FARMLAND PRESERVATION, INC.

MINUTES – JUNE 20, 2023

The regular meeting of the Lower Makefield Farmland Preservation, Inc. (Farmland) Board

of Directors (Board) was held remotely on June 20, 2023. Mr. Steadman called the meeting

to order at 6:00 p.m.

Those present:

Farmland Preservation, Inc.: Dennis Steadman, Vice President

 George Heinze, Secretary

 Sean Carney, Member

Others: John B. Lewis, Supervisor Liaison

Absent: Michael Blank, Farmland Preservation, Inc. President

 Dan Bankoske, Farmland Preservation, Inc. Treasurer

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Mr. Heinze

Mr. Carney moved, Mr. Steadman seconded and it was unanimously carried to approve

the Minutes of May 16, 2023 as written.

INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY ISSUES AND UPDATES: All

Mr. Carney stated Corcoran Landscaping did their second round of buffer cutting a week

to ten days ago, and there were no issues with neighbors having thrown materials over

the fence. It took two days for Corcoran Landscaping to cut the tall grass that had grown

in the buffer area since the original cut which was in late April. Mr. Carney stated he

hopes that as the buffer areas have been better maintained and the neighbors realize

that the buffers are being taken care of, there will be less issues with neighbors throwing material over the fence. There are two more cuttings this year which should be easier as

the summer heat takes over.

Mr. Steadman stated around the farm fields, we maintain a 25’ buffer between the crop

area and a neighbor’s property, and there is typically a farmland fence as well. He stated

Mr. Carney worked on a program over the last two seasons to better maintain the

buffers. Previously the farmers were doing this; but given their busy schedule and

equipment constraints, that was oftentimes less than ideal, and Corcoran Landscaping

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was hired to do four cuttings a year and has also trimmed limbs and trees which has

improved the buffer area which is useful for the farmer as well as aesthetically more

pleasing for the neighbors. Mr. Steadman thanked Mr. Carney for his work on this

successful program.

Mr. Heinze stated he is still working with a property owner in Bridle Estates to decide

what they want to do about the gap in the fence. He stated there have been no issues

with the parcels he reviews.

Mr. Steadman there were no issues with his two parcels. He stated he has driven to

Clearview a few times. He asked Mr. Carney if he can be seen on the motion-activated

camera when he goes into that driveway, and Mr. Carney they do see all of the activity

at Clearview. He stated that camera was moved to another location yesterday; and

between the signs, the cones that had been in place, and the camera, there has been

less activity at Clearview. He added that there is a hunter who is very active in that

area who has been keeping a close eye on it as well.

Mr. Carney stated he has been keeping an eye on Mr. Blank’s properties, and they all

look good. He stated there was a request last year at Farmview 2 from a neighbor off

of Dolington to widen the buffer a little bit between his line and where the farming

starts. This was shown to the farmer last year, and he agreed that there was not

enough of a buffer there; and this year you can tell that they left the 25’ and it is a

nicer buffer area between the end of the farming area and the beginning of the

neighbor’s property.

OTHER BUSINESS: All

Mr. Heinze stated at the last meeting there a was discussion about planting trees

along Dolington Road as it comes off of Woodside. He stated Mr. Steadman had

looked at this area and advised the Board that would not be viable. Mr. Steadman

stated the slope is steep enough that trees could not be planted there, and they

would have had to go up to the level crop land which would take away agricultural

land to make room for trees and would require grass cutting which would be

inconsistent with the Board’s mission and goals.

Mr. Lewis asked where they were proposing to plant trees, and Mr. Steadman stated

it was on Woodside Road past the Golf Course where Woodside becomes Dolington,

and on the inside of the Dolington curve. The proposal was to plant some trees along

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that line and down to Woodside which goes to the Garden of Reflection. Mr. Steadman

stated there were several issues with that from the Board’s perspective. He stated it is agricultural land; and to create a border of trees, it would go into the crop land and

make an area for more grass cutting, and the Board did not want to trade off farmland

when their mission is to preserve the land as agricultural land. Mr. Lewis stated that

there are some slopes that would make it a challenge. Mr. Steadman stated there is

also a pipeline in the area.

Mr. Steadman stated the Board discussed it, and he communicated with Jim Bray

from the Environmental Advisory Council and explained the position of the Board.

That position was put in writing to the Environmental Advisory Council, and they

copied Mr. Lewis and Ms. Blundi who is the Supervisor Liaison to the Environmental

Advisory Council.

Mr. Steadman stated the Board appreciates the support from the Township.

He stated there are parts of Farmland Preservation parcels that the Township Public

Works cuts around the perimeters since the Board does not have the resources to

do that.

