

# CT DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

## FARMLAND PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD

DRAFT Minutes of Meeting

**December 3, 2012, 9:30am**

CT-DOAg large conference room, Hartford, CT

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chairman George Hindinger, Joseph Bonelli, Terry Jones, John Guskowski, Robin Chesmer, Jim Krissel, Paul Larson, Lucy Nolan, Henry Talmage, and Ben Freund.

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** James Zeoli.

**ALSO PRESENT:** For the Department – Commissioner Steven K. Reviczky, Lance Shannon, Katherine Winslow, and Denise O’Meara; Others – Leah Mayor of Working Lands Alliance, Brian Beisel and Lauren Allard, of the Office of Legislative Research, Program Review and Investigation.

### I. **Call to Order:**

Chairman Hindinger called the meeting to order at 9:30 am.

### II. **Review of September 10, 2012 minutes:**

The minutes of the September 10, 2012 meeting of the Farmland Preservation Advisory Board (Board), were distributed and approved (Freund/Guskowski – Unanimous).

### III. **Business:**

#### 1. **Commissioner’s update & Governor’s farm visits.**

**A. Budget update.** Commissioner Reviczky discussed the projected State budget shortfall of \$365 million for the current fiscal year, and a projected 1.2 billion shortfall for the following fiscal year. Reviczky indicated that due to the soft economic recovery, the Agency will be affected by various rescissions, which will affect the Farmers Markets, the Women, Infant and Children (WIC) Program, the Senior Nutrition Program (SNP), and personal services.

**B. Governor’s farm visits.** Commissioner Reviczky stated that Governor Malloy took a day to personally visit and tour farms located in eastern Connecticut. Reviczky indicated the Farm Tour Day was a great success, with the Governor able to tour working, productive farms, and also view farms which are participating in the Governor’s new Farmland Restoration Program initiative, restoring farmland to productive use.

#### 2. **Farmland Preservation updates & summary.**

**A. Farmland Preservation Program (FLP).** Agent Shannon discussed the status summary handout relating to completed and pending farms for 2012.

**B. Community Farms Preservation Program (CFP).** Agent Winslow discussed the status summary of existing cooperative agreements with Municipalities, and farm applications received for the Pilot Community Farms Preservation Program.

Agent Winslow indicated that there are currently eight farm applications being worked on, with six of the eight approved by NRCS eligible to receive federal reimbursement at 50% of the cost. While CFP scoring criteria considers a minimum 10% commitment for scoring purposes, the schedule of state's contribution for projects initiated by municipalities under the joint municipal partnership program regulations, sets a maximum state cost share of 75%, requiring a minimum of 25% in partnership funding.

**C. Federal Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRLP).** Agent Shannon discussed obstacles working with FRLP Program, due to more rules and regulations required, slowing the process, and making it more difficult to comply with the FRLP Program. Shannon added that the Program has closed on a number of farms on our own, and will address NRCS interest afterwards, due to new compliance issues, constant changes in deed language, resulting in delays. Round table discussion took place at a New England conference this fall regarding New England states becoming certified entities to streamline the process. CT-FRLP will pursue the certification process. Commissioner Reviczky also indicated that with the passing of the last Farm Bill, USDA had 5 years to approve and establish certified entities, but has not elected to implement any changes, nor approve one state certification.

### 3. Programs and other updates.

**A. Governor's Council on Agriculture Development (GCAD).** Commissioner Reviczky indicated that numerous interviews, surveys, and listening sessions have been conducted as part of the Governor's initiative to grow farms in Connecticut. Reviczky indicated that on November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2012, eighty experts and key stakeholders convened to propose recommended actions to the Council. Reviczky stated that the primary goal of the GCAD is to address the supply and demand of agriculture, as an economic point of view, and seek a 5% increase in consumer demand for locally grown farm products by 2020. Reviczky added that the GCAD is in the process of drafting a plan for the new year.

**B. Farmland Restoration Program (FLRP).** Agent Shannon discussed the status summary relating to received applications. Shannon indicated that 50 applications have been received to date. Shannon added that the application process is on-going, and that there is good interest in the program.

**C. Program Review and Investigation.** Brian Beisel, Legislative Review Board, indicated the review process is winding down, and he is in the process of writing a report to be submitted to the Legislative Review Board Committee for December 18<sup>th</sup> 2012, relating to Agency staff findings and recommendations.

**D. State Plan of Conservation and Development.** Agent Winslow indicated the public comment period is over with regards to receiving public comments and State Agency comments pertaining to the Draft of the State's Conservation and Development Plan (C& D Plan), for the five year period, covering 2013-2018. Winslow indicated the Department of Agriculture and stakeholders in agriculture have provided input to OPM, relating to growth management principals, and that agriculture being recognized as an economic developer.

Guszkowski stated that the draft proposal being submitted to the Legislative Continuing Committee, will allow for additional input and any recommended changes, but also indicated that changes can be made in favor, or against our Agency's mission. Guszkowski added that it is important for the Department of Agriculture and stakeholders influence the process relating to agriculture in a positive way.

**E. Nursery - Ball & Burlap and Sod.** Chairman Hindinger stated that the issue relating to the Nursery Industry, regarding acceptable versus non-acceptable agricultural practices on preserved farmland continues, and presented this topic open for discussion to the Board Members. Talmage stated that it is important to look at long term preservation and what protects the soils, as a governing thought. Reviczky stated that the purpose of Farmland Preservation Program is to protect the soils in perpetuity, and that tax dollar investment is used for this purpose. Talmage made a motion, for the Program to be supportive of all facets of agriculture to access protected farmland, with the objective and requirement that the soils are protected. Further discussion ensued. Chesmer made an amended motion for the Farmland Preservation Program to be supportive of all facets and aspects of agriculture to access protected farmland, as long as the premise that the objective of the Program to protect the soils is not violated. (seconded Krissel). Vote taken by Chairman Hindinger/unanimous.

**F. State Owned Farmland.** Based on the FPAB report, Reviczky stated that the State has a priority list of state owned land to work on and indicated that Southbury Training School has the highest priority, due to location, size, and soils. Reviczky indicated that the goal of the Agency is to protect the farmland at Southbury Training School as a farm unit in perpetuity, which will require action of the General Assembly.

**IV. Subcommittee Reports:** No reports presented.

**V. Other Business:**

**1. Municipal Matters.** Hindinger discussed a mailed handout that represented a personal disagreement between an individual matter and a Municipality.

**2. 2103 Board Meeting Schedule.** Krissel made a motion to adopt the 2013 Farmland Advisory Board Meeting Schedule (Larson seconded/unanimous).

DAY	DATE	TIME	LOCATION
Monday	March 4, 2013	9:30am	DOAG Lg Conf Rm
Monday	June 3, 2013	9:30am	Htfd Regional Mkt ?
Monday	September 9, 2013	9:30am	TBD – Farm visit ?
Monday	December 2, 2013	9:30am	DOAG Lg Conf Rm

**VI. Adjournment:**

Next meeting, Monday, March 4, 2013, at 9:30 a.m., At Connecticut Department of Agriculture, Large Conference Room, Hartford, CT. The meeting was adjourned at 12:15 p.m. (Guszkowski/Krissel- Unanimous).

Respectfully submitted by Denise O'Meara. Date: December 6, 2012.