

FARMLAND PRESERVATION, INC.  
MINUTES – SEPTEMBER 19, 2023

The regular meeting of the Lower Makefield Farmland Preservation, Inc. (Farmland) Board of Directors (Board) was held remotely on September 19, 2023. Mr. Blank called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Those present:

Farmland Preservation, Inc.: Michael Blank, President  
George Heinze, Secretary  
Dan Bankoske, Treasurer  
Sean Carney, Member

Others: John B. Lewis, Supervisor Liaison

Absent: Dennis Steadman, Farmland Preservation, Inc. Vice President

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Mr. Heinze

Mr. Bankoske moved, Mr. Blank seconded and it was unanimously carried to approve the Minutes of June 20, 2023 as written.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Mr. Bankoske

Since the last meeting there was one invoice paid to Corcoran for buffer maintenance for \$1,750, and another has just come in for the next round of buffer maintenance which will be paid shortly.

Mr. Blank stated he read through the previous Minutes, and we are in good shape as far as our investment portfolio and the spending account as well. Mr. Bankoske stated the Board reviewed everything at a prior meeting and re-confirmed all of our positions as it relates to how we are investing in the funds.

UPDATES ON POTENTIAL PARCELS

Torbert Property – Mr. Blank stated there was discussion in the spring about the Torbert property, and the potential for some of it to be retained as farmland after its sale. Mr. Lewis stated that we

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are waiting for a revised proposal from the developer, and there is nothing new from what was discussed publicly before. Mr. Blank asked if the Township is offering higher-density housing in exchange for preserving some farmland as an option, and Mr. Lewis agreed that was an option. Mr. Lewis stated the Township enacted an Ordinance that would allow higher densities in exchange for protecting portions of the property; however, that Ordinance was not enacted in time to affect this specific Application. He stated there is a legal question about Ordinances that are drafted, public, and in consideration but not approved at the time of the Application. He stated there is openness on behalf of the owners and developer to work with the Township on that, but he does not have an update at this time.

Mr. Blank asked if there is anything that Farmland Preservation can do to influence the Torbert process. Mr. Lewis stated he is not sure. He stated the Estate made the decision to sell the property, and there are multiple Parties of the Estate; and they have indicated a desire to maximize the value of their property. He stated he understands that Farmland Preservation is ready and willing to accept additional parcels of land to manage.

Mr. Bankoske stated with regard to Ordinances, there is the existing Ordinance that created most of the Farmland parcels that we have today, and what Mr. Lewis has referenced is a more-recently enacted Ordinance. He asked if the existing Ordinance would apply. Mr. Lewis stated he would review the specifics of that Ordinance, adding he has not had any specific discussions with the owner/developer one-on-one; and everything has been made public. Mr. Lewis stated he will look into that. Mr. Blank stated he is not sure if the original Ordinance was a requirement or an option for developers.

Grey Nun Property – Mr. Lewis stated this property has been purchased by an individual with an LLC, and that individual has posted a Website describing their intentions for the property. He stated the Website is [nicofarms1750.com](http://nicofarms1750.com). Mr. Lewis stated they intend to build a new home and have a portion that they would personally use for farming as well as other things. Mr. Lewis stated the owner of the property has received a Permit for the demolition of the school building, the manor house, the chapel, the Mother house, St. Mary's Hall, and the gymnasium as part of their Plans.

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Mr. Bankoske stated the farming that was mentioned would be for the owner or his agents to do farming on the property, and Mr. Lewis agreed it is for his own personal use. Mr. Bankoske stated it is owned by a single individual who currently has no intention of putting up other houses for sale besides what he is doing for himself. Mr. Lewis stated a property owner does retain rights, but the owner of the property currently intends to use it personally, although they may change their position on that over time. He added he has not personally met or talked to the owner. He stated the owner was kind enough to electronically brief the Township with their Plans. He stated the Demolition Permit is also a public document if anyone wants to see that.