Mr. Lewis stated he is hopeful that we may be able to get some additional land into

Farmland Preservation in the future although that depends on areas that are under

consideration for development. He stated this will be discussed as certain previously

used farmland becomes up for development. Mr. Steadman stated he understands

that the proposed development of the Torbert Farm will not require any Variances

so that there is little that the Township could do in terms of creating some trade-offs.

Mr. Lewis stated there are some areas where the Township could potentially work

with the owner of the property since it has not officially been sold to a developer.

He stated the property is owned by an Estate which is trying to maximize the value

of their land. He stated they filed a Plan to begin the process; and if that were

approved the Bidders on that land would get a higher rate of return because they

would know it had been pre-approved. Mr. Lewis stated at the Planning Commission

there was discussion that there is an openness to dialogue with the Township.

Mr. Steadman stated Farmland Preservation is willing to take on more farmland if it

is made available within the Township as they would like to see even more farmland

preserved than what we have today. Mr. Heinze stated if the opportunity comes up,

it should definitely be pursued. Mr. Lewis stated the benefit of the Torbert parcel

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is that it is directly across from other farmland that is farmed by a tenant of

Farmland Preservation so if that farmer were to Bid on that Lease opportunity it

would be easy since they would be crossing the street to get to the next parcel.

Mr. Lewis stated he would like to consider if there are ways to cut the parcel so

that the land visually shows more farmland for more people that would have an

aesthetic appeal in addition to its appeal in general for having more farmland

preserved. He stated there might be discussion in the future about parcels that

might not be square but designed in a way that would maximize the potential

views for people. Mr. Steadman stated from the farmer’s perspective, the

larger the farming parcel the better. He added that Farmland’s current By-Laws

are such that the smallest parcel that can be moved into Farmland Preservation

is ten acres. He stated these are the By-Laws that were established when Farm-

land Preservation was established; and although they could potentially be

changed, farmers would most likely not be interested in anything less than

that. He added that there is a farmer that farms a five-acre parcel across from

the Golf Course on Woodside, but they do so because they farm a field adjacent

to it. Mr. Steadman stated if the location is right, it could be less than ten acres,

but it would take a change to the By-Laws if it were less than ten acres.

Mr. Lewis asked if something were L-shaped along Creamery and 332, would that

be a problem. Mr. Steadman stated it would not be a problem as long as it were

not too narrow. He added that between a Residential property and the cropping

field is a 25’ buffer, although you would not necessarily have that buffer from

the road. He stated if it is too narrow it becomes impractical for a farmer given

the buffer limitation. Mr. Steadman stated they are happy to look at anything the

Township would like to consider. Mr. Steadman stated there are farmers in LMT

who are getting toward retirement age, so the Torbert property may not be unique.

He stated while he understands that a landowner will want to do what is in their

best interest to maximize their value, if there is something that can be done to

preserve land for the community, the Board is in favor of that. Mr. Lewis stated

he would keep the Farmland Board advised of any progress with the discussions.

Mr. Steadman stated over the last few years, the Board has run in the red where

our annual expenditures exceed our annual rental income, but the Board does

have resources if there is a need to combine with Township resources; and the

Board is open to exploring that. He stated the Board has a commitment to take

care of the land in perpetuity so we have to be responsible with our resources.

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Mr. Lewis stated the investment income that Farmland Preservation has is enough

to cover the costs. Mr. Steadman stated our annual rental income is about $15,000

a year, and for the last few years we have spent a little more than $20,000 as we

have been dealing with buffer management and tree issues. He stated the buffer

management has improved dramatically which should help avoid larger expenses

in the future. The goal is to break even every year; although if there is a storm and

trees come down, the cost is several thousand dollars to have them removed which

is why we need to have reserves. Mr. Lewis stated the reserves are adequate at

this point, and Mr. Steadman agreed.

Mr. Lewis stated Farmland Preservation, Inc. is a separately-chartered 501C3

and is technically independent of the Board of Supervisors in many functions.

Mr. Steadman agreed that they are a separate entity from Lower Makefield

Township although they cooperate with each other. He stated the Board of

Supervisors appoints the Board members.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no one from the public wishing to speak at this time.

FUTURE MEETINGS

Mr. Steadman stated traditionally the Board does not meet in August because of lack

of activity at that time of year. He stated there is a time slot scheduled for July and

August, and the August time slot will be held although it may be decided not to hold

that meeting.

There being no further business, Mr. Heinze moved, Mr. Carney seconded and it was

unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

 Respectfully Submitted,

George Heinze, Secretary

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