

**TOWNSHIP OF LOWER MAKEFIELD
FARMLAND PRESERVATION, INC
FEBRUARY 27, 2018**

The regular meeting of Farmland Preservation, Inc. was held on Tuesday, February 27, 2018 in the Lower Makefield Township Municipal Building. Mr. Blank called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm.

Those Present

Farmland Preservation

Mike Blank

Ross Bruch

Doug Riblet

Eric Yeager

Others

Bob Colavita

Tom McGowan

***Dan Bankoske**

***Suzanne Blundi**

**(joined the meeting
in progress).**

MINUTES

Motion made by Mr. Blank to approve minutes of January 23, 2018 as amended. Motion was seconded and passed.

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TREASURERS REPORT

Mr. Riblet distributed statements from the Money Market and Vanguard accounts along with a worksheet from Vanguard which includes all the transactions for the past month. Mr. Riblet deposited the rent check from Mr. McGowan into the Vanguard account. Mr. Riblet stated the transactions listed as buy items on the Vanguard Federal Money Market Statement; \$909, \$2,310 & \$509 are rent payments and the \$4,160 dividend received is also a buy.

Mr. Blank asked Mr. Riblet about the decision on reinvestment. Mr. Riblet stated he redirected payments to the Federal Money Market fund as opposed to reinvesting. Mr. Blank stated the balance of the Money Market fund is \$41,241.

- Statement of Investment Objectives – Mr. Bankoske does not have any information for tonight’s meeting.
- Asset Allocation – Mr. Bankoske had no comment and stated that as of tonight’s meeting he will no longer be able to work on the asset allocation as it is now a conflict of interest.
- Mr. Blank will take over working on the Statement of Investment Objectives and Asset Allocation strategy.

TOWNSHIP CLARIFICATION OF BAMBOO ORDINANCE AND FOLLOW UP WITH NEIGHBORS

Mr. Riblet stated the Township has approved an amendment that clarifies the issue/ordinance of bamboo but the BOS is still waiting to approve the language of the ordinance. Mr. Riblet sent an email to Mr. Majewski and is waiting on a response regarding the status of the ordinance.

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UPDATE ON PLANS FOR BAMBOO REMEDIATION

Mr. Blank stated that Farmland cannot move ahead with any remediation projects as of this time as they are waiting for clarification of the bamboo ordinance.

MEETING TO DISCUSS LONG-TERM STRATEGIES

Farmland held an executive session workshop to discuss long-term strategy, goals, By-Laws and their Mission Statement. In attendance: Mike Blank, Eric Yeager, Ross Bruch and Dan Bankoske.

Mr. Bruch handed out paperwork from the meeting and paraphrased Section 2.1 (purposes of this corporation) of the By-Laws as follows:

- Preserving farmland in Lower Makefield Township.
- Preserving and providing future recreation, park and conservation facilities.
- Protection of woodlands, streams, valleys, lakes and ponds and other natural resources areas in Lower Makefield Township.
- Setting aside of other lands in Lower Makefield Township as necessary to assure present and future generations an adequate amount of open space.

The last three purposes are in addition to the objective of providing for Farmland in the future.

Mr. Bruch stated that in the future, if Farmland Preservation feels there is better use for the land other than farming, there are other options that can be considered.

Mr. Bruch asked what is the long-term plan of the farmers? Mr. Blank stated the land currently owned by the Corporation must stay as farmland.

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Mr. Blank asked Mr. McGowan and Mr. Colavita their opinion about the broader scope of the By-Laws. Mr. Colavita responded by saying he felt that Farmland entrusted himself and Mr. McGowan to farm the land that was leased to them and that they have tried to take care of their Farmland property, and appreciate the trust that Farmland has shown in them and other farmers. In turn, Farmland stated that they are proud of the work the farmers are doing.

Mr. Bruch stated he is talking about the future generations of farmers. That is, if there is no desire to farm this land, what does Farmland Preservation do then? He feels it is good to know there are other opportunities available to use this as open space in the Township.

Mr. Bruch asked, that aside from the current land that is being farmed, does Farmland Preservation have any desire to acquire additional land or open space in the Township that could be preserved for farming or for other opportunities? If so, Farmland would need revenue to purchase these parcels to make it a preserved space. Another option would be a conservation easement. Farmland would like to identify all available parcels and talk to the land owners about the benefits/options of this idea.

Other ideas:

- Revenues outside of rents, such as through tax-deductible donations or other fundraising activities.
- Conservation easements as part of legacy planning.
- Community-supported agriculture (CSA) where citizens participate and get discounted produce
- Community gardens
- Purchase additional parcels

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Mr. Blank stated, if Farmland would like to raise funds, they would have to change their tax position.

Mr. Riblet stated Farmland recently studied appraisals as to fair market value in the region. Pricing ranged between \$12,000 to \$16,000 an acre. Mr. Riblet asked Mr. Colavita and Mr. McGowan what size parcel is needed to be farmed? They responded, it depends on the location and what the land will be used for. They feel anywhere from two (2) to approximately thirty (30) acres would be sufficient. Mr. Riblet stated Farmland could afford to buy thirty (30) acres if there was land available.

