

CT DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

FARMLAND PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD

DRAFT Minutes of Meeting

September 12, 2011, 9:30am

CT-DOAg large conference room, Hartford, CT

MEMBERS PRESENT: George Hindinger, Joseph Bonelli, Paul Larson, John Guskowski, Lucy Nolan, Robin Chesmer, Terry Jones, and James Zeoli.

ALSO PRESENT: For the Department – Commissioner Steven K. Reviczky, Director J. Dippel, Katherine Winslow, and Denise O’Meara; Others – Henry Talmage of CT Farm Bureau.

I. **Call to Order:**

Chairman Hindinger called the meeting to order at 9:45 am.

II. **Review of June 15, 2011 minutes:**

The minutes of the June 15, 2011 meeting of the Farmland Preservation Advisory Board (Board) were distributed and approved (Hindinger/Guskowski – Unanimous).

III. **Business:**

1. **Budget and Legislative Update.** Commissioner Reviczky discussed the budget reduction plan submitted to the Governor, for the Department of Agriculture. He also indicated that current vacant positions, due to retirements, might be filled, if the money is available. Reviczky added the Agency has received five million in Bond Funds, and CIA Funds remain intact, with \$10 of the fee still being allocated to Agricultural Sustainability.

Governor Malloy’s Job Tour. Chairman Hindinger commented the event was held at Pride’s Corner, in the Town of Lebanon. Reviczky stated that Governor Malloy is supportive of Agriculture.

Chairman Hindinger indicated that he is planning to attend an initial meeting with Kevin Sullivan of the CT Nursery and Landscapers Association on October 17, 2011, at the CT Farm Bureau. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss issues the nursery group has, pertaining to farming practices, and address their particular issues. Dippel discussed various types of nursery activity such as 6-7 Christmas tree farms, and a number of vegetable and plant green houses currently within the Farmland Preservation Program, and what is permitted. Hindinger added that it is not that the Nursery Industry is restricted from the Program, but certain farmland practices are restricted, due to the program’s purpose to protect the farming soils. Reviczky noted a key component that is missing is an educational piece regarding the criteria of farmland preservation, and what farming practices are allowed. Reviczky indicated that if the nursery groups understood how their farms fit under the criteria of Farmland Preservation, then the issue would be more easily resolved.

2. **FLP Program summary update and related matters.** Director Dippel discussed the status summary, relating to completed and pending farms. He indicated the Agency has protected 12 farms from the beginning of this year to date, for a total of 1,685 acres. Dippel indicated that the Farmland Preservation Program abides by specific scoring and regulation criteria. Dippel presented a power point presentation, to highlight various farms in the Program. He discussed the particular farm, their background and history. Dippel also commented on

negotiations and cost-sharing partnerships. Discussion followed of occasionally holding advisory board meetings at a farm, with a tour of a few preserved farms in that particular area was unanimously agreed upon as a good idea by the Board. Chairman Hindinger agreed that this was something to consider for future meetings.

3. **State Owned Farmlands (a/k/a State Heritage Lands).** Commissioner Reviczky stated the Governor indicated there still needs to be input from stake-holder groups pertaining to state-owned land. Jones commented that the Governor has envisioned a process for Southbury Training School, relating to considering other opportunities for the land.
4. **Cromwell- Farmland Preservation Committee 'First Report'.** Dippel and Winslow discussed recommendations by the Farmland Advisory Board to DECD that had been implemented by the Town of Cromwell's Farmland Preservation Committee, regarding outreach and research of their existing farms. Cromwell's Preservation Committee, contacted the farmers in town, conducted site visits and interviewed the farmers. The Preservation Committee published a First Report, dated June 9, 2011, a copy of which was distributed, which discusses the purpose and activities of Cromwell's Farmland Preservation Committee, and recommendations towards identifying and recommending farmland properties for conservation. Dippel stated that our Department could help them rank the farms.
5. **Plan of Conservation & Development Update.** Commissioner Reviczky stated that he is waiting to hear from the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management on this matter.

IV. Subcommittee Reports:

Agent Winslow passed out current subcommittee member lists for review. Chairman Hindinger asked board members to review the list and consider signing up on a subcommittee.

1. **Stewardship and Policy Report.** Meeting to be scheduled for October, 2011.
2. **Community Farms Program.** Guskowski commented that he is not sure if subcommittee needs to meet, until money is allocated by Commissioner Reviczky to the program. Commissioner Reviczky requested they meet to discuss how to structure the pilot program and its roll out (i.e. whether to conduct as a grant round or have applications received on a continuous basis). Guskowski added that an important criteria for the CFP, is for the towns and community to recognize the farm, and to have municipal partnership. Dippel suggested bringing the scoring criteria to the next meeting, to refresh the criteria that are required for CFP.
3. **Uses of Preserved Farmlands.** Jones stated that a special committee should be formed and report back to the FPAB, to identify issues that the greenhouse and nursery commodities may have. He indicated it would be important to have outreach education to identify any issues. Commissioner Reviczky indicated there could be research and a study to show ways best management practices can be utilized.

VI. Adjournment:

Next meeting, Monday, December 5th, 2011, 9:30am, at Department of Agriculture, Large Conference Room, Hartford. The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a.m.
(Zeoli/Guskowski – Unanimous).

Respectfully submitted by Denise O'Meara
Date: September 21, 2011