

LOWER MAKEFIELD
FARMLAND PRESERVATION, INC.
MINUTES – OCTOBER 22, 2020

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The regular meeting of the Lower Makefield Farmland Preservation, Inc. (Farmland) Board of Directors (the Board) was held remotely on October 22, 2020. Mr. Blank called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

Those present:

Farmland Preservation Inc.: Michael Blank, President
Dennis Steadman, Vice President and Secretary
Daniel Bankoske, Treasurer

Others: John B. Lewis, Supervisor Liaison (joined and left meeting in progress)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

It was unanimously carried to approve the Minutes of September 23, 2020 as written.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Mr. Bankoske

There was no Operating Income or Expenses since the last meeting. The Tax Return and Financial Compilation is under way with accountant Robert Small. Farmland's tax return is due November 15.

QuickBooks is now in place and linked to the Fidelity Account. Mr. Small will attempt to backfill some of the prior year data, and Mr. Bankoske will use backfilled data for 2019 as a reference point for moving forward into 2020. He will provide reports of income by property, income by farmer, expenses by property, expenses by farmer, etc.

Once the Tax Return and Compilation is done for 2019, Mr. Small will be asked to review these documents with the Board. Using QuickBooks, Farmland will be able to send out invoices to the farmers, and the farmers will have the option to pay electronically. Mr. Bankoske stated ideally the invoices would be sent in December with rent due January 1. There is a 2% discount if the rent is paid within the first thirty days (this will be included on the invoice to remind the farmers).

SUMMARY OF MEETING HELD OCTOBER 20, 2020 TO REVIEW CONSERVATION PLANS FOR STACKHOUSE, CLEARVIEW, MAKEFIELD BROOK

On October 20 Ms. Rachel Onuska, Bucks County Conservation District (CCD), and Mr. Tim Stewart, farming tenant, met with the Farmland Board via video-conference. Ms. Onuska presented Conservation Plans for three Farmland properties – Stackhouse, Clearview, and Makefield Brook. (Note: The CCD “Stackhouse” unit encompasses the Farmland parcels of Stackhouse, Farmview I and Farmview II. Thus, the Plans encompass five of the nine properties owned by Farmland). Ms. Onuska indicated Farmland’s properties have high quality Class I and Class II soils.

With regard to Stackhouse there are some deep gullies, and soil there needs to be moved and recontoured requiring heavy equipment. The Plans for that should be completed by January or February of 2021 with implementation in May or June. Mr. Stewart indicated that this would not be a problem with his planting schedule for soybeans there.

With regard to Clearview, Mr. Stewart will continue to do the work to maintain the terraces. Mr. Stewart also has placed bales of hay and some stone in a gully that formed towards Taylorsville Road, and that will stay in place as it seems to be working.

With regard to Makefield Brook, CCD wants to take advantage of some cost sharing because of the Core Creek Watershed designation of that field. The work there will be delayed until October, 2022 in order to take advantage of that cost sharing. In relative priority, this parcel falls below Stackhouse and Clearview. Mr. Steadman will continue to monitor that field for further erosion.

Mr. Lewis joined the meeting at this time.

Mr. Blank reminded the Board that one area within the Stackhouse Soil Conservation Plan is owned by Mr. Kaplan. Mr. Kaplan is subdividing his property and plans to sell a part in the rear for development. Ms. Onuska suggested that Farmland ensure that the Township has a solid storm run-off plan in place before building on that land commences. Mr. Lewis stated that would be part of the Subdivision and Land Development process and that he does not believe anything has been brought before the Board of Supervisors lately on this. Once a building plan was in place, Farmland would be given the opportunity to review it.

The Lot is for sale and there are no construction plans as of today. Most of the homes surrounding the Stackhouse parcel are draining into the field and the gully that has formed in the direction of Dolington Road. While most of Mr. Kaplan's property drains in the other direction, the area where a new structure would be built would drain into the Farmland-owned gully.

The CDC did an analysis of crop rotations and their impact on soil erosion. The analyses showed that good agricultural practices indicated the three Stackhouse fields needed only crop rotation and did not require a winter cover crop. However, Mr. Stewart has indicated that he does put in winter cover crops when weather permits.