Mr. Blank stated while it may be a long-shot on both cases, he would like the Board members to think about and approach both property owners and introduce themselves. Mr. Lewis asked if we have any property that is adjacent to Grey Nun, and it was noted that we do not. Mr. Blank stated the closest would be Heather Ridge.

Mr. Lewis stated he will bring this to the attention of the Township Manager and the Department of Community Development when they are talking to the land-owner in terms of what their intentions are and options in the future. Mr. Lewis stated he feels that for many, this proposal for Grey Nun is a positive in that the owner is choosing to use it for their own purposes at this time and do work on the property that he feels many will appreciate in terms of the intended use of the property; although there is no guarantee that the property owner will not change their mind in the future, and they still retain all of their rights.

BUFFER MAINTENANCE: Mr. Carney

Buffer maintenance continues, and the buffers are cut four times throughout the growing season. The fourth and final cut was done this past week. The buffers that Mr. Carney has walked all look very good. There is minor maintenance that can be done during the winter months. Board members were asked to look at their properties during October or November, and the Board will discuss how to allocate the winter hours. There are no carry-over projects from last year, and we will be able to do limb raising and removal where needed. Mr. Carney stated he has notes from neighbors who have contacted the Board about small projects, notes from Mr. Corcoran about areas he would like to see addressed for equipment/farming reasons, and notes from Mr. Blank.

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Mr. Blank stated he agrees everything looks great, and he thanked Mr. Carney for his efforts.

1491 HEATHER RIDGE DR.: POTENTIAL SALE, BOUNDARY DETERMINATIONS, GRASS CUTTING, POTENTIAL EASEMENT REQUEST: Mr. Bankoske

A slide was shown of the area in question. Farmland property was noted. The area that is being mowed by the property owner at 1491 Heather Ridge Drive was shown which is to the left and the front and the back side of the property. The parcel that is not farmable was shown, and it has contours and is narrow so it is hard for Mr. McGowan to move equipment around. Mr. McGowan had indicated that when he farmed it in the past, there were neighbors who would complain. Mr. Bankoske stated he feels we should ask Mr. Corcoran to add this area to his rotation for maintenance and mowing and have Chance Worthington, who is, in the process of developing the property and selling it, stop mowing. The reasoning is that LMT Farmland Preservation owns the property and should be maintaining it.

Mr. Carney asked if this area would be mowed once a month or once a week. Mr. Bankoske stated it should not be viewed as a yard, and he feels it should be mowed once a month. Mr. Blank stated in keeping with our buffer maintenance, technically we do not have to do it more than four times a year, although that may not work as it is in this property's front yard. Mr. Bankoske stated we would need to consider what the mowing frequency would be.

Mr. Bankoske stated we should get a new survey as well. There are some markers, but they are loose, wooden stakes. Something should be done that is more permanent, such as the green stakes that are on other properties. Mr. Bankoske suggested discussing this with the surveyor who was used in the past as to other monument-type options that would be permanent markers. Mr. Bankoske agreed to look into this further, and Mr. Blank will provide Mr. Bankoske with the name of the surveyor.

Mr. Carney asked if there would not already be a new survey on file for this property since this property has changed hands once and will probably change hands again soon. Mr. Carney stated if Mr. Bankoske contacts a surveyor to do work on our behalf, he would like to speak to Mr. Bankoske off-line as he has another place where he thinks something should be done. Mr. Bankoske stated he will talk to the surveyor and get some more information. He stated he will ask the surveyor if he feels comfortable

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using existing markers as opposed to re-surveying. Mr. Carney stated his hope is that they would be able to find the pins with metal detectors, and we could then put the type of monuments we want on top.

Mr. Blank stated Mr. Worthington was not too clear as to whether he had a survey done.

Mr. Blank stated he is in total support with the grass cutting as is Mr. McGowan adding that while we had agreed that Mr. Worthington could cut the grass, but we would not want that to go on too long so that it becomes his property because he is maintaining it. Mr. Bankoske stated he does not feel that is a concern as everyone knows who the owner is; and just because you mow the property, it does not mean that it becomes your property. He added since it is our property, we should be maintaining it the way we want it maintained.

