

FARMLAND PRESERVATION, INC.
MINUTES – MAY 24, 2022

The regular meeting of the Lower Makefield Farmland Preservation, Inc. (Farmland) Board of Directors (Board) was held remotely on May 24, 2022. Mr. Blank called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Those present:

Farmland Preservation, Inc.: Michael Blank, President
Dennis Steadman, Vice President
George Heinze, Secretary
Dan Bankoske, Treasurer
Sean Carney, Member (joined meeting in progress)

Absent: James McCartney, Supervisor Liaison

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Mr. Steadman

Mr. Heinze moved, Mr. Bankoske seconded and it was unanimously carried to approve the Minutes of April 19, 2022 as written.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Mr. Bankoske

\$50 was paid to LMT for the Community Day fee for Charlann Farms. \$1,175 was paid to Corcoran Landscaping for the buffer work. \$464.17 was paid to Dr. Strnad as a reimbursement for the hive expansion which the Board agreed to pay for.

BUFFER CLEANUP ON STACKHOUSE, MR. HIRSCHMAN, 1554 BROOKFIELD RD: Mr. Heinze

Mr. Heinze and Mr. Carney had done some cleanup along the fence line and discussed with Mr. Corcoran having him do additional cleanup on this fence line when he did his buffer work at Stackhouse.

Note: Once Mr. Carney joined the meeting he advised that all of the buffer work is complete; however, he does not believe this area was taken care of yet as Mr. Corcoran was asked what he felt he would do in this area, and that would then be presented to the Board to consider the budget for this and whether it should be applied to one of the summer days for that job as well as one of the winter days as it was felt that it would take two days to do the work in this area. Mr. Heinze stated his understanding was that while Mr. Corcoran was on the Stackhouse property doing buffer work and had his equipment, he would spend a few extra hours in that area which would go against the summer hours. Mr. Carney will discuss this with Mr. Corcoran.

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UPDATE ON WORTHINGTON EASEMENT REQUEST, 1491 HEATHER RIDGE DR: Mr. Bankoske
There was an initial discussion with the builders (i.e. Worthington) who bought this property about the potential of obtaining an easement from Farmland in order for them to connect to the Heather Ridge neighborhood for water and sewer. Initially the Board had advised them that they should take it down the sidewalk and up their driveway. They were able to do that with respect to the gas line but not for water and sewer. Comments from the builder along with a survey map provided were sent to the Township solicitor (Mr. Truelove) and Mr. Majewski for review so they could provide input to the Board for further discussion with the builders.

Mr. Steadman asked when the Township will get back to the Board with that input, and if Worthington has a timeline as to when they need this. Mr. Bankoske has not yet heard back from Mr. Truelove. Mr. Chance Worthington did not give a specific timeline. Mr. Heinze asked if it is not feasible for them to go down the sidewalk and up the driveway for the water and sewer; and Mr. Bankoske stated while they want to confirm this with the Township, it may still be possible for them to do that either by taking up the entire driveway or taking down a row of trees on their property. Mr. Bankoske stated they may also decide to have a well and septic. Mr. Steadman stated he does not feel it is reasonable to take down a row of mature trees. Mr. Blank stated that up until now the Township has been very responsive on this matter.

SUMMARY OF SPRING TOUR OF FARMS: Mr. Steadman

The annual spring tour was held with Doug McGowan, Tim Stewart, Sam Stewart, and Board members. Certain properties were selected to visit where there was an issue to be discussed. Past tours had been focused on erosion, water management, and soil management issues; and Mr. Steadman complimented the Board and the Stewarts in working closely together over the last couple of years along with the Bucks County Conservation District so that there are not really any major soil erosion/water management issues.

Grading was done last year at Stackhouse using a bulldozer in collaboration with the Soil Conservation District, but they left a small area that needs adjustment. Tim Stewart is going to try to shift some soil in that area and fix the area that was not covered.

Mr. Steadman had suggested that they look at the lower end of the field on Clearview during the tour, (the east end that goes toward Taylorsville Road); however Mr. Tim Stewart indicated he was aware of the issue and has a plan to modify his planting so they did not look at this area on the Tour.

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A major issue that came out of the Tour was at Farmview II off of Dolington Road. There is a driveway next to the new community that was built the last year or two. It was noted that at the driveway that gives the farmer access, there is no fence between the Farmland property and the Residential neighbors. A fence may need to be installed along the border between the farmland and first house on Susan Circle. This fence would discourage children and others from walking into the active farmland. A survey would probably be needed to establish clear lines, and the neighbors should be notified that the intention is to install a fence.

