

FARMLAND PRESERVATION, INC.  
MINUTES – FEBRUARY 15, 2022

The regular meeting of the Lower Makefield Farmland Preservation, Inc. (Farmland) Board of Directors (Board) was held remotely on February 15, 2022. Mr. Blank called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Those present:

Farmland Preservation, Inc.: Michael Blank, President  
Dennis Steadman, Vice President and Acting Secretary  
Daniel Bankoske, Treasurer (joined meeting in progress)  
Sean Carney, Member (left meeting in progress)  
George Heinze, Member

Absent: James McCartney, Supervisor Liaison

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Mr. Steadman

Mr. Steadman moved, Mr. Blank seconded and it was unanimously carried to approve the Minutes of January 25, 2022 as written.

UPDATE ON CORCORAN LANDSCAPING WINTER JOBS: Mr. Carney

The spreadsheet has a total of eight jobs that the Board highlighted for Corcoran Landscaping to do and use up the ten days that had been contracted. Work has been done at Farmview I, Farmview II, and Beth El. The work done looks very nice, specifically with the work done around the trees in Beth El and Farmview. At Sunnyside all of the brush has been removed, and none of the bamboo has come over onto the Farmland property from the neighbor's property. Mr. Bankoske had advised Mr. Carney that the work done behind Greenbriar Court was very well done.

The weather is causing some delay as at times when the ground warms up, ground gets soft and trucks could get stuck. More work will be done off of Dolington this week, and next week they will do the buffer area at Leedom's Farm. Other work needs to be done at Heather Ridge, Makefield Brook, and Stackhouse.

Mr. Corcoran expressed concern about the work that has been done on Farmview II, which Mr. Carney assumes has to do with the residences behind Fairfield Road. Mr. Corcoran has advised that it is difficult to get in the area with their machines because of the amount of fence that has been cut, wrapped up, or removed and is laying down. Usually, they would go right down the fence line like was done at Stackhouse and Leedom and cut in the buffer area; however, there are several fences that have been cut and rolled up. Mr. Carney stated he also has seen an issue like this on Leedom's where two residents have cut their fence in an effort to get back behind the fence and mow down the buffer area to their satisfaction.

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Mr. Corcoran agreed that he believes that a couple of the fences have been cut down so that the residents can get back there and do work, but a couple have also been cut and the residents are dumping back there.

Mr. Carney stated the Board should walk the fence line. He added that in the letter to the residents, it was stated that the fence is Farmland property; and if it has been cut it would need to be repaired at the homeowners' expense. Mr. Carney stated the fence is being cut at Beth El/Farmview I. He stated he and Mr. Blank and Mr. Bankoske had walked the area behind 1600 to 1614 Fairfield Road, and they noticed that the fence was not in great shape in certain areas. Mr. Carney stated this is an issue because if it is difficult for Mr. Corcoran to keep the buffer area clean that is an issue for the Board and the farmers; and if the fence is taken down or removed in areas, the integrity of the fence line is compromised which could cause deer to migrate in large numbers and it would be easier for trespassers to access.

Mr. Carney stated neighbors may feel that the buffer area is not being maintained to their satisfaction and then take it into their own hands. He stated if someone is cutting the fence down, rolling it up, or removing it that is an issue especially if we are finding this being done to a large degree, which is what Corcoran Landscaping is alerting us to.

Mr. Steadman stated at this time last year the "Good Neighbor" letter was sent to all adjoining neighbors, and wondered if that should be done again as an annual communication. He stated properties do turn over, and we could build on last year's letter to address issues we have this year.

Mr. Steadman stated after the buffer areas have been cleaned out, the Board should go out; and if there are neighbors who have removed or damaged the fencing or are dumping, a letter should be sent to those neighbors individually addressing the specifics of that situation. The Board's diligence in addressing these issues will act to prevent these issues in the future.

Mr. Carney was asked how effective a general mailing would be, and Mr. Carney stated when the letter was sent last year, it was because a letter had not been sent in many years, and the amount of turn-over in neighbors was increasing. He stated at that time it was discussed that another letter would be sent out in three to five years. He stated while there has been turn-over, he feels a letter sent out every other year would suffice given the cost of mailing. He stated he does feel that breaches in the fence and debris being thrown over into the buffer need to be addressed immediately as it will likely only get worse if not addressed.

Mr. Heinze asked if the fencing needs to be replaced, who would be responsible to pay for that replacement; and Mr. Carey stated that would be at the homeowners' expense as it is private property owned by Farmland Preservation. He stated he believes that it was indicated in last year's letter that that the fence is private property; and if it were deemed damaged to the point where it had to be repaired, it would be at the homeowners' expense.