Mr. Carney stated he will meet with the Corcorans and show them each of the winter projects, and he will include this property as well. He stated he feels we could start out with monthly mowing during the summer months or it could be aligned with the buffer cutting if that is what we want do and then add more if need be. Mr. Bankoske stated he feels it should be the same timeline as the other buffer maintenance at least as a starting point.

Mr. Heinze asked if it is known what is the frequency that Worthington has been cutting it; however, Mr. Bankoske stated he did not know. Mr. Carney stated we would be changing the narrative since if it is being cut weekly now like a lawn, that will change once Farmland takes that responsibility back over. Mr. Heinze stated if they are cutting it once a week, and we are changing that and cutting it once a month or once a quarter, that should be shared with the Worthingtons. Mr. Heinze stated if it is going to be more frequent than our quarterly buffer cutting, we need to understand that is going to cost more money.

Mr. Bankoske stated Mr. Worthington is in the process of working out a deal to sell and/or to develop the property to rebuild/renovate the house, and working with a potential buyer. He stated Mr. Worthington had reached out with an informal inquiry asking if they could purchase the front of the property to square it off.

Mr. Bankoske stated he does not believe anyone has yet responded to Mr. Worthington. Mr. Bankoske stated if we wanted to sell that piece of Heather Ridge, it would require a Township Referendum. He stated he would recommend responding that we are not interested in doing anything like that.

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Mr. Carney asked if we have considered the cost of buffer maintenance for this property. He stated the farmer has indicated that the property is not farmable, and it does nothing other than add acreage to what we manage. He stated he feels it would have a much greater use to them than it does us if that can be done.

Mr. Blank stated while it is not farmable now, it might be in the future. He stated our By-Laws do not permit us to sell any of our land without a Referendum. He stated he agrees that maintaining this area will cost us money, and we should find out how much. He stated other than that he would not be in favor of selling it.

Mr. Bankoske showed the access point to our property which is off of Heather Ridge Drive. He noted where McGowan has access directly from his property, but if we were to lease it to someone else, there is only the access off Heather Ridge to get to our property. Mr. Carney stated the strip between the yellow lines on the slide would still be open, and Mr. Bankoske agreed. Mr. Heinze asked if they can fit farming equipment in that stretch of land just pointed out if we needed to access that long term if someone else were farming our piece of property. Mr. Bankoske stated you could drive farm equipment up there. He also noted a location on the slide where there is a curb cut. Mr. Heinze stated if in the future it made sense to sell that portion of our property and we went through the legal ramifications, if there was other property in the Township that was available that we wanted to pursue, a sale of this small property would generate some funds to be able to do that. Mr. Heinze stated we would also not have the added expense of maintaining that piece of property that we would be paying for and getting nothing out of it.

Mr. Bankoske stated there is also the potential for other use of that land and there may be someone else who might be interested in doing something there on a much-smaller scale. He stated he believes a former Board member was considering a small community garden/small plots in that area.

Mr. Lewis asked about the possibility of planting trees there. Mr. Bankoske stated we would then not have to mow it. Mr. Lewis stated they could be Christmas trees planted there; and while he is not sure we would want to enter that business, it would be an option to reduce the costs. Mr. Blank stated he feels that is an interesting idea. Mr. Bankoske stated he would be in favor of the idea of a wooded/meadow area.

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Mr. Blank asked if there is a Motion that we would not entertain selling this piece of property assuming that the costs of mowing it are acceptable to the Board. Mr. Bankoske stated he could make a Motion that the Board would not entertain selling this property and will continue to look at other potential uses and/or costs as it relates to mowing and maintaining the property and reducing those costs.

Mr. Bankoske stated he is strongly against selling this piece of property.

