

LOWER MAKEFIELD
FARMLAND PRESERVATION, INC.
MINUTES – NOVEMBER 30, 2020

The regular meeting of the Lower Makefield Farmland Preservation, Inc. (Farmland) Board of Directors (the Board) was held remotely on November 30, 2020. Mr. Blank called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

Those present:

Farmland Preservation Inc:	Michael Blank, President Dennis Steadman, Vice President and Secretary Daniel Bankoske, Treasurer
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Others:	John B. Lewis, Supervisor Liaison
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APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Steadman moved, Mr. Bankoske seconded, and it was unanimously carried to approve the Minutes of October 22, 2020 as written.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Mr. Bankoske

There were two operating expenses in the last month: \$2,250 to Robert Small & Associates for 2019 tax return and 2019 annual compilation (these will be posted to the SharePoint), and \$1,400 payable to Corcoran Landscaping for tree trimming and removal at two locations at Makefield Brook.

Expenses have been more than operating income over the past few years, and this is expected to continue in the near term due to increasing boundary issues, including tree & brush removal, bamboo maintenance, fence replacement, etc.

QuickBooks is up and running and 2020 will be fully conducted in QuickBooks. There are cost associated with getting data from prior years completely up on QuickBooks, which may be cost prohibitive, but there could be loose analysis done for 2019 and more recent prior years. There had been discussion about the ability to run a P & L Statement by farm and to consolidate by farmer as well.

Since most of Farmland expenses go toward maintenance of boundary lines/buffer Zones between Farmland property and its neighbors, Mr. Steadman presented a new spreadsheet

quantifying lengths of Farmland property boundaries. Farmland properties possess approximately 21,000 yd or 11.9 miles of boundary. About 6.2 miles border residential properties and about 2.7 miles border roadways not counting I-295. We have counted a total of 187 residential properties that neighbor preserved farmland.

Farmland income is fixed in the intermediate term by 5-yr and 10-yr leases. The average rent collected is \$~54/Ac over Farmland's 340 acres, resulting in about \$18,000/yr. of income. Tree trimming and removal expenses are growing. For example, it was necessary to spend \$1,400 in the past 2 weeks at the back of two neighbor's properties on tree removal. It was observed that the lands came into preservation about 30 years ago, so trees are now bigger/older and a considerable amount of money is being spent to trim and/or remove trees.

Mr. Steadman stated it would be productive for the Board to consider and plan expenses based on boundary distances and number of residential neighbors, rather than just on an acreage basis. The expectation is that each year Farmland Preservation will need to spend far beyond their annual revenue in the management of bamboo and maturing trees. Mr. Blank agreed that there is an ever-accelerating need to spend on buffer areas; however, for more than twenty years there was little spent, because trees were young and neighborhoods and fencing were new. Thus, Farmland has built up capital that can be drawn on.

Mr. Steadman observed that perhaps there could be more maintenance and less emergency responses with more refined planning. Of course, the intent would not be to spend a certain amount per property every year, but they could consider a maintenance budget over a rolling time period, and an emergency budget. Mr. Lewis stated they may want to consider which properties are at the highest risk, so that a maintenance plan could be built for them. He also observed that properties are very different in terms of topography and Farmland also needs to consider the farmers' role in keeping the buffers in good shape as well and auditing that.

Mr. Blank suggested the Board have an Executive Session to go over some potential strategies for better budgeting and planning. When asked when the expenditure data might be available to support such analysis, Mr. Bankoske thought it could be ready in January.

UPDATES ON BUFFER ISSUES

Farmview I (1604 and 1642 Fairfield Road): Mr. Bankoske

The neighbor at 1604 Fairfield Road reached out a week ago and sent pictures. There are downed trees and other material that the neighbor wants Farmland to consider clearing out.

One tree appears to have fallen into the buffer and is nearly reaching the crop. It is not an emergency and Mr. Bankoske will inspect the property and report back. Sam Stewart may be able to help clear this out.

1642 Fairfield is near the retention basin and homeowner is concerned about drainage. Water is running across the property driveway onto the next property and is creating a permanent ice at below freezing temp. Mr. Blank and Bankoske will get in touch with the homeowner to meet at the property now that the field has been harvested.

Leedom (2048 and 2088 Farmview Drive): Mr. Bankoske

The owner of 2048 Farmview Drive, Mr. Carney, hired Corcoran Landscaping to clear out the brush. He had previously asked the Board if he could have permission to remove the brush from that area. There have been discussions with Mr. Carney about sharing costs of replacing the fence, which is damaged with trees and brush intertwined. The cost estimate is \$1,400, which included taking down the fence; however, Mr. Carney agreed to do it himself, so the new estimate is \$900. The parties agree to split this 50/50. The fence will be replaced and stumps removed.