Mr. Blank stated he sent pictures of metal stakes that were in the ground, and they are mostly visible on the Dolington end of the line bordering Susan Circle as well as a wooden stake near the corner that was probably put in by the developer. Mr. Blank agrees that there should be a demarcation adding that a neighbor nearest to Dolington has already put in pine trees that appear to be on the Farmland side of the line.

Mr. Carney joined the meeting at this time.

Mr. Heinze stated he supports a survey of the property line, and to decide how much fence is appropriate to put up. Mr. Bankoske stated that further along Susan Circle past where the house is located where pine trees have been installed, the property line is then up against Susan Circle so nothing may be needed there. Mr. Blank stated at this same field there is missing fence behind Sunnyside Lane that was unable to be seen before Corcoran cleaned up the area as well as missing fencing on the other side of Dolington. A fence company could look at this whole area once the survey is done. Since there are significant stretches that do not have fencing, it will be a lot of work to remove the brush in order to put in a fence.

Mr. Blank moved and Mr. Steadman seconded to have a survey done of Farmview II in its entirety.

Mr. Blank stated he will attempt to contact the original surveyor, and the Township will be asked if they have a surveyor they would recommend. It was noted that a number of farms were surveyed within the last ten years. Mr. Blank stated he had sent to the Board a detailed summary of his findings with regard to Farmview II, some of which has just been discussed.

Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Steadman stated he feels it is productive to have the Spring Farm Tour getting together with the farmer tenants and walking the fields to address issues, being sensitive to the farmers' time taken during the Tour given the work needed to be done by the farmers during this planting season.

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The Board should agree beforehand the issues they want to address on the Tour and focus on those with the farmers. Individual Board members could continue the Tour on their own without the farmers.

Mr. Carney stated he went with Mr. McGowan to the southernmost part of Heather Ridge. Work had been done on the fence line at Trowbridge approximately one month ago partnering with the neighbor. While Mr. Corcoran was doing that work, Mr. McGowan had introduced himself to Mr. Corcoran and indicated that he did not want any ruts/markings left from the equipment that had been in the area. While it had been agreed earlier that Mr. Corcoran could leave behind some larger material and come back subsequently to get it, Mr. McGowan wanted to show Mr. Carney where Mr. Corcoran had stored some larger logs. Mr. Corcoran has indicated that he will be back for the larger logs, and will coordinate this with Mr. McGowan who offered to help remove them.

ISSUES ON MAKEFIELD BROOK: Mr. Steadman

Upgraded “No Trespassing” Signs – Three homemade “No Trespassing Signs” were put up by Mr. Carney and Mr. Steadman on Dolington Road where there is a wide, paved pull-off area next to the woods which is part of Makefield Brook at the intersection of Dolington Road and I-295. Based on the debris observed there, it appears that partying and dumping is going on in this area. The Lower Makefield Township Police were notified about this, and they indicated they would step up patrols in this area.

Mr. Blank stated there were e-mails about upgraded “No Trespassing” signs.” Mr. Steadman stated he and Mr. Carney had discussed whether the homemade signs they installed should be upgraded. Mr. Carney stated he drives by the area, and they are still in the ground and are very visible; however, the things that caused them to install the signs are still going on. He stated they would want to consider upgrading them if they are going to be needed long term.

Cover on Well Pipe – A vertical well pipe was found about 30 yards off of Dolington Road, and Mr. Majewski has indicated they have no record of this well. It is a 6” pipe which had been covered in concrete which has deteriorated. Mr. Steadman has covered it with a pot and cement block. A well cover cap has been ordered by a plumber which Mr. Steadman and the Township have used in the past, and it is anticipated he will install the cap shortly.

Missing I-295 Fence – About 30 yards of I-295 fence is missing; and Mr. Hucklebridge has contacted the contractor who was doing the I-295 expansion, but nothing has been heard back from the contractor. Mr. Hucklebridge has resigned and will be leaving the Township

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shortly, and he will provide the contact information to Mr. Steadman in order to follow up on this.

POST-MEETING CORRECTION: This item was being managed at the Township by Mr. Majewski, not Mr. Hucklebridge. Mr. Majewski has reached out to the DRJTBC on the matter, but nothing has been heard back as of the meeting time.

UPDATE ON OPEN UTILITY BOX ON CLEARVIEW: Mr. Steadman Mr. Hucklebridge contacted the company that owns the towers and is responsible for the utility boxes that are on Township property along the driveway. They are still waiting for a response. While the box is not on Farmland property, the driveway gives access to the Farmland property, and the box is 10' to 15' into the field on a small strip of Township-owned land. It is a hazard to someone driving there and a hazard to someone in the field. A wooden pallet has been put over it with orange flags around it so that the farmer does not drive over it while in the field.

