

**TOWNSHIP OF LOWER MAKEFIELD
FARMLAND PRESERVATION, INC**

July 22, 2020

The regular meeting of Farmland Preservation, Inc. was held on Tuesday, July 22, 2020 via Zoom. Mr. Blank called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

Those Present

Farmland Preservation

Mike Blank – via Zoom

Eric Yeager – via phone, mtg in progress

Dan Bankoske- via Zoom

John Lewis – via Zoom

Dennis Steadman – via Zoom

MINUTES

Mr. Blank stated the first order of business was to approve the minutes from the June 2, 2020 meeting. He asked if there were any comments on these minutes and none were expressed. Motion made by Mr. Bankoske to approve minutes of June 2, 2020 as amended. Mr. Steadman seconded the motion. Motion moved and approved by the Board and carried.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Mr. Bankoske reported he would give a quick update on the two brokerage accounts. The Fidelity account, as of the close June 30th was \$424,344.00 and the Vanguard account \$510,674.69. The cash management account with checking at Fidelity now has \$6,900.00 in it and the William Penn checking account has been closed.

Bob Small, farmland's accountant, has recommended using QuickBooks as it would help with financial reports and tax returns every year. His firm has offered to backfill all the data which

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would provide several years' historical data. Pricing for the online version of QuickBooks is \$25.00 monthly which should satisfy Farmland's needs. Another more advanced version is \$40 per month. Some advantages of using QuickBooks online: easy access for both Board members and the accountant, the ability to run reports by each property (farm) and better tracking of expenses for each property and farmer. Mr. Bankoske is going to check into QuickBooks version that you can download. He will report his findings back to the Board. The Board discussed and felt the pricing was fine and using QuickBooks would be very beneficial. Mr. Lewis suggested checking into pricing for nonprofit organizations which could offer discounts. He also suggested that the Board check on pricing for a year as compared to paying a monthly fee, which the Board agreed to do.

Expenditures: Three (3) checks were written to Corcoran Landscaping

- 1) \$2,350.00 - for removal of a large tree on the Bethel Track.
- 2) \$400.00 - for bamboo maintenance on Makefield Brook.
- 3) \$250.00 - for bamboo maintenance on Farmview II.

With Mr. Yeager joining the meeting via phone, Mr. Bankoske moved the discussion of the performance comparison between the Fidelity managed account and the self-managed Vanguard account. He stated Farmland had moved \$400,000 in May 2019 from Vanguard to a managed investment account with Fidelity. The difference between the two accounts was that the investment decisions with Vanguard were being handled by the Farmland Board while Fidelity made the investment decisions on funds invested with them. Both accounts were allocated on the aggressive side, as Farmland is focused long-term. Twelve-month performance ending June 30, 2020, was 6.09% at Fidelity net of fees and 6.2% at Vanguard accounting for income and expenses. The net performance is basically at the same level but having the funds managed by professionals removes the risk of the Board making the investment decisions. This also makes a compelling case for moving more or all funds at Vanguard to Fidelity. Mr. Blank asked for Board comments. Mr. Steadman stated he could see the value of having the funds managed by

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Fidelity. Fidelity would monitor the funds daily opposed to the Board making decisions by Zoom meetings with time restrictions. Mr. Blank added that, given the current volatile times, the managed option is his preference and he was in favor of transferring all Vanguard funds to Fidelity. Mr. Bankoske asked Mr. Yeager for his opinion. Mr. Yeager replied he agreed with using the managed investment strategy which would allow better use of meeting time without the need to discuss investing options. Mr. Blank summarized the Board decision is to move all remaining Vanguard funds to Fidelity. Mr. Blank made a motion for the Board to approve moving the funds. Mr. Steadman seconded the motion. Mr. Bankoske stated he felt a timeline should be added to the motion to allow for paperwork and signatures that will likely be needed. Mr. Steadman stated the motion should be amended to the funds being moved to Fidelity allowing Mr. Bankoske reasonable time to secure anything needed to accomplish the transfer. The motion, as amended, was approved by the Board. Mr. Blank asked if the Board had any further comments on the Financial report. There were none.