In certain situations where there is a shale-type soil (e.g. Makefield Brook), Ms. Onuska stated it is okay to plant continuous corn, as Mr. Stewart does on that parcel. Continuous corn is planted on Makefield Brook and on Clear-view because the deer situation at those properties would make soybeans non-economical.

OVERVIEW OF BUFFER ISSUES ON FARMVIEW I (Including 1642 FAIRFIELD ROAD, Drainage Issues) AND ON LEEDOM (Including 2088 FARMVIEW DRIVE (Overgrown Brush): Mr. Bankoske

The owner of 1642 Fairfield, Mr. Patel, reached out to Mr. Hucklebridge at the Township to discuss the water run-off that he experiences especially in the winter. The Farmland Preservation Board had advised Mr. Hucklebridge that they could address this after the field was harvested. Mr. Bankoske and Mr. Blank did a walk-through of the area over the weekend. Mr. Bankoske will contact Mr. Patel to set up a time to go to the site and meet him to understand his perspective.

A vast majority of the field drains down through the center toward the retention basin. The corn is planted east/west, and that may not help the drainage situation. There is an area on the property where a rock garden has been installed, seemingly, to help slow down the water flow.

There may be several "easy" fixes but any work there should await discussions with the homeowner and perhaps Bucks Conservation District.

Mr. Harding is the owner of 2088 Farmview Drive which is off of the Leedom parcel. A number of trees have died at Leedom over the last few years and had to be removed. Mr. Harding had reached out to the Township directly about the overgrowth along the tree line and the buffer. Mr. Bankoske and Mr. Blank visited this field as well over the weekend. In the last two years, Farmland had cleaned up a number of trees and brush as well as replaced a section of the fence on another section of the Leedom parcel.

Mr. Bankoske is interested in walking the site with someone that knows the native species in order to devise a cleanup plan.

Mr. Lewis suggested that they reach out to Alan Dresser who is on the Environmental Advisory Council (EAC). Mr. Bankoske stated he listened to the EAC's last meeting, and Mr. Dresser seemed very knowledgeable; and if the right opportunity comes, Farmland would like to walk this line with Mr. Dresser if he is willing.

Mr. Bankoske stated Farmland should rank this potential cleanup effort among other buffer maintenance issues, which could be done as part of the concept of a rolling buffer cleanup project.

Mr. Blank stated he feels what is needed is a concerted effort like they did on Leedom in the past.

Some of the buffer areas on Leedom are immaculate, but others are not. Mr. Bankoske stated it is a joint effort with adjoining property owners, and that Farmland has not done anything in the lower section for possibly three years, so it would be worth doing something.

NEXT STEPS FOR 1524 POWNAL DRIVE @ LONGSHORE (Vines and Fence):
Mr. Blank

The fence line at the property, which was previously overgrown with wild grape, has been cleared by Farmland. The homeowners are maintaining the fence line on their side. Mr. Blank stated he will go back to the property in the fall and take out pieces of the vines from the chain link fence.

TRIMMING OF TREES BY TOWNSHIP ON LONGSHORE: Mr. Blank

Farmland received confirmation that the Township cut the limbs overhanging the walking path along Woodside across from the Golf Course and also around the corner along Dolington.

PROPOSED 'RESPECT OUR TREES' SIGNS FOR SYCAMORE TREES ALONG WOODSIDE ROAD @ LONGSHORE (Needed on Other Properties?)

Mr. Steadman is proposing erecting signs asking residents to respect the trees and that people should not be stapling or nailing things to the trees. While it is recognized that the positive/hopeful signage hung on the trees during the Pandemic were done with the best of intentions, it damages tree health and can shorten tree lifespan. Mr. Steadman was there last weekend to remove nails and staples. There was an average of about fifteen per tree and it took a long time to clean up just eight of the trees.

Mr. Steadman suggested installing three to four signs along that tree row asking not to attach screws, staples, or nails to the trees as it damages tree health and long-term survivability.

Mr. Steadman contacted Bob Shaw Signs, who the Township uses for signage, and preliminarily such signs would cost in the range of \$50 not including posts.