UPDATE ON SPONSORING LMT FARMS & HONEYBEE KEEPING AT COMMUNITY DAY: Mr. Blank Community Day is August 27. An invitation was sent out to all of the farmers asking whether they would be interested in having a display at Community Day with Farmland Preservation paying the entry fee. Mr. Tim Stewart indicated that they would like to participate, and the entry fee has been paid by Farmland Preservation. There had also been discussion about Dr. Strnad having a display on honeybees; however, Dr. Strnad is not available that day.

Mr. Steadman stated Dr. Strnad has experience in education and is willing to put together a display if someone would be willing to man it on Community Day, and Dr. Strnad would work with them so that they would be able to answer questions. Mr. Steadman asked the Board members to consider if they would be willing to commit to this adding that there is a chance that he may be available himself.

Mr. Steadman asked if the Board would be interested in having a large map of the Township with the Farmland properties highlighted along with the street names and lots that could be displayed at Community Day sharing the booth with the Stewarts. He had contacted Mr. Majewski about a company that could make a large map like this for the Board and to get an estimate as to the cost. Mr. Majewski had indicated that he could make that for the Board in-house for free. Mr. Bankoske stated the last time Farmland had a booth, he made up a 2' by 3' map of the Township with the Farmland properties colored in, which was displayed.

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He stated he has that map at his home. Mr. Blank stated he and Mr. Bankoske were at Community Day when this map was displayed, and the response was “underwhelming.” Mr. Bankoske agreed adding that they tried this three years in a row. Mr. Blank stated they could still provide one of the green Farmland signs at the booth along with the map.

FUTURE MEETINGS: Mr. Blank

There was discussion whether Board meetings would continue via Zoom until at least early fall. June 21, at 6:00 p.m. is the next scheduled meeting via Zoom. Ms. McVan has advised that while Farmland could not have hybrid meetings which would be via Zoom and in-person, they could have their meeting in-person. After discussion it was agreed to continue with Zoom meetings at least through the summer months as it is easier with scheduling for some of the Board members. In the past the Board has not held a meeting in August. Mr. Blank stated he has asked Ms. McVan if their meetings could be regulated so that the meeting would be held the fourth Tuesday of each month at 7:30 p.m., and she indicated that could be done. This was acceptable to the Board. Board members indicated that Zoom is more convenience for the majority of the Board members, and it would be useful to have the meeting the fourth Tuesday of every month which would help the Board plan. Mr. Blank will confirm with Ms. McVan that they will maintain the fourth Tuesday.

OTHER BUSINESS: All

Election of Secretary – Mr. Blank thanked Mr. Steadman for his work as Secretary over the past years. Mr. Blank moved, Mr. Carney seconded and it was unanimously carried to elect George Heinze as Secretary.

Longshore – Mr. Blank stated there are two properties near the corner of Pownal and Dolington where the residents have let vines grow from their side, and letters should be sent to them that they need to remove those vines before they damage the fence and start growing on the Farmland side. There is also unevenness in the height of the grass in the buffer area, and it seems to be in the area where someone has cut the Farmland fence. In the past when this has happened the fence company has had to re-do the fence in this area, but it was then cut again and people are getting into that area with their mower and cutting the grass to a lower level. Mr. Carney had confirmed with Mr. Corcoran that is probably what is happening. Mr. Steadman stated Mr. Corcoran is able to mow these areas, but some of the neighbors are choosing to make it look more like a lawn than a field.

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Mr. Carney stated while the neighbors are mowing with lawnmowers trying to make it look like an extension of their lawn, Mr. Corcoran is cutting with a larger Hydro-Ax; and Mr. Corcoran hopes that by maintaining the buffers, he will get rid of the debris, smooth it out and raise the trees, and ultimately be cutting them with a mower himself, and the neighbors should be happy with the cut that he will be eventually be able to do. Mr. Carney stated this happened at Leedom's as well; and for years it grew up very high, and a few neighbors went to the other side to cut it down. Mr. Carney stated he believes that the more the buffers are being cut and maintained, the less people will go back there and mow these buffers that were not being maintained to their liking in the past.