FOLLOW UP WITH BUCKS COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Mr. Blank stated that soil conservation is important on all Farmland properties but there are three properties that are in special need of attention: Stackhouse, Clearview and Makefield Brook. He reported he has called and emailed Ms. Rachel Onuska of the Bucks County Conservation District on numerous occasions without success. He has also discussed his efforts to contact BCCD with Mr. Tim Stewart who knows Ms. Onuska. Mr. Stewart offered to try and contact her as well. Mr. Blank stated the next step might be to contact Ms. Onuska's boss in an attempt to move the discussion forward. He asked Mr. Lewis if the township has ever had any contact with the BCCD? Mr. Lewis replied the township has had prior dealings with the BCCD but he does not recall any issues with them being non-responsive. Mr. Lewis asked who the BCCD reports to at the county level, the Planning Commission? Mr. Blank replied he had not been able to determine the chain of command but thinks it may be the Planning Commission which he can

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verify outside of this meeting. Mr. Steadman added he thought the soil conservation district was part of the USDA, possibly the US Soil, now, Resource Conservation Service. He thought the BCCD should flow up through them. Mr. Blank stated he was under the impression BCCD was a separate report though they do collaborate. Mr. Steadman added that he felt it may be a good idea to check with Mr. Tim Stewart to see if bypassing Ms. Onuska would be the correct course of action.

Mr. Blank asked Mr. Lewis who at the township has had dealings with the BCCD? Mr. Lewis felt it would have been the Township Manager or Mr. Jim Majewski, Director of Planning and Zoning. He added that the township had worked with another environmental specialist, Mr. Rich Krasselt, who has been very helpful. If the BCCD remains unresponsive, Farmland could contact Mr. Krasselt. Mr. Lewis will send Mr. Blank the BCCD contact link. Mr. Steadman stated this needs to have a sense of urgency as farmers have taken some conservation steps but the erosion will only get worse over time.

WINTER COVER CROP RE-DISCUSSION

Mr. Blank wanted to revisit the winter cover crop discussion as he had heard an interesting radio story that stated that less than 50% of farmland in the U.S. is owned by farmers. Some landowners allow buffers to be used for wildflowers, etc. non-agricultural use. They also encourage the use of cover crops even paying the cost in some cases. Mr. Blank stated Mr. Steadman had mentioned the no-till method and had provided a video which was very helpful in understanding how this method works. Mr. Blank asked, given this additional information, if there was any further action the Board should consider encouraging the use of cover crop. Mr. Blank added he has had discussions with Mr. Tim Stewart who favors the use of cover crop. Mr. Stewart would need to spend some money for an attachment to get the seeds in the ground before the corn is harvested. Mr. Blank opened the floor to Board discussion.

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Mr. Steadman stated the winter cover crop's purpose is to conserve the soil which is a great benefit. He is happy to hear Mr. Tim Stewart is open to using cover crop as the Stewarts (Tim and Sam) are the largest land tenant. Mr. Steadman thought the Board should prioritize which fields should have cover crop, due to soil issues. The Board could then have a meeting with those tenants to see what their positions are on winter cover crops and what they would require since the farmers would be the ones to execute any Board plan. Mr. Yeager stated he spoke with Mr. Sam Stewart about this. The Stewarts did plant a winter rye crop last year, though Mr. Yeager was not sure in which field the rye was planted. The rye seeding did not work as geese ate a lot of the seed that was planted. The Stewarts also have a machine that does not do a full till, digging only about one inch into the ground instead of a 6-inch normal till. This helps prevent erosion. Mr. Blank added that Mr. Tim Stewart told him that, if winter cover crop is seeded before harvesting it is harder for the geese to get to the seeds and, second, this gives the seeds time to germinate and grow. This, then, would happen before the farmers turn their attention to pumpkins which is their fall cash crop. Mr. Blank thought Mr. Steadman's idea for scheduling a meeting was a great idea. Mr. Steadman took scheduling of the meeting as an action item. Mr. Blank asked if any other Board members wished to participate. Mr. Yeager expressed an interest to participate. Mr. Bankoske did not feel he needed to attend but felt the meeting was the correct course of action. He added that most fields did have cover crop but the timing of when to plant or other options could be discussed. Mr. Steadman stated that Clearview and Makefield Brook, which did not have cover crop last year, along with Stackhouse would be his priorities. Mr. Lewis stated these efforts could help with the erosion issues the township encountered at Clearview near I-295.

DEER HUNTING

Mr. Steadman stated there were a couple of items on which to update the Board. The Pennsylvania Game Commission has provided "Red Tags" for the Leedom property that enrolls this parcel in the Red Tag Agricultural Deer Control Program. He has discussed this with Mr.