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Mr. Steadman stated the fence is a boundary fence that Farmland owns as we put up the fence at our expense. As Farmland property it should not be tampered with or damaged by neighbors.

Mr. Blank stated he would be in favor of sending out the “Good Neighbor” letter every other year. Mr. Carney stated he would also be in favor of sending it out every other year given the turn-over in the area and to re-introduce ourselves in an effort to have good neighborly relationships. Mr. Blank stated he will put a reminder to start getting this together in December of this year so it can be sent out early in 2023. It was agreed to send out the “Good Neighbor” letter every other year.

Mr. Carney stated he will keep the winter landscaping jobs spreadsheet up to date. He stated they will then start a list for the 2022/2023 winter projects.

UPDATE ON FENCE REPAIR BRIDLE ESTATES: Mr. Steadman Apex Fencing has been busy, and they expected to have a new estimate to Mr. Steadman by now but he has not received it yet. Mr. Blank asked if there was not something to be fixed from the original job, and Mr. Steadman stated, yes, that was part of it. Mr. Steadman stated they were going to fix the original job that was not done quite right, and we had also changed the specifications and need Apex to install another post or two which was a change to the original job. Apex is to provide an estimate as to what the new changes would cost so that it could be approved; and with that approval Apex will fix the original job and do the new work as well.

There was no one from the public wishing to speak on this or any other topic that has been discussed at tonight’s meeting.

HUNTING UPDATE: Mr. Steadman The Pennsylvania Game Commission Red Tag Program started February 1, and that runs until the opening of regular archery season in September with a six-week break in the ‘fawning season’ encompassing the month of May and first two weeks of June. We received 23 Red Tags from the Game Commission, and each tag is numbered and associated with a particular parcel; there are four farm parcels for which we received Red Tags. Of those 23 tags, 19 have been distributed to hunters; and if they harvest a deer, they are obligated to report that immediately. Mr. Steadman submits a report at the end of each month to the Game Commission on tags used or not used. Last year this program resulted in 19 tags used; and since we are getting better with this, he expects better success this year. It is a difficult time of year to hunt without the crops in the field, but we have responsible hunters who have treated this in an appropriate and respectful fashion.

Mr. Bankoske joined the meeting at this time.

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We are trying to reduce the crop damage for our farmers. A picture was shown of a corn field on Woodside Road at Farmview where a large area of corn was only waist high because it was eaten down by deer. This is a major problem for our farmers. Crop loss from deer damage impacts the economic viability of an entire field and needs to be mitigated.

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

TREASURER'S REPORT: Mr. Bankoske

An Apex Invoice was paid for the fencing work at Bridle Estates. Mr. Steadman stated they are waiting for Apex to submit the estimate for the new work, and Apex wanted to be paid for the first project first; and by paying that bill it will hopefully free up the next estimate we have been waiting for. The amount of the payment made was \$1,240 for the existing work.

Mr. Bankoske stated a summary of the Leases will be provided to the Board as to what was paid and to show the reconciliation including whether the farmer used the discount or did not have it paid in time for the discount.

A high-level investment allocation review should be included on the agenda for a future meeting. This could be done at next month's meeting.

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

OTHER BUSINESS: All

Mr. Steadman stated he received a call from Jeff Hirko who lives in the historic home that is surrounded by the wooded area of the Longshore property. Mr. Hirko has advised that there have been a number of different individuals hunting at the wooded-field edges, which is Farmland property bordering Mr. Hirko's property. They discussed the hunters that are there, and the fact that Farmland is trying to keep a log of hunters who have permission to hunt on Farmland property; and that permission is granted by the farming tenant (in this case is Sam Stewart) as well as by Farmland Preservation, Inc. Mr. Steadman stated the list of hunters includes auto license plate numbers so that if we see a parked vehicle we can determine who it is to better manage hunters' access to our properties.

Mr. Steadman stated Mr. Hirko had permission from Mr. Stewart's father many years ago to hunt that area because of the crop damage being caused, and that Mr. Hirko will provide a list of hunters. Mr. Hirko wanted everyone to have a common understanding. Mr. Steadman stated he has not yet received the list from Mr. Hirko. He will keep the Board apprised once received, and it will be added to the list of hunters we have.