Mr. Bruch stated the purpose of possibly buying or acquiring land through donations, would not necessarily be for farming but could possibly be for a community garden that would benefit the Lower Makefield Township community.

Action Item Community Gardens – Mr. Yeager:

- Liability insurance - need to make sure Farmland is covered.
- Plot size: 10 x 10, 20 x 20 or 30 x 30. Prices range from \$40 - \$100 depending on size.
- Water Source: If a well is not available, rain barrels could be used.
- Accessibility: making sure residents have easy access to the garden.
- Writing laws: referencing what type of spray or chemicals can and cannot be used.
- The initial startup cost is estimated to be \$3,000.

The question was raised about what level of management the Township applies to the Community Garden located at the Garden of Reflection or whether it is managed by an independent organization. Mr. Yeager is going to follow up on this question and report back to the Board when he has the information.

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Mr. Blank stated they also discussed the possibility of current farmers getting involved with a CSA that is currently owned by Farmland. Both Mr. Colavita and Mr. McGowan stated they are not interested in working on this project at this time. Mr. Riblet asked if there are any parcels that would be useful for a CSA project? Mr. Colavita stated there is a piece of property owned by the county near Black Rock Road that might be available. Ms. Blundi brought up the Harris Tract parcel and stated that one half of the land is toxic but the other half should be okay to farm.

Mr. Bruch will investigate both the Black Rock and Harris Tract parcels and report back to the Board with any information he may gather.

Mr. Blank stated, to summarize the meeting, Farmland could in theory broaden their purview and consider several of the possibilities that were discussed during the long-term strategy meeting.

Mr. Bruch stated he feels that “Community Day” could be used as an opportunity to educate and ask the community for their feedback on any interest in community gardens. He feels this would be helpful for Farmlands as to their long-term goals.

REVISED PROCESS FOR BUFFER ISSUES

Mr. Bankoske discussed the possibility of revising the current process being used for dealing with buffer issues and neighbor complaints. Farmers have an obligation to maintain the buffers to a certain degree according to their leases. Currently Ms. Holmes fields the call at the Township building and forwards the information to Mr. Blank who in turn contacts the farmer who is responsible for taking care of the issue. Farmland would like Ms. Holmes to contact the farmer directly and not go through Mr. Blank. The Farmland Board wants to remove themselves and simplify the process by possibly having Ms. Holmes or the homeowners’ contact the farmers directly.

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Mr. Riblet stated he would like to leave the process as is. He feels by having the neighbors contact the farmers directly is not the solution and it might result in conflict between the neighbors and the farmers.

Mr. Riblet would like to add “looking at the Buffers” to the Spring Tour Agenda.

Mr. Blank stated – Keep the process the same for now and he will discuss the issue with Ms. Holmes.

ACTION ITEM REVIEW

Fence on Clearview - Mr. Riblet is following up with Mr. Stewart about erecting a fence, for safety reasons, on Clearview during the DRJTBC project and is still waiting on a response. Mr. Bankoske stated he spoke with Mr. Stewart who would prefer not having a fence.

Mr. Blank asked Mr. Bankoske what had been done regarding monetary adjustments for Mr. Stewart since he is not able to farm part of the acreage. Mr. Bankoske said nothing has been done.

There was discussion regarding the piece of land which was previously owned the Christian Radio Station, for possibly housing the community garden. Mr. Bankoske said the property is now owned by Nassau Tower RTY, LLC. Mr. Bruch will reach out and report his findings to the Board.

Shaw Sign - Mr. Blank ordered and received the replacement sign for Mr. “Buster” Doan.

Investment Documents - Mr. Blank will take over working on the Investment Documents since it is a conflict of interest for Mr. Bankoske.

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Bamboo Ordinance & Clarification – Mr. Riblet will follow up with Mr. Majewski.

Bamboo removal project with Mr. Stewart – Mr. Yeager left a voicemail for Mr. Stewart and is waiting for a response.

Bamboo Removal - Mr. Stocker – Both Mr. Riblet and Mr. Bankoske are waiting for a return call.

OTHER ITEMS DISCUSSED:

Review Township Plan #660 – Octagon Center – Office Condo Phase II - (Dunkin’ Donuts/Daycare) - The Board had no comment.

Mr. Bankoske talked about the following two (2) properties:

- 1) Longshore - Mr. Bankoske stated the neighbor at Longshore near Pownal Drive is upset that debris is collecting along the fence on Farmland property and would like it removed. Mr. Stewart will address this issue.
- 2) Bethel Property – Mr. Bankoske stated neighbors were concerned that one of the trees on the property is being strangled by vines that are wrapped around it. The Board discussed and Mr. Bankoske will contact Mr. Stewart to see if he could cut the vines.

Spring Farm Tour - Saturday, April 21st – 7:30am beginning at Sterling Farms.

The Board decided to cancel their March meeting.

There being no other business the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Blank, President