Board members walked 2088 Farmview Drive where a stretch of Farmland buffer needs work. This work could be combined as part of a larger project along the back stretch of Leedom including 2088 Farmview and their neighbors. A proposal and cost estimate will be sought.

Longshore (1524 Pownal Drive): Mr. Blank

Earlier this year Board members cleaned up vines from the fence at 1524 Pownal. There is still a significant fence damage and Apex had provided a quote. This job will be done at the same time as Mr. Carney's at 2048 Farmview Drive. Apex is waiting for fencing materials.

Makefield Brook (1435, 1437 Wheatsheaf Road): Mr. Steadman

On November 16, Mr. Kerr, the neighbor at 1435 Wheatsheaf Road, e-mailed the Township about a Farmland tree that had come down, was leaning toward his and his neighbor's property at 1437 Wheatsheaf. Mr. Steadman visited the next day and agreed it could be an unsafe situation and needed to come down ASAP. Corcoran Landscaping came out the next day, provided an estimate, and removed it that same day. Both neighbors were very cooperative, understanding and provided access to their rear yards. The neighbors were pleased with the fine job done by Corcoran.

There are large trees along that wooded area of Makefield Brook. Even though nothing was seen that would be considered risky at this time, given the age of the homes (30 yr.) and the trees, there may be additional needs along this boundary.

'RESPECT OUR TREES' SIGNS FOR SYCAMORE TREES @ LONGSHORE: Mr. Steadman

A draft (14"x11") from Bob Shaw Signs was shown. The wording asks that trees be respected and is intended to be educational, stating that screws, nails, and staples cause harm to the trees and can shorten tree lifespan. Significant time was spent removing the large number of staples that had been put in the Longshore trees along the Woodside; not all of them were able to be removed. The Board made small, final revisions to the text. Each sign will cost \$43 not including posts. The Board discussed installing three such signs along the row of sycamore trees that make an "L" along Woodside Road and Dolington Road, with two on Woodside and one on Dolington. The signs would be set back in the same line as the trees. There is a small Township-owned parcel at the corner of Woodside and Dolington. Proposed exact sign locations were shown on the map and would be installed only on Farmland property. Mr. Steadman said he would mark the installation locations. Mr. Lewis stated Farmland should send an e-mail about that to Greg Hucklebridge, Director of Public Works, with a cc to Mr. Lewis to ask if the Township could carry out installation.

Mr. Blank moved, Mr. Bankoske seconded and it was unanimously carried to expend the necessary funds to have Bob Shaw Signs make the three signs, for Mr. Steadman to purchase the mounting post and hardware and to approach the Township to installation.

INTRODUCTORY LETTER TO NEIGHBORS: Mr. Bankoske

New neighbors continually move into the area and with this turnover, some may not know who owns the farm property behind them. The Board believes Farmland should have a proactive program to introduce themselves to our neighbors to improve mutual understanding, expectations and communications. The last "neighbor letter" was sent about eight years ago to all Farmland residential neighbors. This topic stems from recent discussions with a new neighbor and confusion as to who owns the property and how to reach out to their farming neighbor should there be issues. Following discussion, the Board agreed upon the following:

- A "Dear Neighbor" letter is to be sent to all residential neighbors bordering Farmland property early in 2021.
- The content should be short, friendly and informative without a "legalistic" tone. Main messages should include, who owns the property, our mission, our expectations of

neighbors (no dumping of refuse, no trespassing, etc.) and how to reach us when and if an issue arises.

- Mr. Steadman will draft the letter for Board review, refinement and finalization.
- The Board will contact Ms. Ellison at the Township to determine if the Township can update the list of Farmland neighbors (names and addresses) to support such a mailing.
- The Board will also investigate with Ms. Ellison the ability in the future to have an annual list of neighbors who moved in in the last year so that Farmland could send these new property owners a “welcome” letter to better keep all neighbors are informed.

This discussion of neighbor communications and letter content triggered a discussion on the content on the Farmland Preservation pages of the LMT.org website. While the Farmland history and mission are on the site, it was agreed this text should be reviewed and refreshed if deemed helpful. Mr. Blank will review and propose revised the website language for consideration by the Board.

BAMBOO REMEDIATION PROGRAM UPDATE: Mr. Blank

In 2020 the Board laid out a plan with Corcoran Landscaping for a bamboo maintenance/removal program consisting of four treatments per specific location per year. The Board is uncertain as to the number of treatments per property and Mr. Bankoske has asked Corcoran for more details on this.

