

**CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**  
**FARMLAND PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD**

Draft Minutes of Meeting

**September 14, 2009**

Connecticut Farm Bureau, Windsor – 9:30 a.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** George Hindinger, Robin Chesmer, Susan Rose, John Guskowski, Lucy Nolan, Joseph Bonelli and Benjamin Freund.

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Terry Jones, James Krissel, James Zeoli and Steven Reviczky.

**ALSO PRESENT:** Commissioner Philip Prelli, Joseph Dippel, Katherine Winslow, Denise O'Meara, David Wrinn and Jiff Martin.

**I. Call to Order:**

Chairman Hindinger called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m.

**II. Review of June 1, 2009 minutes:**

The minutes of the June 1, 2009 meeting of the Farmland Preservation Advisory Board (FPAB) were reviewed and approved unanimously. (J. Guskowski/B. Freund).

**III. Any Old Business**

1. **Membership Terms and Reappointment:** Hindinger introduced new member, Joseph Bonelli (replacing Steve Broderick) to the board. Hindinger further indicated Norma O'Leary, representing CT Agriculture Experiment Station, has resigned and her spot is vacant.
2. **Legislation impacting Farmland Preservation:** Commissioner Prelli discussed the budget that has been passed, and how it affects the Farmland Preservation Program. Prelli indicated Funds for the agency have been reduced by 60%, from \$900,000 to \$400,000. The Farmland Preservation Program will not be receiving any CIA funding for the next two years, while all but 10% of agency program funds will be assigned to the new dairy support program. He also indicated the budget implementation bill and bond budget have yet to be negotiated and approved. He hopes the bond budget bill will include funds for farmland preservation. Director Dippel indicted present funds are available for farms currently in the pipeline, but not beyond.
3. **Compliance Issues:** Dippel introduced Assistant Attorney General David Wrinn. Wrinn discussed how compliance issues can result into litigation very quickly. He cited two examples that went to litigation where the owners of restricted farms, whose development rights had been purchased by the State Farmland Preservation Program, tried to utilize the restricted farm for non-agricultural purposes. Wrinn cited one example with the owner attempted to

construct a golf course on such land in Preston, and a more current example, with an applicant to the Siting Council attempted to construct a cell tower on restricted farmland located in Warren. Wrinn noted compliance issues generally do not happen with an original owner, who negotiated and sold the development rights on the farm to the State; but rather with the subsequent owners.

#### IV. **Farmland Preservation – Agency Report:**

1. **Program update summary:** Director Dippel handed out a summary status report of program closings and pending projects as of September 14, 2009. Dippel indicated that last time the Program received Bond Funds, was April, 2009. He stated present pipeline projects do have funding, but although the Program is still taking farm applications, it is not going forward with the appraisals.
2. **Federal Farm and Ranchlands Protection Program (FRPP) Update:** Dippel indicated that a Federal Cooperative Agreement is being worked on with the FRPP. He stated the FRPP continually makes changes to the rules and guidelines. Commissioner Prelli stated agreement issues are individual state differences, with the states that desire to participate as part of the FRPP. The FRPP needs to allow State's to run their Programs rather than put up unnecessary roadblocks that hinder them.

#### V. **Subcommittee Reports:**

1. **Stewardship and Policy Report:** Chesmer discussed draft brochure of "Dos and Don'ts" handout helping to identify potential uses/activities that may or may not be allowed on restricted farmlands and under which conditions they may be considered. Dippel indicated the brochure could be sent to the towns and their respective departments. Suggestions on the brochure are/were solicited from the board. It was suggested to include a paragraph about the Farmland Preservation Program and an introduction from the Commissioner in the brochure.
2. **Community Farms Program (CFP) Criteria Report:** Guskowski discussed the revised scoring criteria, designed to qualify the better applications from the weaker ones. He indicated the next subcommittee meeting is on Tuesday, October 13, 2009, and asked for suggestions as to how CFP may best be promoted.
3. **State Owned Agricultural Lands Committee Report:** Hindinger reported on State owned Farmlands and indicated that some properties on the list make a potential good fit. A letter was sent to NRCS seeking their assistance. Recommendations are due in January, 2010. A copy of the legislation was distributed. The Committee meets again on October 5, 2009, at 1pm, at CT Farm Bureau in Windsor.

VI. **New Business:**

1. **Suggested Legislation:** Dippel suggested consideration of legislative changes regarding the Siting Council, requiring the Council get approval from the Agency or entity holding a conservation easement prior to going forward with the Council's application. Wrinn commented the example of the cell tower application filed with the Siting Council and the opinion that the determination of material decreases in arable land, is for the Department of Agriculture to determine, and not the Siting Council.
2. **Agriculture Working Group for Climate Change:** Winslow commented on the Conference held on August 24, 2009, at UCONN, on the effect of Climate Change. Winslow indicated 10 major commodities were addressed, including Forestry, Dairy, Livestock, Produce, Orchards, tobacco, and aquaculture. Other areas were also identified within each larger commodity, to evaluate risk and how each commodity is impacted by climate change, and what infrastructure changes, legislative, or policy changes may be required.
3. **Draft Request for Proposals, Farm Lease in Lebanon:** Dippel indicated the State owned farmland in Lebanon, consisting of 575 acres, has been leased by two farmers for the past 10 years. The farm is utilized as dairy support land and an active dairy of about 50 milking cows. The agency will solicit a request for agricultural lease proposals for the farm. Dippel stated three different lease scenarios could be considered; one scenario a lease of the entire farm, a second scenario may allow the lease of the north side of Norwich Avenue, and a separate lease of the south side of Norwich Avenue. Comments on the draft RFP were/are being solicited.
4. **Any other business:** Martin stated that in order for the Farmland Preservation Program to be made whole, 12.5 million of new bond money would be needed. Freund made a motion: "The Farmland Preservation Advisory Board shall recommend to the Governor that \$12.5 million of additional State Bond Funding be authorized in the Budget over the next two fiscal years for the Farmland Preservation Program." A letter should be sent to the Governor and proper legislative leaders as well as the Chairman of Finance, Revenue and Bonding indicating the shortage of funds. Guskowski seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

VII. **Next meeting:**

**Monday, December 7, 9:30am:** The next meeting shall be held at the Connecticut Farm Bureau, Windsor, CT.

VIII. **Adjournment:**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:15pm. (L.Nolan/B. Freund).

Respectfully submitted: Denise M. O'Meara  
Date September 17, 2009.