Mr. Blank stated the Board could send everyone along the line on Merrick and Pownal a letter indicating they should not trespass onto Farmland property and mow the buffer themselves or cutting the fence. If it can be identified where the fence is cut, a letter could be sent just to those homeowners. Mr. Steadman stated while he has not seen the property, he feels it would be more effective if the letters were sent specifically to those doing this than a general letter that would be accusing those who are not doing it. Mr. Bankoske asked the number of properties where this is being done, and Mr. Blank estimated it to be three properties. Mr. Bankoske asked if all three of them are cutting the fence as well as the grass; and Mr. Blank stated he only saw one area where the neighbor has cut the fence, but he sees the same grass height across two or three properties. Mr. Bankoske stated he feels a letter should only be sent to whoever has cut the fence.

Mr. Carney stated it should be indicated that if the integrity of the fence line has been broken, and the fence needs to be replaced, it will be at the homeowner's cost. He added that if letters are going to be sent, he will provide some additional addresses where fences have been cut which should receive the same letter. He added that it is known that there was a motorcycle driving in the field; and if they are not coming off of Dolington, it is not impossible that they are coming through places where there are cut fences. He stated there is also a location where the fence was taken down and rolled up. Mr. Steadman stated he agrees with Mr. Carney, and it could be indicated that they have a new approach to maintaining the buffer which will be more effective with lower grass once the buffers are cleaned up.

Mr. Blank will draft a letter about this as well as a letter related to the properties where vines are growing on the fence.

Farmview II – There have been issues with bamboo on 7 Sunnyside Lane and 9 Sunnyside Lane, and Mr. Kirk has gone out in the past to warn one of the property owners about bamboo. While remediation was done, it was apparently not effective enough and the bamboo is coming up on the Farmland side of the fence. Mr. Blank copied the Board on an e-mail he sent to Mr. Kirk who will be going out to look at this again.

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Susan Circle – Mr. Blank stated that while he was proposing sending a letter to the residents of 1696 Susan Circle about the pine trees that were planted on what appears to be the Farmland side, it seems that we should wait for the survey before a letter is sent out.

Fencing Discussion – Mr. Blank stated there is no fence behind 15 Sunnyside, 7 Sunnyside, and 1536 Dolington, and he will talk to the surveyor about that once a surveyor is identified.

Fence at Farmview II – Mr. Steadman asked if they will get multiple Bids on the fencing that needs to be installed. Mr. Blank stated he had previously done an extensive survey of Bucks County fencing companies, and he was only able to find one company, Apex, who was willing to work with the Board that dealt with the type of fence that we put up on most of our farms. It was noted that this type of fence is the PennDOT type 2 fencing. Mr. Bankoske stated the ordinance requires this specific fence which is listed as the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Type 2 right-of-way fence. Mr. Blank noted that even though the ordinance calls for that type of fencing, at Longshore it is chain link so there was an Agreement at some point years ago by the Board to allow for that development to have chain link. Mr. Bankoske stated they could review the ordinance on this to see if there is a better alternative. Board members will do some research to see if there is an alternative fence supplier.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Blank thanked the Board members for being engaged Board members who bring various skills and backgrounds to the Board, and the Board members thanked Mr. Blank for his leadership.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Mr. Blank

There was no one from the public wishing to speak at this time.

REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS: Mr. Steadman

1. Mr. Bankoske – Follow-up with the Township on 1491 Heather Ridge Drive right-of-way passage for sewer and water lines
2. Mr. Blank – Identify a surveyor to conduct a survey at Farmview II
3. Mr. Steadman – Follow-up with Mr. Hucklebridge on missing fence along I-95
4. Mr. Steadman – Follow-up with Mr. Hucklebridge on utility box
5. All – Consider a commitment to Community Day with regard to the beekeeping program
6. Mr. Blank – Draft a letter with regard to vines growing at the fence line at Longshore

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7. Mr. Blank – Draft a letter to neighbors about fence cutting
8. Mr. Blank – Follow-up on bamboo issue at 7 Sunnyside and 9 Sunnyside Lane
9. Mr. Blank/Mr. Steadman – Look into fence companies;
Mr. Blank – Get an estimate from Apex
10. Mr. Blank – Follow-up with Ms. McVan confirming the fourth Tuesday of every month at 7:30 p.m. as the regular meeting night on Zoom

POST MEETING NOTE: Ms. McVan informed Mr. Blank that since the Board wishes to meet via Zoom that the third (3rd) Tuesday of every month from 6 – 7 pm is the best option. Ms. McVan further stated that should the Board need longer meetings or need to change a date that she will try to accommodate us.

There being no further business, Mr. Heinze moved, Mr. Blank seconded and it was unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

George Heinze, Secretary