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Jim Kovalcik of BOWMA and Mr. Sam Stewart the farmer at Leedom. BOWMA will utilize the red tags, now in their possession, to hunt Leedom. Mr. Kovalcik is organizing the hunt with his group. Ten tags were provided which, if all are used, can readily be replaced with another ten tags. Mr. Kovalcik pointed out that any land being hunted under the ADCP must be posted as such. The Game Commission can be contacted and they will provide the signs identifying the property as part of the program. Mr. Steadman has attempted to reach the Game Commission without success at this point.

Farmland has the red tag program running on three properties already with Leedom being the fourth. Until the signage is received, Mr. Steadman felt we should proceed with the program as we have been. The hunters have the instructions, including program do's and don'ts. He is optimistic that BOWMA will begin utilizing the red tags immediately as no tags have been used yet on the other three properties. It is early in the hunting season but with the crops now coming up the deer should begin feeding making them more available to the hunters. 2020 will be a trial year to measure the success of the Red Tag program. BOWMA will be managing the hunting on Leedom and Mr. Sam Stewart managing the other three properties with Mr. Steadman advising. We will re-evaluate the red tag program at the end of the hunting season which is the end of September.

Mr. Lewis asked if BOWMA was hunting Leedom with the Red Tags now? Mr. Steadman replied that he had just delivered the red tags last Thursday and has not contacted BOWMA to give approval to start hunting prior to receiving the property signs. We don't want any delay that may cause us to miss the season. Mr. Lewis wanted confirmation that BOWMA was not waiting for anything from the township. Mr. Steadman replied BOWMA had been waiting for township approval which they since have received. Mr. Blank asked to be reminded what the property signs read? Mr. Steadman replied the signs state "Participating in the Agricultural Deer Management Program," which is the official name for the Red Tag program.

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Mr. Steadman reported that a hunter had dropped off to his house placards to be placed in car windshields. These placards state the hunters are there with the permission of Charlann Farms and Farmland Preservation to avoid past issues with neighbors reporting strange cars, at early hours, to the police. Mr. Blank asked if there were any further comments. Mr. Bankoske stated he was in favor of the program and it will be an interesting one-year program to see how many red tags are used. If BOWMA is successful at Leedom, the Board felt that it may want to involve them on more properties in the future.

Mr. Steadman added that he had just received a text from Mr. Kovalcik at BOWMA which stated that BOWMA is also pursuing acquiring the signage from another angle.

TREE UPDATE FARMVIEW I

Mr. Blank reported an update was needed about tree work on the two properties bordering Farmview I. Mr. Yeager reported the large tree at 1602 Farmview Drive was removed within two weeks of Mr. Matt Corcoran being given the go ahead. The stump was taken down almost completely but not ground. The stump is low enough to allow Mr. Sam Stewart to mow without any damage to his machinery.

Mr. Blank asked about the tree in our buffer behind 1628 Farmview that fell into that neighbor's yard. Mr. Bankoske stated that Mr. Sam Stewart had cut up this tree but left debris. Mr. Bankoske reminded Mr. Blank that they had cleared as much of this debris as they could and asked Mr. Corcoran to clear the remainder. Mr. Yeager stated that Mr. Corcoran has cleaned up the debris. The homeowner did express concern about some additional trees in the vicinity. Mr. Yeager replied that he and Mr. Corcoran had inspected the trees and they were determined to be safe. They did see some brush remaining from homeowner cleanup. Mr. Blank had communicated with the homeowner that the trees were safe but would appreciate her cleaning up

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the remaining debris. Mr. Blank asked if anyone could get to this property and verify the cleanup was complete. Mr. Yeager replied he could attempt to get out there next week.

BAMBOO REMEDIATION PROGRAM UPDATE

Mr. Yeager reported that Mr. Corcoran had done the first mow/spray/cut treatment of the bamboo about two months ago. The second regular treatment is scheduled for tomorrow. One pending item is to remove the old, wooden fence at Stackhouse near the Kaplan property which will enable Mr. Corcoran to get to the bamboo. Mr. Corcoran will be able to do this work for \$200. Mr. Yeager stated he believes the Board approved installing this barrier for the remaining bamboo near Kaplan at a meeting about three months ago. Mr. Blank thought it was approved too. Mr. Yeager stated Mr. Corcoran could do the barrier by fall if not sooner. Mr. Blank asked if the fence issue needed to be resolved before the barrier could be installed. Mr. Yeager replied the fence/debris would need to be removed but the cleanup would be a quick job. Mr. Bankoske had a concern that the fences, a split rail and a deer fence, do not follow the property line. This means Mr. Corcoran cannot use the fences as a basis for where he installs the barrier. Mr. Blank asked if Farmland needed Mr. Kaplan's approval to remove the fence? Mr. Bankoske replied notifying Mr. Kaplan would be a courtesy that we should extend. Mr. Blank asked if Mr. Bankoske could contact Mr. Kaplan? Mr. Bankoske replied he could make the contact but thought Mr. Yeager should be involved to relay any details to Mr. Corcoran should they arise. Mr. Yeager replied he could be involved just let him know when.