The Farmland side at Farmview II at Sunnyside Lane needs remediation according to Mike Kirk. Mr. Bankoske stated he will reach out to Corcoran on this matter.

REVIEW OF STORM WATER DRAINAGE PLAN FOR MR. KAPLAN'S SUBDIVISION

(adjoining Stackhouse): Mr. Blank

The Board received a development plan through Jim Majewski, which was forwarded to Rachel Onuska, Bucks County Conservation District. She indicated it was satisfactory provided that the size of the rain garden adequately limits outflow “to the pre-construction stormwater run-off rate.” Mr. Majewski will be asked if this is the case. To further coordination on this subject, the Soil Conservation Plan from Bucks County Conservation District will be sent to the Township by Mr. Blank.

PROCESS FOR ONBOARDING NEW BOARD MEMBERS: Mr. Lewis and Mr. Blank

The Board of Supervisors to consider appointing Mr. Carney to the Farmland Board at their Dec 16th meeting. Assuming approval, Mr. Carney will join the January Farmland meeting (date

TBD). Mr. Blank will provide Mr. Carney a Board orientation, including a review of the Board's Operating Principles.

OTHER BUSINESS: Mr. Steadman

A neighbor at Makefield Brook, Dr. Strnad, is a PhD entomologist and a beekeeper (at a property in NJ). Because a goal of Farmland is to support agriculture and agricultural-enterprises in the Township, and because honeybee keeping is agriculture, creating a honeybee operations could be a wonderful fit. Currently Farmland agriculture is limited to corn, soybeans and Christmas trees with few, if any other options. There is a large wooded section at Makefield Brook, which cannot be cultivated as farmland. The woods along Dr. Strnad's backyard is approximately seventy yards deep before reaching the cropping area.

Conceptual Proposal: Lease a small space to Dr. Strnad to begin a honeybee keeping operation on a trial basis to learn, experience and discover if this has longer-run viability and fit with Lower Makefield Farmland Preservation and the community. Dr. Strnad would present a detailed proposal for consideration and would address all potential Board and community issues before action is taken. Mr. Steadman provided some preliminary details to the Board to assess their interest in further exploration:

- Two hives would be considered a minimum start in order to assess the opportunity.
- A land footprint of approx. 10 Sq Ft would be needed for 2 hives.
- A trial period of 2 seasons would be necessary to adequately assess the opportunity.
- The hives would be on edge of woods close to crop field and thus, ~70+ yards from the nearest residential property line.
- The level of activity By Dr. Strnad is expected to be approximately 1 hr. about 1/week.
- Dr. Strnad would need to be provided access to the property from his property.
- There are seven acres of woods in the area. Dr. Strnad would need to determine the most desirable location with approval of Farmland.
- This is envisioned to be a formal landlord-tenant relationship under written agreement.
- Since the entirety of the Makefield Brook property is leased to Charlann Farms, their permission is needed before moving forward.

It is clear, that having increased pollinators in our area would be helpful to local flora and fauna, and any blossoming fruit trees, such as crab and other apple trees. If deemed successful and fitting, such an activity would support local agriculture and the local environment by increasing pollinator population, which is challenged and in short supply.

The Board agreed to hear a proposal and learn more. With that Dr. Strnad will be asked to make a proposal at a future meeting.

REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS

Mr. Blank – schedule an Executive Session in January to analyze and develop a maintenance plan for buffers.

Mr. Blank –review the LMT Website for the accuracy of the Farmland Preservation, Inc. information.

Mr. Blank – meet with Kurt Ferguson to update new Board members as needed.

Mr. Bankoske – reach out to Barbara Ellison for a list of owners of properties adjacent to Farmland properties and to consider once a year to ask the LMT Tax Collector for change of ownership information.

Mr. Steadman – re-draft the letter to the neighbors.

Mr. Bankoske – follow up with Matt Corcoran on bamboo remediation experience and how many times this has been done this year.

Mr. Blank – follow up with Jim Majewski on the Stackhouse and Kaplan Subdivision and send Jim Majewski the Bucks County Conservation District Soil Conservation Plan for Stackhouse.

Mr. Blank – follow up with any new approved members of Farmland Preservation Inc. to discuss the operating principles.

Mr. Steadman – follow up with Dr. Strnad to make a proposal before the Board in January or February.

Mr. Steadman – order signs from Bob Shaw Sign, reach out to the Township about installation of the signs, and purchase the appropriate posts and hardware.

November 30, 2020

Farmland Preservation, Inc.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:20 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael Blank, President