Mr. Heinze asked why a Motion is necessary if we do not know if someone really wants to buy it; and Mr. Blank stated an e-mail was sent from Worthington asking us if we would be interested in selling this piece of property. Mr. Blank stated we could defer answering him at this time; however he would like to give him an answer. Mr. Carney stated we could give him an answer now or wait a month after we have an idea of what our out-of-pocket costs will be. He added if there is a strong desire on the Board not to sell it, we could advise him now that it is not for sale. Mr. Blank stated he and Mr. Bankoske are opposed to selling the property; however, he gets the sense that Mr. Carney and Mr. Heinze would like to consider it further, and we could delay it a month. Mr. Carney stated he raised the question to understand how strongly other Board members felt; and since there are strong feelings not to sell it, he is fine with that. Mr. Heinze stated he is not totally opposed to that either; but if we are not being pushed on it now, there are some things that we could get a better handle on. He stated he is fine if the Board wants to advise Mr. Worthington that we are not interested in selling the property at this time.

Mr. Heinze moved, Mr. Bankoske seconded and it was unanimously carried to advise Mr. Worthington that we are not interested in selling the property at this time.

SUBDIVISION PLAN #693 – 1511 LINDENHURST ROAD – COMMENTS DUE TO  
J. MAJEWSKI BY SEPTEMBER 29: All

This Plan was sent out by Mr. Majewski for comments. Mr. Blank stated neither he nor Mr. Steadman have any comments.

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Mr. Bankoske stated he feels that we should comment that we have a farm field that has a higher elevation, and there is water run-off and drainage that runs toward this property. Mr. Bankoske stated through the middle of this property there is a drainage ditch that runs underneath the road and crosses to the other side as well. He stated he feels that they should be advised that whatever potential implications there are from the Farmland property as to water run-off and drainage should be their issue that they will have to deal with on that side if they are trying to change Zoning. Mr. Bankoske stated he believes during the Zoning Hearing Board the issue was brought up that there is a wetland area. He stated they should be informed that they have a wetland area to the side of where they are trying to develop.

Mr. Blank asked why we would advise them that there is a risk from the Farmland property. Mr. Bankoske stated while this could be a non-issue, he does not want there to be an issue in the future. He stated we are not reaching out to the neighbor with comments, rather we are reaching out to the Township. He stated he does not want there to be a future circumstance where we have to do something different on our property that has been maintained, mowed, and farmed in the same manner for many years.

Mr. Blank asked Mr. Bankoske if he would write comments to be sent to Mr. Majewski for the Board's review, and Mr. Bankoske agreed to do so. It was noted comments are to be sent to Mr. Majewski by September 29.

HOUPT FARM SIGN ON LONGSHORE: Mr. Blank

A slide was shown of the sign which had been discussed previously; and while it does not look bad in the picture, it is in bad shape. Mr. Blank stated he has no personal knowledge of the history as to how this sign came about. He stated he assumes that when this land was transferred to Farmland Preservation, there was an Agreement to put up this sign. Mr. Heinze stated the Board discussed this while Mr. Blank was gone, and he looked into the history of this sign. He stated the sign was installed a number of years ago in recognition of all Mr. Hought had done for Lower Makefield as he helped initiate and was a catalyst around farmland preservation. Mr. Heinze stated he believe Mr. Hought's family is very proud that he was honored and recognized for that work. He believes they would be very disappointed if the sign came down. He stated he feels the sign should either get a "facelift;" or if the Board feels that it should be more in line with the signs we already have on the property which are metal signs and slightly smaller, we could duplicate what is on the existing sign, and install that in place of the sign that is there now. He stated the metal sign would last longer.



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Mr. Blank stated there is precedent for that since we installed one for Buster Doan. Mr. Bankoske stated he would be in favor of doing something similar and converting the Houpt sign.

Mr. Blank stated if the Board agrees, he can get a quote from Bob Shaw Signs who made the other signs. This was acceptable to the Board. Mr. Blank stated that the signs that Mr. Shaw made held up well.

FUTURE COMMUNITY DAYS: All

Mr. Blank stated he would like to hold this over until the next meeting so the Board can discuss what they might want to do or not do in the future.