Mr. Blank asked the bamboo status at Makefield Brook and Farmview II. Mr. Yeager replied that Mr. Corcoran said both properties look very good. Both will be treated tomorrow with the regular, quarterly maintenance. Mr. Blank stated that Farmview II had a couple of bamboo shoots that Mr. Doug Riblet took pictures of and sent to the Board. The shoots are at 7 Sunnyside Lane. He asked if Mr. Corcoran has seen this area. Mr. Yeager replied he had taken Mr. Corcoran there about 6 months ago. Mr. Corcoran felt this area was not in his contract with

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Farmland but Mr. Yeager could review the contract to see if he is correct. Mr. Blank stated that, if not covered in the contract, shouldn't this area be included. Mr. Bankoske added that the homeowner may need to be notified. Mr. Blank replied there is a history with the homeowner who put up the barrier when they were previously informed there was a need for one. Mr. Bankoske stated that, from the photo, the bamboo appears to be on the homeowner's property between her barrier and fence but impacting Farmview II property. This makes the bamboo treatment the homeowner's responsibility. We will need to notify the homeowner of this need. Mr. Blank asked Mr. Lewis who the code enforcement officer for the township was? Mr. Lewis replied Mike Kirk. Mr. Blank stated that Mr. Kirk had contacted the homeowner before about a bamboo issue which triggered them to install the original barrier. He asked if Mr. Kirk could contact the homeowner again about this new bamboo issue? Mr. Lewis replied Mr. Kirk could contact the homeowner and inspect to see who's responsible for the new bamboo. Mr. Blank stated he will contact Mr. Kirk on this matter.

REVIEW OF OPERATING PRINCIPLES FOR LMFP BOARD

Mr. Blank reported that the Operating Principles detailed the internal workings of the Board. He felt the review of the operating principles may be better suited for an executive session. Mr. Blank asked if all Board members had reviewed the updated document. Mr. Yeager replied he had not reviewed the revised principles yet. All others had. Mr. Blank asked that Mr. Yeager review and return with any comments. Mr. Blank will incorporate any new suggestions into a final review document. Mr. Steadman stated he had reviewed the principles and considered it a quality document with the changes making sense. He felt any final edits could be reviewed and approved via email. Mr. Bankoske replied an email discussion might work but a final Board review done in person might be a better option. Mr. Blank asked if a regular or executive session should be used for this review? Mr. Bankoske felt regular session would be fine. Mr. Blank summarized that, once Mr. Yeager has reviewed the principles, he will incorporate any changes

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into the document and resend to the Board. He will add a final review to the next meeting's agenda. Mr. Blank stated the principles set good ground rules.

REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS

- Mr. Steadman will arrange a meeting including Mr. Blank, Mr. Yeager, Sam & Tim Stewart for a winter crop cover discussion.
- Mr. Blank will review the contact information for the Bucks County Conservation District to determine the next contact option. He will contact Mr. Tim Stewart to discuss if this option is the best course of action to attempt to move the process along.
- Mr. Bankoske will transfer all funds from Vanguard to Fidelity in a reasonable time as paperwork permits.
- Mr. Yeager will inspect debris on Farmview Drive especially any on the property of neighbors.
- Mr. Bankoske will contact Mr. Kaplan to arrange a meeting, with Mr. Yeager, to discuss the fence needing removal, property lines and decide on a bamboo barrier location.
- Mr. Blank will contact Mr. Kirk on the bamboo issue at 7 Sunnyside Lane.
- Mr. Yeager will review the Operating Principles document and return with any comments. Mr. Blank will incorporate any changes into a final document for review at the next meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Blank stated the August meeting has been cancelled in the past to give the Board a break in the meeting schedule. By unanimous consent, the Board agreed to cancel the August meeting and that meetings will resume with the September meeting.

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ADJOURNMENT

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several fluid, overlapping strokes that form a stylized representation of the name Michael S. Blank.

Michael S. Blank, President