Mr. Steadman asked the Board if they felt that they should post some signage and spend a couple hundred dollars to procure the signs.

Discussion included approximate size (18" by 24" metal), number of signs (3 at most), wording (all agreed should be less wordy), installation (previous signs were installed by the Township), and other locations for such signage (none identified).

Mr. Steadman will re-draft sign wording and get detailed cost quotes to bring back to the Board for a final decision.

BAMBOO REMEDIATION PROGRAM UPDATE: Mr. Blank
(Makefield Brook, Stackhouse (Mr. Kaplan's fence), Farmview II
(7 Sunnyside Lane)

Corcoran Landscaping is on track in the bamboo remediation effort on Farmland parcels. Corcoran will treat the bamboo areas one more time before the end of the year.

Farmland will wait for Mr. Kaplan to sell his subdivision before dealing with bamboo growing near that fence as the fence does not match the property line, and the line will need to be reestablished when someone builds there. Installation of a new driveway on the development site will require establishment of an accurate property line.

Mr. Steadman reported on the bamboo at Makefield Brook where Farmland spent a lot of time and approximately \$10,000 on remediation. A neighbor, Mr. Solomon, has a very large bamboo patch which has been trimmed back about 8' to 10' from the line and a heavy plastic barrier put down creating a buffer from his bamboo to the line. This is a fine example of a very good neighbor.

Mr. Steadman reported that a large, high top of a silver maple was dangling over the Makefield Brook driveway from Quarry Hill Road. This should be removed by a professional, and Mr. Blank will discuss this with Mr. Corcoran.

Mr. Blank stated with regard to Farmview II, he knows that Mike Kirk is aware of the growth of bamboo between Sunnyside Lane and where remediation was done by a homeowner. Mr. Blank stated he had asked Mr. Corcoran to check the Farmland side, and he will discuss that with Mr. Corcoran again.

ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COUNCIL (EAC) – Potential for Collaboration:
Mr. Bankoske

Mr. Bankoske stated he received an e-mail from the Township on behalf of the EAC with regard to a tree-planting event. Mr. Bankoske stated he was wondering if they were looking for other areas to plant trees, whether there was an area on Farmland Preservation property that would need trees to be planted. He stated he listened to the last EAC meeting, and Alan Dresser on the EAC seemed very knowledgeable about trees including native species.

Farmland has only taken down trees that were dead or dying or taken out brush that was overgrown without consideration of native/non-native species. Farmland has discussed previously about the pros and cons of using chemicals or having non-native species (e.g. Bamboo) that are expanding at a rapid pace. The feedback from experts was that in a lot of cases people claim the non-native species actually create more destruction than the chemicals used to control them. Mr. Bankoske stated he felt it might be worthwhile to consider what they are removing and how they are doing it; and they may want to work with the EAC on this in the future.

Mr. Lewis reported that to date, no one has volunteered to serve on Farmland, and he continues working on this.

Mr. Lewis left the meeting at this time.

Farmland Board members will make an attempt over the next few months to view the EAC meetings and see if there are areas of overlap where there could be cooperation.

OTHER BUSINESS

After discussion of future 2020 meetings, it was agreed that there would be one more on November 30.

REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS

Mr. Blank - send his Leedom photos to everyone so everyone can see more of the buffer situation.

Full Board – walk Leedom buffer to plan next steps on Sunday, November 1 at 7:00 a.m.

Mr. Steadman - development of signs including final cost proposal and verbiage.

Mr. Blank - talk to Matt Corcoran about bamboo on the Farmland side at 7 Sunnyside Lane and follow up with Mike Kirk on the neighbor's side.

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Mr. Blank – ask Matt Corcoran to look at the silver maple tree along the driveway at Makefield Brook.

Mr. Lewis - work on getting volunteers for the Farmland Board.

Mr. Blank asked if anyone from the public watching the meeting would be interested in volunteering for the Board.

Full Board - listen to the EAC meetings when available to look for future potential areas of collaboration.

Mr. Bankoske - try to get QuickBooks up and running for invoice use in December.

Note: Mr. Bankoske stated for a calendar year non-profit the Tax deadline is extended to November 15.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:05 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael Blank, President