DISTRIBUTION OF HONEY: Mr. Blank

Mr. Steadman had advised Mr. Blank that all 12-oz containers of Lower Makefield Preserved Farmland honey was distributed to Lower Makefield Farmland Preservation stakeholders and friends including Sam and Tim Stewart, Board members, and LMT staff that regularly supports Lower Makefield Farmland Preservation, Inc. We are most grateful for the time and talents of Dr. Sven Strnad, our volunteer beekeeper who tends and invests in the 4 hives on our Makefield Brook property and harvests this honey gratis.

OTHER BUSINESS: All

Agricultural Deer Control Program – Mr. Blank stated that Mr. Steadman advised him that within the Agricultural Deer Control Program, the PA Game Commission revamped the process for issuing and distributing tags (Red Tags) in 2023. As a result, there was a one-time need to reapply before a July 1<sup>st</sup> deadline, which he had unfortunately missed. Mr. Steadman has since received and submitted the Renewal Applications for the 4 parcels on which we allow deer hunting by specific permission only. He expects to receive the new Red Tags within a week or so, and he will distribute those to the approved Red Tag hunters. This has been communicated to the Red Tag users.

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Flash Floods – Mr. Blank stated following the flash floods, there was one neighbor who had sent a letter which we responded to. Mr. Blank stated he had walked Longshore with Mr. Fuller, the Public Works Director, who had suggested that we have a similar letter posted on Facebook so that more people would be aware of Farmland Preservation, Inc. and aware of our stance on this as he was getting questions from homeowners. Mr. Blank stated while they were at Longshore, they inspected the drains, and they were open; and it was just too much water during that storm that was going downhill for those drains to accept, and it spilled over. Mr. Blank stated he sent Mr. Fuller a draft letter, but has heard nothing back.

Mr. Bankoske stated he feels we should just respond individually to anyone who reaches out, and he does not feel that there is much to gain by posting something on-line. He stated at this point a lot of time has passed since the storm, and Mr. Blank agreed since posting it now would be about something that happened two months ago. Mr. Bankoske stated the Board has discussions with residents all of the time.

Mr. Lewis stated the Township has engaged a company to do an analysis of the stormwater management in the broader area, and not just the Maplevale area; and it will look into things that feed into that area. He added that concurrently, the Township has been very aggressive in addressing the issues related to the sinkhole at 18 Maplevale and 20 Maplevale; and it was mostly restored within about twenty days after the event. He stated we continue to work on stormwater management in that area. He stated the intensity and volume of that storm was unique, and its localization was unique. He stated at Patterson Farm, we had 2" of rain in an hour and half period, while in the affected areas it was over 5". He stated the Township has more to do regarding stormwater management throughout the Township, and will continue to do so which is a larger issue than a Farmland Preservation property and an abutting neighbor since we will be looking at that systemically throughout the Township.

Mr. Blank stated when he was with Mr. Fuller there was discussion that they were using equipment to determine if anything is blocking the pipes. Mr. Lewis stated Public Works has done a tremendous amount of sediment removal and reviewing all of the stormwater features.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Mr. Blank

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

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REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS: Mr. Heinze

1. Mr. Lewis – Follow up on any applicable existing Ordinances that would be in effect regarding the Torbert Farm sale that would potentially impact Farmland Preservation.
2. Mr. Bankoske – Talk to the surveyor we have used in the past about a new survey of the farmland off Heather Ridge. Mr. Blank will provide Mr. Bankoske the contact information.
3. Mr. Bankoske – Draft a response to Mr. Majewski about the Plans for 1511 Lindenhurst which will be circulated first to the Board for comment.
4. Mr. Blank – Get a quote from Bob Shaw Signs in Doylestown for a new sign replacing the existing wooden sign in recognition of G. Allen Houpt.
5. Mr. Carney – Ask Matt Corcoran for the cost of cutting 1491 Heather Ridge Drive.
6. Mr. Blank – Draft an e-mail to Worthington to be reviewed by the Board that we had a meeting and are denying the request to entertain any offers for the sale of property.

There being no further business, Mr. Carney moved, Mr. Heinze seconded and it was unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

George Heinze, Secretary