Mr. Steadman stated Mr. Hirko also discussed an opening behind his barn on Farmland property that is about 60' by 60', and he has a letter from Farmland dated many years ago

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that have him permission to plant a garden there. They did not plant a garden there because the area was rocky and because of deer damage. However, Mr. Hirko, a skilled carpenter/lumberman cuts his own lumber and wants to know if he could rent that plot to stack his freshly-cut lumber to dry. Mr. Hirko had asked if he could rent it for "\$1 a year." Mr. Steadman advised Mr. Hirko that he would bring this to the Board and then follow up with site visit.

Mr. Carney asked with regard to the hunting issue if Mr. Hirko is a hunter, and Mr. Steadman stated Mr. Hirko indicated that he does not hunt; but there are hunters he knows that have been hunting on the Farmland woods surrounding his parcel, and he allows them to park in his driveway.

Mr. Carney asked if hunters who hunt on Farmland properties are required to get permission from the farmer and Farmland Preservation, or could it be permitted by just one or the other. Mr. Steadman stated this should be discussed further. He stated historically the Board had taken the position that we did not want to be in the position of granting permission, and we left that to the farmer. However, over the last few years, there have been some hunters who did not behave to the standards we expect. He stated that is motivating him to want to require dual permission – both from the farmer and from Farmland. He stated that would be an explicit decision the Board would need to make. He stated Mr. Stewart does not managing this in a detailed way and would just like to see less crop damage in his field. But the Board has to deal with issues that arise, such as neighbor complaints; and that is why he feels hunters on Farmland property should have permission from Farmland as well as the farmer.

Mr. Carney stated he would be in support of that. He stated some of the farms are quite visible from the road and having permission from both Farmland and the farmer would be helpful.

Mr. Carney stated with regard to the request from Mr. Hirko about storage of lumber, he would like to see this area so that he could make a more-informed decision.

Mr. Heinze asked with regard to the hunting issue, is it more critical that the Board grant permission or is it more important that we are advised by the farmers so that we know who is on the property so that if something comes up, we understand who we can approach to have a discussion. He stated if there is a form created that shows who the farmers have granted permission to, that could be kept as a record; and he asked if that would be easier than having to issue a formal letter and have a more active role in the process.

Mr. Steadman stated it is some of both. He stated last year there was a hunter who was causing problems, and he had to tell him that he could not no longer hunt on Farmland property. This is why he feels that the hunters should be required to get Farmland's permission as that allow us to restrict access if there is a problem. Mr. Steadman stated the information is also important because it has been their experience that if a hunter shows up and just asks the farmer if he can hunt, typically the answer is yes; and the farmer does not collect the information we want to have. He stated if Board permission is required, that will enable us to

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get the information we want. Mr. Steadman stated he does have that information on most of the hunters because of the Red Tag Program in which the PA Game Commission requires such hunter information. He added that it is during the regular hunting season where some hunters go onto a property without Farmland's knowledge. Mr. Steadman stated if the farmer is advised that a hunter also needs permission from the Board, then the farmer would inform any inquirers that they need to contact Farmland to get their permission as well.

Mr. Carney left the meeting at this time.

Mr. Heinze stated in order to get the names of the hunters, the Board would have to approach the farmers anyway. Mr. Steadman stated he has advised Mr. Stewart that the hunters should contact him so the Board can give their permission and get their information. Mr. Steadman stated he has also been contacted in the past by hunters wishing to hunt on Farmland property, and he has advised them to get permission from Mr. Stewart as well.

Mr. Blank stated in this way we would have the hunters on a list, and Mr. Steadman agreed. He added that we want their mailing address, auto license plate number, hunting license number and cell phone so that if a vehicle is parked on the road, we know whose vehicle it is. Mr. Steadman stated we want to make sure as landowners that the land is being treated properly. He stated last year there was a hunter who was cutting down trees.

Mr. Bankoske stated he agrees that it should be a dual-permission concept.

Mr. Bankoske asked if the Board should re-visit the issue of posting our properties. He stated he understands that there are now purple markers that are used. Mr. Steadman stated if that were done there would only be a few locations where that would be important. He stated the Farmland is not to be trespassed on. Mr. Bankoske stated he understood that if No Trespassing signs were to be posted, they have to be posted a certain distance apart, and then people would see these from their back yards. Mr. Steadman stated there is an obligation in terms of the height and distance between the signs, but one is not obligated to post them everywhere and we could post only in locations we believe are high-potential trespassing areas, like certain stretches along a road. Thus, we would not have to post on the back side of properties putting signs at everyone's back yard fence.

