

FARMLAND PRESERVATION, INC.
MINUTES – MARCH 21, 2023

The regular meeting of the Lower Makefield Farmland Preservation, Inc. (Farmland) Board of Directors (Board) was held remotely on March 21, 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
Dan Bankoske, Treasurer
Sean Carney, Member

Others: John B. Lewis, Supervisor Liaison

Absent: Michael Blank, Farmland Preservation, Inc. President

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Mr. Heinze

Mr. Bankoske moved, Mr. Steadman seconded and it was unanimously carried to approve the Minutes of January 17, 2023 as written.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Mr. Bankoske

There was an invoice in January from Corcoran Landscaping for two days of work at Stackhouse in the amount of \$2,000 which was paid in March. There was an invoice for \$179 from Mid-Atlantic Printing which was for the signage being used for the deer stands/hunters. There was an invoice in March for five days of work around Makefield Brook for \$5,000 from Corcoran Landscaping. The final Corcoran Landscaping invoice is in the amount of \$2,500 for two and a half days which was some additional work at Makefield Brook and at Leedom's. There will be a discussion later this evening as to what is left for the winter work from Corcoran Landscaping. All of the work done by Corcoran was pre-arranged at pre-set fees.

Mr. Steadman stated we have a good relationship with Corcoran Landscaping, and we contract with them for a set number of days when his business is slower, and he can give us a much better price for those days to help keep his crew occupied when weather conditions are suitable. He stated much of the buffer clean-up is done during

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the off-season which has been a great savings. Mr. Steadman stated Mr. Carney has managed that relationship which is working out very well. He stated we are very pleased with both the service and the pricing from Corcoran Landscaping.

PROPERTIES & ISSUES UPDATES

a. Makefield Brook - Mr. Steadman

An excellent job was done by Corcoran Landscaping and the buffer looks great. Problem limbs were removed without harming the integrity of the trees. No additional time is needed at this property. Recently one of our trees fell onto our fence and intruded into a neighbor's property during a time of high winds. The property owner reached out and Mr. Corcoran went out, and cut up the tree that had fallen. The property owner is pleased with the work that was done.

b. Winter Projects – Mr. Carney

Winter projects were set up with Corcoran Landscaping, and one day was allocated to Farmview Drive (Leedom's Farm), two days were allocated to Leedom's Drive (Stackhouse Farm), and five days were allocated to Brentwood Road (Makefield Brook), which was a leftover project from last year and was the focus project for this year. The project at Makefield Brook went well. Two days were done at Stackhouse, and the work went well.

The Farmview Drive project was anticipated to be a one-day project this year, and one-day the following year to clean up close to the end of the farm (2088 to 2092 Farmview Drive). The crew worked there one day, and did a good job.

Mr. Carney stated he received an e-mail from the Township which the Board is aware of, and a neighbor at 2080 Farmview had asked that we visit their property to see what was behind that residence which included bushes growing from our side of the fence over through to their property. Mr. Carney met with the homeowner, and they came up with a plan. Corcoran came back out to finish some work and incorporated a little more than a half day's work at this property to take down a dead/dying tree, limb up another tree, and remove some of the bushes that were growing from our side over onto the neighbor's property. It was a very windy day when they were there, and a large tree that was in the farming area came down during the night. Corcoran sent him a picture and asked if the tree should be taken care of since all of the equipment was there already, and Mr. Carney agreed that should be done. Therefore one day at Leedom's Farm turned into two days

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to take care of the 2080 Farmview fence line as well as the tree that had fallen into the farm which has now been cleaned up and gives the farmer direct access to that area with no problem.

This leaves a half day left. Mr. Carney stated he does not feel that is sufficient for either of the two small projects that had been noted if there were extra days available. Those two projects were some tree elevation at the Fairfield area on Stackhouse and Heather Ridge off of Trowbridge where a little more work needs to be done, and they will be made a priority for next year.

We have been billed for all the work that Corcoran has done. He stated the half day could be used at some location or it could be held in case there is a situation arises where work needs to be done.

