

CT DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

FARMLAND PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD

Minutes of Meeting

June 7, 2010, 9:30am

CT Farm Bureau conference room, Windsor, CT

MEMBERS PRESENT: Steve Reviczky, Jim Zeoli, Ben Freund, Terry Jones, Susan Rose, Jim Krissel, Joseph Bonelli, Paul Larson, Lucy Nolan, and Robin Chesmer.

ALSO PRESENT: For the Department - Director J. Dippel, George Krivda, Jr., and Katherine Winslow; Others – Henry Talmage and Jiff Martin.

I. **Call to Order:**

Members present appointed Jim Zeoli to chair the meeting in Chairman Hindinger's absence (Freund/Larson – unanimous). Zeoli called the meeting to order at 9:40 a.m.

II. **Review of March 8, 2010 minutes:**

The minutes of the March 8, 2010 meeting of the Farmland Preservation Advisory Board (FPAB) were distributed and approved with the following changes recommended by Larson: (1) Page 2, Paragraph 2, 4th Sentence – clarify that “three” refers to three million and not three farms; and (2) Page 2, Paragraph 2, 7th Sentence – fix clerical error changing “it” to its (Larson/Freund – unanimous).

III. **Business:**

1. **Budget/Legislative update.** Director Dippel indicated Commissioner Prelli was at a conference in Maine and gave the report in Prelli's absence. Dippel reported that \$5 million will be swept from the Community Investment Act (CIA) balance for the 2010-2011 fiscal year, in addition to the \$5 million being swept from the fourth quarter of the current fiscal year. It is unclear how or when this would be allocated among agencies/programs who use these funds. Krivda clarified that Office of Policy & Management (OPM) is the authority on the allocation of the sweep and has not made a commitment yet. The FPAB expressed their strong support for keeping the CIA intact for agriculture. An emergency appropriation has carried the Department of Agriculture through budget cuts for the current fiscal year; another would be required to continue operations at the present level for the next fiscal year. [Krissel and Jones enter the meeting]
2. **FLP Program update summary and related matters.** Director Dippel distributed a summary of the status of projects and indicated that 273 farms, comprised of 36,050 acres have been protected, or approved for protection,

through the Farmland Preservation Program (Program) to date. An estimated 64 farms at approximately \$41 million have been completed, or are under negotiation, for the period from 2008 to the present. Currently, projects are being funded by CIA funds. Lump sum state bond monies for farmland preservation have been authorized, and then allocated to specific projects. On the reverse side of the summary distributed, Dippel pointed out a copy of today's editorial entitled, "Keep Saving Farmland" in the Hartford Courant (Courant). Dippel then distributed a copy of the Connecticut Weekly Agricultural Report dated June 2, 2010 with an article entitled, "Federal Enhanced Easement Incentive Expired But May Soon Be Renewed". Dippel explained these tax incentives are important to the Program and the farmers we are working with.

3. **State owned agricultural lands discussion.** Jones reported he spoke with Matt Fritz of the Governor's office and wondered the status of the Department of Agriculture's activity on this topic. Krivda responded the Commissioner has talked with the relevant agencies whom are generally receptive, however additional work is required, such as the Connecticut Valley Hospital agricultural lands need to be quantified. The FPAB would like the Heritage Lands protected over the next six months and consider it fiscally responsible and a visionary approach to achieving farmland preservation goals. The FPAB would like the Governor to take this innovative step to further farmland preservation in Connecticut and lead other states in considering the same by announcing this at an upcoming Board of Governor's conference. Jones plans to attend Friday's New England Board of Governor's Conference in New Hampshire and will encourage such an announcement at a subsequent meeting. The FPAB agreed that the recent Courant editorial indicates the visibility of farmland preservation as an issue and the widespread community support for local agriculture in Connecticut. The FPAB agreed to offer members of the Committee to assist the Governor's office in drafting an Executive Order (EO) for the protection of the State's Heritage Lands for agricultural use, acknowledging an EO as a creative solution and effective means in these tough economic times, as well as, a legacy for Governor Rell as she leaves office. The FPAB renewed and expanded its statement of support for this initiative made at the March 8, 2010 FPAB meeting, by passing the following resolution,

"The Farmland Preservation Advisory Board recognizes the Governor's leadership and accomplishments in farmland preservation and looks forward to fulfilling the Governor's vision of preserving the state's 'Heritage Lands' for agricultural use in perpetuity. The State of Connecticut led other states as one of the first to establish a Farmland Preservation Program in the 1970s, and now building upon tremendous community support for local agriculture and farmland preservation, has an extraordinary opportunity to take a leadership role in committing high ranking agricultural lands, already owned by the state, to agricultural use in perpetuity. The Board pledges to work with the Governor's Office to accomplish an Executive Order to fulfill this vision for the people of Connecticut - a legacy for Governor Rell as she prepares to conclude her term in office" (Jones/Chesmer – Unanimous).

4. **Board Member appointments.** Dippel pointed out the membership list on the reverse side of the agenda. Initial two-year terms are followed by three-year terms. Letters are needed by the end of June to reappoint the following members: Reviczky, and Jones. Letters are needed in September for Hindinger and Krissel.
5. **Any other business.** Jones reported that strawberries were two weeks ahead of schedule at Jones Family Farm in Shelton. There was general discussion of climate change and its effect on local agricultural commodities. Some discussion followed about how the dairy subsidies from CIA have helped suppliers and the multiplier effect of local agriculture on related business activity. Contingent upon funding, the University of Connecticut plans an economic study of Connecticut agriculture, similar to that done for the dairy industry. Reviczky reports preliminary numbers could be available by the end of August that will help prove the dramatic effect of local agriculture on economic activity in Connecticut. The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) released a report on the state of farmland preservation. Working Lands Alliance (WLA) suggests a goal of protecting 2,000 acres per year to achieve what is needed by 2050 per CEQ; Martin has an article in the upcoming “Edible Nutmeg” issue. The WLA annual meeting is scheduled for November 17, 2010. The Connecticut Farmland Trust annual “Celebration of Farms” is scheduled for September 12, 2010. The need for educational packets for new legislators come the November elections was discussed. Representation by the nursery grower industry and Northeast Organic Farming Association in the broad-based collaboration for local agriculture advocacy was discussed, as well as planning for legislative strategy.

IV. **Subcommittee Reports:**

1. **Community Farms Program Criteria Report.** No report.
2. **Stewardship and Policy Report.** No report.

V. **Adjournment:**

The next meeting of the FPAB is scheduled for Monday, September 13, 2010 at 9:30 a.m. at the Connecticut Farm Bureau in Windsor. The meeting was adjourned at 11:15 a.m. (Freund/Krissel – unanimous).

Respectfully submitted: Katherine Winslow.
Date 6/10/2010, revised 6/28/10.