

FARMLAND PRESERVATION, INC.
MINUTES – APRIL 15, 2021

The regular meeting of the Lower Makefield Farmland Preservation, Inc. (Farmland) Board of Directors (the Board) was held remotely on April 15, 2021. Mr. Blank called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Those present:

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

Absent: Dawn Bock, Member
James McCartney, Supervisor Liaison

REVIEW & APPROVAL OF MINUTES: ALL

Mr. Carney moved, Mr. Blank seconded and it was unanimously carried to approve the Minutes of March 11, 2021 as written.

HONEYBEE FARMING PROPOSAL: Mr. Steadman

Mr. Steadman presented a document (including an aerial map) summarizing the proposal to lease 225 SF of wooded land on the Makefield Brook parcel to Dr. Sven Strnad, 1433 Wheatsheaf Rd, for the purpose of establishing and managing 2 honeybee hives. The document included an aerial map showing Dr. Strand's residence and the selected location for the honeybee hives, which is approx. 60 yd. behind Dr. Strnad's backyard, approx. 120 yd. from the nearest backyard on Brentwood Rd., and approx. 30 yd. from the cropping area.

Additional information included the following:

- In general honeybees are not aggressive compared to yellow jackets and paper wasps which are more apt to sting than a honeybee. The European honeybee breed to be used is a docile breed. While they can sting, they tend not to as they die if they do.

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- A picture of a five-stage hive was shown, two of which would be established if successful.
- Food is supplied initially to help establish hives. Legs of the hives have water wells that will be maintained so the bees do not need to seek water.
- Bees fly up to five miles in all directions so they will not be concentrated in any one area although they will come back to the hive.
- Two signs will be posted at the Honeybee Farm site, and the area will be marked off with string or wire to demarcate area, plus this is a no-trespassing area.

Multiple benefits of honeybee hives include:

- Increased pollinators are good for local gardens, flowering and fruiting trees, and plant life.
- The European honeybees will interbreed with the local domestic honeybees, which should make the local population less aggressive.
- Production of local honey and beeswax (this is not a commercial operation; products will be given away).
- Lower Makefield Farmland Preservation will be helping to address global problem of failing honeybee populations due to bee colony collapse.

Farmland is proposing to lease a 15' by 15' plot to Dr. Strnad via a formal lease agreement, which has been reviewed by Dr. Strnad and circulated to the Board.

The proposal has also been discussed with Tim and Sam Stewart, and they fully support the project. They rent commercial honeybee hives seasonally. No insecticides are sprayed on the crop, and their operation will not harm the honeybees. A document modifying the Stewart's Makefield Brook lease is required as their current lease includes all the land, including wooded area. This document has been reviewed by Mr. Stewart.

With regard to insurance, Dr. Strnad has reviewed his homeowner insurance coverage with his insurance agent. He has increased his liability umbrella coverage to a suitable level consistent with the lease for the 225 square feet behind his home which will be covered by his insurance.

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Dr. Strnad and Mr. Steadman will install a farm gate in the fence to provide access to the hives.

After detailed discussion the Board was pleased with the proposal and Mr. Blank requested that Farmland receive a written confirmation from Dr. Strnad that he met the insurance requirement in the proposed lease. A certificate of insurance will suffice.

The meeting was then opened up for public comment. There was none.

Following discussion, Mr. Steadman made a Motion that the Board approve the 3-year lease agreement with Dr. Strnad and the lease modification agreement with Mr. Stewart to allow honeybee farming at the selected site on Makefield Brook on the condition that Dr. Strnad produces written evidence that he carries the necessary insurance called for in the lease.

Mr. Carney seconded the Motion, and it was unanimously carried to approve.

STACKHOUSE BUFFER: Mr. Carney

Mr. Carney reported that the buffer clean-up project on the Stackhouse parcel was completed today. The work was done in 6 days by Corcoran Landscaping, 1 day more than the estimated 5 days, but 1 day less than the budgeted 7 days. Multiple bordering neighbors came out to compliment the project, express their sincere appreciation, and one appreciative neighbor brought out lunch for the workers. This expenditure of \$6,000 was an investment in the property, which will reduce annual maintenance cost for years to come.

While the crew was in the area, Mr. Carney approved incorporating the clean up of the south boundary of the Kaplan property within the overall project. The Kaplans expressed great appreciation and pleasure with the results.

Mr. Carney communicated that there is to be no further dumping there by Kaplan contractors and a 'No Dumping' sign has been installed at the field driveway to prevent dumping by others.

Mr. Carney reported that there may be a bit more clearing that could be done, and Corcoran estimated that 1 single day/year (\$1,000) could maintain both Stackhouse and Leedom's properties.

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All Board members praised and thanked Mr. Carney for his initiative and leadership on the project.

LEEDOM BUFFER: Mr. Carney

This project was successfully completed since last meeting, clearing 1,000 yd. of property fence line, for which many neighbors expressed thanks and pleasure. This included brush and vine removal, tree limbs trimmed to ~8 ft. high, and grass mowed. Corcoran Landscaping total cost was \$5,000 based upon the new 'bulk day' contract with Corcoran. As is the case with Stackhouse, this 'investment' will make annual maintenance more effective and less expensive for years to come.

Again, the Board thanked Mr. Carney for his impacts and leadership on these Farmland parcels.

REVIEW OF SPRING FARM TOUR: Mr. Blank

Mr. Blank gave a report on the tours of Leedom and Stackhouse and an issue raised by Mr. McGowan concerning trees planted on Farmland property by a neighbor. (See below)

HEATHER RIDGE: Mr. Bankoske

During the April 10 spring farm tour with the farmers, Mr. McGowan reported that a neighbor, Mr. Patel at 2033 Trowbridge Dr. recently planted 5 white pine trees on the Farmland side of the property line. This is problematic as white pines spread wide, and have weak limbs subject to hanging low and breaking. Plus, allowing a neighbor to plant trees on Farmland property without giving notice of our objection may eventually result in the neighbor owning those trees.

Mr. Bankoske e-mailed the neighbor that same day and had no response as of meeting time. Mr. Bankoske discussed the fact that since the trees are freshly planted, still in their nursery root balls, it would be easiest for the neighbor to save the trees by digging them out and replanting them on his property. If they are not removed by the neighbor Mr. McGowan will have to cut them down.

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BUCKS COUNTY SOIL CONSERVATION PROJECT, STACKHOUSE AND CLEARFIELD: Mr. Blank

Mr. Blank reported that Bucks County Conservation District staff will be at these parcels on April 16 to review the projects with the excavation equipment operator. Mr. Blank will accompany them on the review, and Mr. Carney will join them at Stackhouse and Mr. Steadman will join at Clearview.

ACTION ITEMS:

Mr. Bankoske – Follow up with Mr. Patel on Heather Ridge concerning the pine trees planted on Farmland property. Also, please keep Mr. McGowan informed of the status regarding these violating trees.

Mr. Steadman – Secure written confirmation of insurance coverage for Honeybee Farming lease; and once secured, have Dr. Strnad and Mr. Stewart execute their respective agreements and send to Mr. Blank for execution by Farmland.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dennis Steadman, Acting Secretary