Mr. Carney stated he had some preliminary discussions with Tim Stewart about continuing the Contract we have with Corcoran Landscaping for the buffer cutting which is separate from the winter work. The buffer cutting takes place four times during the growing season, and they maintain the buffer by cutting it; and if there are any limbs, etc. that need to be taken care of, they help with that as well. Mr. Carney stated Mr. Stewart seemed to be one board. Corcoran had two requests – one for a longer Contract to be a couple of years; and the other was that there be a surplus charge if diesel/gas prices go above \$5 again for a period of time. Mr. Carney stated Tim Stewart was fine with this but wanted to speak to Sam Stewart about that, and he will then get back to Mr. Carney. Once he has confirmation of this, he will advise the Board.

Mr. Steadman stated the buffer approach with Corcoran doing the mowing and sharing the cost between ourselves and the farming tenant worked this past year, and he is glad that Tim Stewart is willing to continue that. He believes that helps Mr. Stewart as it was difficult for him to get to as much mowing as was contracted and it helps the Board as there are then not complaints about the buffers.

POLICY DISCUSSIONS AND/OR ACTION

a. Hunting Policy Approval – Mr. Carney/Mr. Steadman

Over the last few years the Board has gotten more involved in managing the deer hunting that goes on at the farm properties. Some of them have a fair amount of woods where hunting is appropriate and necessary, but in other cases, there is not

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that kind of environment. In those areas where hunting is appropriate the Board wanted to be sure that hunting was done in a responsible, safe way. The only hunters that should be on Farmland property are those who have permission from the farmer/operator of the farm as well as Farmland Preservation, Inc.

A policy was drafted which was circulated to the Board and has been discussed at previous meetings. The key point is that any hunter must abide by all Pennsylvania Game Commission rules, have permission from the Board, and that the hunters are responsible and will be respectful of the property, the neighbors, the land, and to other hunters. The document was provided to those hunters who received Red Tags; and they were advised that while it was a draft, it was expected that it would be approved shortly. It was universally accepted by the hunters. This gives the Board the ability to take the permission to hunt away if someone violates a policy or acts inappropriately.

Mr. Carney moved, Mr. Heinze seconded and it was unanimously carried to approve the Policy as presented.

Mr. Steadman thanked everyone for their attention to this. He stated there is a tremendous amount of crop loss due to deer damage in the area, and some of the fields are getting to a point of economic break-even with the amount of loss that is caused by deer; and we want to do whatever we can to help our farmers remain viable.

b. Year-End Holiday ‘Thank You’ Meeting Discussion: All

At the December Board meeting key stakeholders, the farming tenants, and key employees from the Township are invited to a holiday gathering which this year was held at the Vault. Mr. Steadman stated there was productive discussion and it builds relationships particularly since we are working remotely and through e-mail throughout the year. The issue raised was the cost of the event. The total cost has been divided and paid for by the five Board members.

As the cost has increased over the years, there was discussion about handling the cost differently. One idea was to divide the total bill by the number of those present and each Director would pay their own per capita share and the remainder would be paid with Farmland Preservation funds. Mr. Steadman asked if there were any other suggestions. Mr. Lewis stated the Supervisor Liaison should pay their own share as well.

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Mr. Heinze stated he feels that this should be framed as a year-end review/networking event with our stakeholders, and not call it a party. This was acceptable to the Board.

Mr. Bankoske stated what has been suggested for paying for the event seems reasonable, and Mr. Carney agreed. It was noted this would be able to be paid for with Farmland funds.

OTHER BUSINESS: All

Mr. Heinze stated Mr. Steadman has provided the Board with an e-mail related to the Ad Hoc Property Committee work being done, and he asked if that was something that the Board needs to discuss in the future or was it for information only; and Mr. Steadman stated that was for information only.

Mr. Carney stated prior to being on the Board, he understands that there was a lot of discussion about bamboo, and it seems that enough progress has been made, that it is no longer an issue. He stated for a majority of his first year on the Board, there was a lot of discussion about buffer issue, and we are moving in the right direction there. He stated he believes that we are going to have to address the fencing. He stated there are areas where the fencing is down so much that the deer just step over it and some areas where pieces are missing at the top which could be dangerous. He stated he understands that fencing can be expensive, but many of these fences were put in many years ago. He stated as we walk our properties, we should consider where fencing should be addressed, and we could make a priority list of where fencing needs to be addressed as we did with buffers; and we could work on that over time.

