

Township of Franklin Agricultural Advisory Committee
Meeting of January 13, 2020
Minutes

In attendance (8) Chay Johnston, Ralph Travaglione, Tim Doyle, Mike Vassallo, Jim Ketchum, Ken Atkinson, Cindy Roberts, Guest; Jeff Thies.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Chay at 7:04 PM after the Flag Salute. OPMAC guidelines were adhered to.

REORGANIZATION

Nominations and elections were held for the 2020 Chairman and Secretary positions of this committee. Chay Johnston was elected Chairman and Ralph Travaglione was elected Secretary.

The minutes of the last meeting (November 11, 2019) were approved.

FARM PRESERVATION STATUS

Ken Atkinson reported:

Farms That Are Talking To Our Facilitator To Start Preservation:

DiGioia Farm. Dominick & Tammy. Block 6402, lot 11. Dutch Mill Rd. 15 acres in the Main/Piney Hollow PIG. Pinelands PRR. They received an application on October 9, 2019. A voice mail was left with them and they have not responded.

Hunsinger Farm. Block 5901 lot 88, 23 acres. They received an application in June of 2018. Ken called and left a voice mail if they were still interested. Jeff Thies rents their land, and he will also contact them to see if they still are interested.

Jean Bellone Farm. Block 6805 lot 4.1 is in a trust. 32 acres. Jean has signed with intent to preserve and is now deceased.

Andy Bellone. Block 6805 lot 6 is about 18 acres Andy has signed with intent to preserve.

Tom Bellone . is about 13 acres. Tom has signed with intent to preserve.

Phil Danko Farm Block 6805 lot 3. 31 acres. Phil has signed with intent to preserve.

All four farms are on Harding Highway in the Downstown area and the front 300 feet of these farms are zoned Highway-Commercial. Their applications are on hold. Steve Bruder of SADC has stated that our zoning ordinance does not include Ag as a permitted use within this zone. Furthermore, the Right-to-Farm act would not apply here to protect these farmers should a concern arise. Therefore, all four farms are ineligible to be preserved. The SADC will give a conditional Green Light after the Township issues a one paragraph letter-of-intent stating how the Township will add Agriculture as an accepted use in the Highway Commercial Zone. If done by Ordinance, the letter must state the Date of Introduction, the Date of Vote, and the Date of review.

To assist us, the SADC sent a copy of a similar project in Marlboro Twp. in Monmouth County. Tim Doyle has received this copy and has spoken to the former Mayor and is in the process of fixing the problem Franklin has with the RTF Act within the Highway Commercial Zone. Tim has forwarded the e-mail chain to Mr. Armano- Township Solicitor. The Bellone Brothers have spoken to both Ken and Ralph on the progress of their application. We told the Bellones that they should contact the Township Committee for comment on December 3, 2019.

Grochowski Farm. 260 acres Block 1902 Lot 1 on Fries Mill Rd. This farm is zoned Business Mixed Use and is not in any of our Project Areas. This parcel is on hold until 2023. The Trust signed an option agreement with a solar company for possible solar development on the property. Ken informed Loraine Kiefer that while the agreement is active, farmland preservation is not an option. Ken also informed them that if the option expires the farmland preservation process can continue.

O-10-19 was introduced to the Township Committee on November 12. This new ordinance adds all agricultural uses on the Grochowski farm allowing it to be a candidate for preservation via a direct easement with the SADC. Ken, Leah Vassallo, and Nancy Brent met with the Grochowski Trust Family members earlier today.

Jeff Thies Farm. Lake Rd. Block 5802 lot 21. 79 acres in the Pinelands. Recently purchased from the Corwonski family. Mr. Thies is in the process of filling out his application. He will be speaking to his children about severable exceptions on the parcel. Mr. Thies was present at the meeting. He stated that he may purchase about two acres from an adjacent farm (Block 5802-lot 22). This 6.81 acre parcel lost its Q Farm status. Cindy Roberts questioned if a Pinelands

Determination would be needed for this lot line adjustment. Mr. Thies does not want to hold up his application. Cindy told him “all you need is an agreement of sale” to proceed with the preservation of his 70 acre farm.

FARMS THAT HAVE BEEN APPRAISED

LaRose/Durkin Farm. 5802, lot 1. Dutch Mill Rd. 18 acres in the PRR zone of the Pinelands. Their appraisals will be certified either at the February or the March SADC meeting. Rich Martin has a backlog of appraisals.

Gorrell Farm LLC. Block 7101 lot 35. 50.5 acres on Harding Highway, Pinelands Highway Commercial and PRR. The Gorrells have until February 5, 2020, to sign their agreement. They were given a 60 day extension to contact their accountant for advice on their LLC and how it would distribute funds to the brothers. Ken will contact them within the next two weeks to see if they have decided.

McCalister Farm, 5701 lot 81 and 5701 lot 17 Dutch Mill Rd and Marshall Mill Rd. 62 acres. The Deed of Easement agreement was signed and turned in to the township. Ken can now request P O #s to hire survey and title work.

FARMS THAT HAVE BEEN SURVEYED

ABNC, LLC. Corwonski/Miller. Block 5802-21, Dutch Mill Rd. 88 acres. After extensive discussions with Fralinger, the final survey package is in the process of being prepared. West Jersey Title will address any final closing issues. The SADC will be picking up more than its 60% share of preservation expenses because the CMV is less than \$9,000 per acre. It is anticipated that settlement will occur in early April.

SADC REPORT

Cindy Roberts reported that there has been a large turnover in SADC staff. Among the many staff changes, Steve Bruder’s assistant-Megan Stanly has left, and there will be extra work for Steve. Rich Martin at appraisals, has been alone in the department and there is a two month backlog. Cindy is the training coordinator and asked if we had any suggestions. Tim Doyle suggested that she speak to zoning officers and not construction code officers on the subject of not being able to build on preserved farmland. We also suggested that the SADC offer

more deer fencing to farmers, either to preserved farm owners at 50% cost share, or to eight year program farms at 50% cost share. Mike Vassallo suggested that the SADC look into cost sharing with farmers who want to “tile” their farms for better drainage.

NEW BUSINESS

Ken Atkinson reported that he drafted Request for Quote forms for the required appraisal, survey, and title work needed for all future farmland preservation projects.

Ken also reported that the SADC is requiring all municipalities that have received PIG grants to update their plan every ten years. They will do a 50% cost share with the towns after the work is completed up to \$20,000, Land Conservancy submitted a proposal on May 30, 2019 for \$4,000. The Township will need to address this in 2020. The SADC needs a resolution of support from the governing body for the plan update.

The next meeting will be held March 9, 2020 at 7:00pm.

Meeting adjourned 8:40 pm .

Respectfully submitted,

Ralph Travaglione
Secretary