

DRAFT
CT DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FARMLAND PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD

Draft Minutes of Meeting

December 7, 2009

CT Farm Bureau, Windsor – 9:30 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: George Hindinger, Steven Reviczky, John Guskowski, Ben Freund, Terry Jones, Joseph Bonelli, Paul Larson.

ALSO PRESENT: For the Department - Commissioner Prelli, J. Dippel, Katherine Winslow and George Krivda Jr.; Others - Jiff Martin, Tom Crider.

I. Call to Order:

Chairman George Hindinger called the meeting to order at 9:44 a.m.

II. Review of September 14, 2009 minutes:

Review of the minutes was delayed in the agenda and inserted just after the budget. The minutes of the September 14, 2009 meeting of the Farmland Preservation Advisory Board (FPAB) were approved (Guskowski/Reviczky – unanimous; Larson- abstention).

III. Business:

1. **Membership – new appointments.** Hindinger welcomed Paul Larson to the FPAB. Larson introduced himself.
2. **Budget update – deficit mitigation plan.** Commissioner Prelli described the budget situation. The Department experienced a 60% cut in operations expenses and is in need of inspectors but will not hire in the near term. The Governor's recent rescission package would draw \$4,789,000 from the Community Investment Act (CIA). The Legislature shall meet on December 15, 2009 to look at the details. Previously, \$125,000 was drawn from agency CIA funds including \$25,000 from the Farmland Preservation Program (FPP) and \$100,000 from FarmLink. The next round of grant payments to dairy farmers from CIA should occur by January 2010.
3. **State Owned Agricultural Lands Committee Report (SA # 09-8).** Hindinger provided copies of meeting minutes from October 5, and November 2, 2009 and discussed the process used to evaluate seven State-owned agricultural properties. A report to the Legislature is due January 15, 2010. The next meeting of the State-owned Agricultural Lands Committee shall be January 7, 2010 at 1:00pm at the CT Farm Bureau in Windsor. The FPAB resolves to authorize the committee to prepare a report to the Legislature that reviews the evaluation process,

4. **FLP Program update summary and related matters.** Director Dippel handed out a summary of the Program funding and status of projects as of December 7, 2009. Dippel explained \$5 million was authorized in September 2009 by the State Bond Commission. Total authorized and available funds exceeds \$36 million and total priority projects exceeds \$40 million. The Program closed on the development rights to nine farms in 925 acres in calendar year 2009 thus far, and has 22 farms comprised of 2,445 acres worth over \$15 million pending closure in the short term. Over \$6 million were available in the CIA account as of January 1, 2009, but it is unclear the amount of money still available due to fund sweeps of the deficit mitigation plan. The Board would like to explore ways to increase the rate of closings and disbursement of farmland preservation funds currently available.
5. **Climate Change Report update.** Winslow provided a handout announcing two public informational meetings of the Adaptation Subcommittee of the Governor's Steering Committee on Climate Change: December 17, 2009 at the Legislative Office Building and January 12, 2010 at the CT Agricultural Experiment Station. The risk assessment report of the Agriculture Workgroup will be one of four reviewed. Comments are welcome.

IV. **Subcommittee Reports:**

1. **Community Farms Program Criteria Report.** Subcommittee Chairman Guskowski provided the draft score sheet, minutes of the October 13th and November 19, 2009 meetings, as well as a memorandum addressed to the Board with a recommendation to roll out the Community Farms Preservation Program as a pilot with an application deadline when funding is made available. The FPAB resolves to recommend to the Commissioner of Agriculture that the Community Farms Preservation Program be established as a pilot program using the score sheet prepared by the subcommittee and that funding of \$1.5 million be requested for the initial pilot (Guskowski/Freund – unanimous).
2. **Stewardship and Policy Report.** Dippel explained the subcommittee has not met since the last meeting.

V. **Other Business:**

1. **Request-for-proposals, agricultural lease at Lebanon Farm.** Dippel discussed the request for proposals published for the lease of 263 acres of land owned and managed by the Department of Agriculture in Lebanon and Colchester. A public viewing is scheduled for Tuesday, December 15 at 10am. A bid package, with a detailed questionnaire, has been sent to about 15 people who have inquired. Proposals shall be accepted until February 1, 2010. Stewardship is an ongoing issue and will factor in to the deliberations of the State-Owned Agricultural Lands Committee.

2. **Any other business.** Surveys are still being accepted for the PA 490 program. Dippel briefly discussed American Farmland Trust initiative to prepare a publication for municipalities about agricultural lease procedures to better encourage, and assist in the supportive use of town-owned lands for agricultural use.

VI. **Meeting Schedule:**

1. **Monday, March 8, 2010 at 9:30am at Hartford, Department of Agriculture, Conference Room.** Originally scheduled for March 1st, the date of this meeting was changed to March 8, 2010 to accommodate the Board.
2. **Monday, June 7, 2010, 9:30am Windsor, CT Farm Bureau**
3. **Monday, September 13, 2010, 9:30am Windsor, CT Farm Bureau**
4. **Monday, December 6, 2010, 9:30am Windsor, CT Farm Bureau**

VII. **Adjournment:**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:45 am (Guszkowski/Reviczky – unanimous).

Respectfully submitted: Katherine Winslow.
Date 12/14/2009.