Mr. Steadman agreed and as part of the discussion we should be getting information on the type of fence. Mr. Bankoske stated what we have is the standard PennDOT Type II fencing. Mr. Steadman stated it is not an impressive fence in terms of strength or appearance. He stated it may be appropriate to consider what our standard fence should be and what the implications would be in terms of cost. Mr. Bankoske stated he feels we need to research this as he believes that it was a Township policy that referenced the type of fencing to be used. He stated he agrees that it is not an attractive fence. Mr. Steadman stated we have to consider the cost, strength, and durability of the fence in addition to its appearance.

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Mr. Steadman stated in many locations the fence is not really a fence and is more like a boundary line, and it can be stepped over or climbed over, and we want it to have better integrity than it has in many locations. He noted Makefield Brook on Wheat-sheaf Road where the fence is in the woods, and keeping a fence up in a woods is almost impossible. He stated there are other locations where it is a wide open clean vista between a yard and a buffer. He stated he agrees the Board should consider this in the near future.

Mr. Bankoske stated Mr. Carney had noted the bamboo, and he asked Mr. Steadman how the bamboo looked at Makefield Brook on our side. Mr. Steadman stated the major area along the driveway where it was very invasive is still in good condition, and the barrier that was put down seems to have had a real impact, and the giant bed of crushed rock that retards the bamboo's ability to come up through it also seems to be working. He stated that was a very challenging area, and he is impressed that it is in good as condition as it is since it has been four years, and the control had held up. There was discussion as to whether Corcoran billed us for bamboo, and Mr. Carney stated he does believe that he is still spraying it and we are being billed for that. Mr. Bankoske stated he is also mowing those buffers as well, and we should see if Mr. Corcoran feels we still need to do the spraying for bamboo. Mr. Bankoske stated bamboo does still exist on some of our neighbors' properties, so it could come back in our direction as well. Mr. Carney stated he feels that given the cost of it, it is not much to have him continue to spray, and stopping that could open us up to growth. Mr. Steadman stated he feels the reason the bamboo is not as much as a problem was because a number of years ago we took an aggressive approach to bamboo. He stated he does not feel we should let up on keeping that invasive plant smothered as much as we can.

Mr. Lewis asked if there are residents with bamboo next to our buffer areas that we have not addressed yet, and Mr. Bankoske stated he believes every instance of bamboo has been addressed. He added that Mr. Blank had been in touch with the Township Code Enforcement Officer in a couple of cases which involved communications with neighbors about bamboo. Mr. Bankoske stated he believes that we had two cases where we had bamboo come onto our property from neighboring properties, and he believes that in both of those cases those neighbors still have bamboo on their property. Mr. Steadman stated they have pushed it back away from our property, and Mr. Bankoske agreed it was done in accordance with Township policy. Mr. Carney stated the one property on Farmview II continues to encroach on our property. He stated Mr. Corcoran calls us every year to let us know that it is still coming over

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and it seems that it has jumped the barrier that was put in at one point. He stated when we did the fence work this year, we found that the fence was out too far, and where we wanted to put the fence where the actual line was, there was bamboo there. Mr. Lewis asked that he be advised of the property, and he will check into that. Mr. Bankoske stated there is an e-mail chain with Mike Kirk on that. Mr. Carney stated he reached out a few times to the property owner with no response. He stated the residence is on Sunnyside Lane.

Mr. Steadman stated now that is it spring we might want to remind Mike Kirk to follow up on this, and Mr. Lewis agreed. Mr. Steadman stated he will send an e-mail to Mike Blank asking him to share with us his latest e-mail chain so that we can follow up with Code Enforcement.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Mr. Steadman

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

REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS: Mr. Heinze

1. Mr. Carney – Waiting to hear back from Tim Stewart regarding the buffer contracts and maintaining Corcoran for the buffer work, and advise the Board once he hears back.
2. All – Future Agenda item in April or May is to discuss fencing status/infrastructure issues. Mr. Carney will do some research before it is put on as an Agenda item.
3. Mr. Steadman – Follow up with Mr. Blank regarding the latest communication on the Sunnyside Lane bamboo issues; and depending on the status of that, will follow up with Mike Kirk if necessary.

There being no further business, Mr. Carney moved, Mr. Heinze seconded and it was unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 6:42 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

George Heinze, Secretary