentioned in the chain of title and determine the accuracy of the survey completed. If it is determined that the deed was not accurately interpreted by the surveyor, Bryan will contact the surveyor to suggest correction.

Based on a suggestion by Linda at a previous meeting, Jennifer reached out to Don Van Fleet, appraiser to determine the proceedings should anything happen to Don Van Fleet. Jennifer has verified that Don's daughter, Robin, will carry out any appraisals needed.

Bryan made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:03 a.m. Nancy seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Prepared By:

For:



Jennifer Lauri



Jon Lucas (Secretary)