

Township of Franklin Agricultural Advisory Committee  
Meeting of March 8, 2021  
Minutes

In attendance (4) Jim Ketchum, Harry Lucas, Ralph Travaglione, Ken Atkinson .

The meeting was called to order by acting Chairman Jim Ketchum at 7:10 PM after the Flag Salute. OPMAC guidelines were adhered to.

New members were introduced.

The amended minutes of the last meeting (January 11, 2021) 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. There has been no contact since January 2020.

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. There has been no contact since January 2020.

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 Downtown area and the front 300 feet of these farms are zoned Highway-Commercial. Their applications were

on hold. With the passage of O-12-20 on November 10, 2020, we have verified that we are now able to preserve these farms with the SADC. The language of O-12-20 added all types of agriculture and agriculture businesses as an accepted use in all zones of the township. Ken will visit these applicants in the next two to three months.

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 while a solar option on the land is in effect-until 2023.

Rohs Farm. 30 acres Block 6805 lot 30 on Forest Grove Rd. This farm is zoned RA and is in our PIG area. We informed him that we will be ready to assist him when he feels that the time is appropriate.

Martorano Farm. 138 acres. 38 acres tillable. Block 5901 Lots 8, 90, 92, 94, 95, 96, 79.01. Farm is located both on Tuckahoe and Main Roads in our Main/Piney Hollow PIG area. It is in the Pinelands PRR (3.4) acre zone. They first contacted the County in June of 2019. Ken has meet with them on February 23<sup>rd</sup> to fill start the application process. They requested additional time to consider if they want to take any exception areas and contemplate some other specifics concerning the pending application. Cindy Roberts had stated that this can be a SADC Direct Easement Farm because it has the minimum acres, but its quality score has not been performed, and therefore its application should be submitted as a MUNI PIG until a quality score is completed. Also, if this farm was submitted as a DE, it would have to compete with other farms in the state for preservation, and with a limited budget, it is best to apply for preservation via the MUNI PIG program.

Graiff farm. 22 acres. 21 acres tillable. Block 5702 lot 84 on Central Ave. in the Central Project area. This farm was purchased in September of 2020, and has been actively farmed for 100 years, but lost its Q status. Mr. Graiff has re-entered the Q program and this farm needs two more years before being preserved. We are waiting for a letter from the County Tax Assessor (Tammy LaTorre) to proceed with an application. This farm must be on the Q list prior to going to settlement for Preservation.

## FARMS THAT HAVE BEEN APPRAISED AND CERTIFIED

LaRose/Durkin Farm, 18 acres on Dutch Mill and Tuckahoe Rds. Block 5802 Lot 1. The SADC certified their appraisal on February 28, 2020. All owners of the property have now signed to accept our offer on Preservation. Mrs. Mary Durkin has spoken to Ken recently and said she will obtain an attorney to represent her at closing. The appraisal value does not cover the full mortgage value, and this must be worked out between the co-applicants. The options include the co-applicant forgiving any excess debt that would remain on the mortgage after the farmland preservation settlement, or the contact landowners securing additional funds through some other means to pay off any excess mortgage balance. Once the mortgage has been paid, the plan is to have Mrs. Durkin's name removed from the deed and add Mr. LaRose's name, SADC has their signed approvals. The next step would be to do title work on the farm, this would indicate if there is a mortgage on file, and how it will be satisfied.

Jeff Thies Farm. Dutch Mill Rd and Lake Rd. Block 5802 lot 21. 79 acres in the Pinelands. One 3.4 acre severable exception along Lake Rd, and one non-severable 1 acre exception along Dutch Mill Rd. have been asked for. CMV was June 29, 2020. On August 11, 2020, Ken and Ralph made the Township offer to the Thies family. Mr. Thies felt the offer was considerably lower than the ABNC farm that is next to his farm. We extended the time for them to accept our offer to December 11, 2020. We then extended the timeline for the Thieses to accept our offer to January 11, 2021. Ken then gave them a verbal extension, till we could meet. We asked Mr. Thies to speak to his mortgage holder and ask them how much interest would he pay on the loan during his two years of waiting to be re-appraised, should he deny our offer and ask for another appraisal after his mandatory two year wait. A motion was made by Harry Lucas, and seconded by Jim Ketchum, for Ken to send another letter to the Thieses for them to either accept our offer or reject or offer by April 1, 2021. The motion also stated that a no response would constitute a no, and we will never contact them again. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

## FARMS THAT HAVE BEEN SURVEYED

McAlister Farm, 59 acres on Dutch Mill and Marshall Rd. Block 5701 lot 17 and 81. After several months of work we have finally addressed the deed overlap issue. Quit Claim deed with 5 adjoining property owners have been filed and the McAlisters relinquish all rights to any lands indicated in the overlap areas. The SADC requested a number of revisions with the survey and title. The revised

survey package is at the SADC for final review. We anticipate settlement to be in early May.

Our Annual PIG application was submitted and accepted by the deadline of December 15, 2020. This year, the application required a resolution from the Township Committee that acknowledges Preservation activities within the Township. We have received no news from the SADC on our application, so no news is good news.

Our 10 year review with The Land Conservancy continues. LCNJ hopes to make the 2<sup>nd</sup> public presentation during the April or May Planning Board meeting.

## SADC REPORT

Cindy Roberts e-mailed a SADC report. A new Regional Acquisition Coordinator (RAC) has been hired.

## MEMBER COMMENTS

Jim Ketchum suggested that we have a public meeting (after Covid-19 restrictions are lessened) to help educate our township farmers on the Right to Farm (RTF) ordinance. He suggested that a good time would be this autumn. We were all in agreement that O-12-20 opened our eyes on the holes in the law that protect our farmers.

The next meeting will be held May 10, 2021 at 7:00pm.

Meeting adjourned 8:10pm .  
Respectfully submitted,  
Ralph Travaglione  
Secretary