Mr. Steadman stated while the purple stripes are now used as noted by Mr. Bankoske, most people do not know what purple stripes mean as that is a new program; and a purple stripe on trees at approximately 3 ft. to 6 ft. height means "no hunting" and can be used instead of "No Hunting" signs. This program is unknown to most people. He stated he would prefer not to have No Hunting signs, and if we are going to put up signs they should be "No Trespassing" signs. He stated he would prefer not having to do this, but if the situation warrants, we could consider that.

Mr. Blank stated we have informed the neighbors that they should not trespass. He would be concerned about posting a lot of signs that would interfere with the overall beauty of the fields.

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Mr. Bankoske stated with regard to Mr. Hirko's request of storing lumber to dry, he agrees that Board members should look at the area and determine what this will look like and how much space will be used. He asked if there is going to be a shed or a structure with a roof to allow it to dry better or if the materials are going to be covered with tarps. He stated he feels this will need to meet a "high bar" that would meet the goals and objectives of Farmland Preservation to allow something like this although he will reserve judgment until we get more information.

Mr. Steadman stated he agrees that they need to go out to the site. He stated his impression is that it will not be visible from anywhere as it will be behind Mr. Hirko's barn, and is surrounded by woods.

It was noted that Mr. Blank has Longshore assigned as one of his properties, and he was asked if he would take the lead on this. Mr. Blank agreed to contact Mr. Hirko. Mr. Steadman stated he would also like to go out to the site if he is available at the scheduled time.

Mr. Blank stated he went out to Stackhouse with Doug Johnson and the relic hunters with their metal detectors. Mr. Johnson stated there are a number of hobbyists in the area who do this. Mr. Johnson reported that he asked Mr. Majewski about sponsoring an event at the Patterson Farm where there are a number of buildings with great history for doing some relic hunting there, although he has not heard back from Mr. Majewski. Mr. Blank stated that Mr. Johnson had said that he could get one hundred people to pay \$100 each to come out and hunt for relics and wondered if Lower Makefield Township may be interested in this as a fund-raiser for Patterson Farm. Mr. Johnson said that he would need Porta Potties and some bins for recycling/trash. Mr. Blank stated while Patterson Farm is not a Farmland property, he feels this is a great idea. He suggested to Mr. Johnson that he try to get this on a Board of Supervisors' Agenda to see if he could get approval. Mr. Blank stated that informally Mr. Majewski had stated that he felt it was an interesting idea.

Mr. Bankoske stated Charlann Farms only leases the farmland, and it seems that this would be done in the area in and around the buildings so it might not impact the Stewarts, but he feels that they should still be advised of this. Mr. Blank stated he did advise that he felt they would need to get Mr. Stewart's approval for doing this adding it might be done further than around the existing buildings since there were buildings on the property that no longer are there, which may be of interest to the group.

Mr. Steadman stated a likely question would be whether they would be walking the farm fields or just be around the existing buildings. He stated from his involvement on the Ad Hoc Property Committee, he had suggested to Mr. Majewski to involve the Lower Makefield Historical Society and/or the Lower Makefield Historical Commission. He stated the Historical Society is a non-profit looking for ways to raise funds; and these groups would also want to be involved in this. He suggested that this idea be turned over to these groups to work with Mr. Johnson to determine if they want to coordinate on a fundraiser. Mr. Steadman stated there is a significant amount of historic preservation that needs to be done at Patterson Farm and they

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need significant funds. Mr. Blank stated at Mr. Steadman's suggestion he advised Mr. Johnson of that and indicated to him that Ms. McVan could provide the contact information for those groups.

Mr. Steadman stated he assumes that Mr. Blank could vouch for this group as conducting themselves responsibly, following through, and treating the fields with respect. Mr. Blank said he could do so. Mr. Blank stated he advised Mr. Johnson that if they got to the point of going before the Board of Supervisors, he would be happy to attend and support them.

REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS: All

1. Mr. Carney – Update the Board on progress Corcoran Landscaping is making on winter projects
2. Mr. Blank – Make a note that the Good Neighbor letter should be started in December, 2022 or early 2023.
3. Mr. Steadman – Follow up with Jeff Hirko to get the list of hunters that hunt the area around his property
4. Mr. Blank – Follow up with Jeff Hirko on his request to potentially use a small plot of Farmland property in the woods behind his barn for drying of timber
5. Mr. Blank – Put the investment allocation review on the next Agenda

There was no public comment at this time.

There being no further business, Mr. Steadman moved, Mr. Heinze seconded and it was unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael Blank, President