

LOWER MAKEFIELD
FARMLAND PRESERVATION, INC.
MINUTES – JANUARY 13, 2021

The regular meeting of the Lower Makefield Farmland Preservation, Inc. (Farmland) Board of Directors (the Board) was held remotely on January 13, 2021. Mr. Blank called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Those present:

Farmland Preservation, Inc.: Michael Blank, President
 Dennis Steadman, Vice President and Secretary
 Daniel Bankoske, Treasurer
 Dawn Bock, Member
 Sean Carney, Member

Others: James McCartney, Supervisor Liaison

INTRODUCTIONS:

Mr. Blank asked board members to introduce themselves and welcomed two new members, Dawn Bock and Sean Carney as well as James McCartney the new Board of Supervisor Liaison for 2021.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Mr. Steadman moved, Ms. Bock seconded and it was unanimously carried to approve the Minutes of November 30, 2020 as corrected.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS:

Mr. Bankoske nominated Michael Blank as President. Mr. Steadman seconded and the motion carried to approve Michael Blank as President with Mr. Blank abstained.

Mr. Blank nominated Dennis Steadman as Vice President. Ms. Bock seconded and the motion carried to approve Dennis Steadman as Vice President with Mr. Steadman abstained.

Mr. Steadman nominated Daniel Bankoske as Treasurer. Mr. Blank seconded and the motion carried to approve Daniel Bankoske as Treasurer with Mr. Bankoske abstained.

Mr. Steadman is currently Secretary. Following discussion Mr. Steadman agreed to continue as Secretary with the suggestion that this item could be brought back to the agenda in a few months to see if there is interest in another board member taking this position.

Mr. Bankoske nominated Dennis Steadman as Secretary. Mr. Blank seconded and the motion to approve Dennis Steadman as Secretary carried with Mr. Steadman abstained.

PROPOSAL FOR HONEYBEE FARMING:

The Makefield Brook property has a very large wooded area on two sides. Dr. Sven Strnad, a neighbor on one of the wooded sides is an experienced entomologist, teacher and honey beekeeper. He has asked if Farmland would approve his starting a honey beekeeping operation in the wooded area behind his house as this is consistent with the mission of farming use of the preserved farmland. The Board discussed this previously, were open to the idea and asked Dr. Strnad to make a proposal and address questions.

Dr. Strnad has lived in Lower Makefield since 1990, has a Master's Degree and a PhD in Entomology. Dr. Strnad's work experience included working with insects and arthropods including maintaining beehives. He and another individual currently maintain eight honeybee hives in New Jersey. The proposal is to have two honeybee hives in the Farmland Makefield Brook woods that border Dr. Strnad's home with the purpose being to produce comb honey as a hobby and educational resource. It would be a non-commercial operation, but rather honey would be given away and Dr. Strnad would cover all operation costs. Producing local, Lower Makefield honey, giving it away, this operation could increase the community's appreciation and knowledge of the important role bees and beekeeping plays in farm/food production. The presence of the honeybees will also improve pollination of a variety of plants in the vicinity.

A detailed Q&A discussion followed with many questions focused on distance of honey hives from residential properties, space required by the operation, access to farmland property, etc. Specific 'soft' conclusions reached, IF and WHEN such a proposal is approved, included:

- Honey hives are to be as far away from houses as possible (likely in the range of ~50yd to 70yd) and still at least twenty feet from the fields, to keep bees from crop spraying. (This is not expected to be a problem, but Mr. Steadman will follow up with Sam Stewart of Charlann Farms to confirm.)
- A space of ~10Ft x 15Ft would be required for 2 hives, which is the minimum.
- Because the entire property is leased to Charlann Farms, their permission and concurrence would be necessary. (Mr. Steadman will follow-up with Sam Stewart.)
- Preferred access would be via Dr. Strnad's backyard and not through the cropping area.
- Some facts from Dr. Strnad:
 - As long as a person stay 5 to 10 Ft away from hives, honeybees do not bother
 - Honeybees are attracted to water sources, and the hives would be designed to contain adequate water sources.
 - Yellow jackets are the primary risk of stinging, not honeybees.
 - The honeybees go dormant in the winter, and hives are wrapped with black tar paper in the winter.
 - Each honey hive would start with a queen and ~5k to 10k bees. Not all bees fly around as they have different jobs in the hive. Their flying radius is up to 2 miles, and whether there is adequate food sources is trial & error. The honeybees would be fed initially. Honeybee hives have been used on the Snipes Farm. Post-meeting note: Mr. Stewart uses honeybee hives each year in LMT in his pumpkin fields.
- It was agreed that if moved forward, a proactive communication (letter) to all residences bordering Makefield Brook would be done before a final decision.

- Even though there are no trespassing signs on Farmland property, it was proposed that a warning sign(s) be posted at the site with Dr. Strnad’s contact information.
- It was suggested that Dr. Strnad be given access via a simple closable gate in the Farmland fence on Dr. Strnad’s backyard
- It was stated that a formal lease agreement would need to be entered into by the parties spelling out the location, rules, responsibilities, and liabilities, etc.

Mr. McCartney asked that Township regulations be checked to confirm no conflicts. (Mr. McCartney will follow-up.) Mr. McCarthy stated he would be in support of this proposal as bees are a huge part of our eco-system.

Mr. Steadman asked about using the honey hives as an educational resource. Dr. Strnad would be happy to organize & conduct education and would use a “dummy” hive without bees as a model that could be set up at most any location. Farmland thanked Dr. Strnad for his proposal; he offered his services to address any insect questions, and the Board had generally a favorable opinion of the idea. The Board has taken the topic under consideration.

PROPOSAL FOR HISTORICAL SEARCH OF FARMLAND:

Mr. Doug Johnson and Mr. Jason Bozuffi, joined the meeting and were welcomed. Mr. Mr. Bozuffi and Mr. Johnson are amateur historians who search older farmland and houses with high-end metal detectors to locate pieces of history that may have been lost hundreds of years ago. If found, they take them from the ground, clean them, restore them if possible, and bring them back into public life via donation to local historical societies, collections, etc. If they find trash, they take that with them. If they find large iron objects that could damage farming equipment, they take that out as well.

They have done this throughout Bucks County and wanted to introduce themselves to Farmland Preservation to see what might be available to access in Lower Makefield. They did the Snipes Farm with the approval of Mr. and Mrs. Jonathan Snipes, and they found a few items some of which they gave to the Snipes family. They typically only access the properties during the winter months when there are no crops planted. If they remove an item, they cut a “plug” with a trowel, flip it over, extract the material, flip it back, and tamp it down so they leave no footprint.

They do not represent any organization, and they are just two individuals who want to try to save these items. If they were to find an item that was valuable, which is rare, they ask if they can take a photo of it, and then give it to the property owner. Most of what they find are buttons, buckles, and possibly Revolutionary War artillery bullets and have no real monetary value.

Mr. Bankoske stated they would need to discuss this proposal with the farmers who lease the land to get their approval. Mr. Bozuffi stated they have done a number of farmlands, and they could provide references.

Mr. McCartney stated he feels the Township would welcome having Mr. Johnson and Mr. Bozuffi set up an historical display of some type and they indicated they would like to do that. Mr. McCartney stated he would be in favor of the proposal.

Mr. Johnson invited the Board and Mr. McCartney to join them if interested as they have extra detectors.

The Board took the proposal under consideration this and get back to Mr. Johnson and Mr. Bozuffi.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Mr. Bankoske

At the end of the year \$400 was paid to Corcoran Landscaping for the final check on bamboo and \$1,400 to Corcoran at the end of November for the trees at Makefield Brook. Bob Shaw Signs was paid \$189 for the Respect Our Trees signs. Apex Services was paid \$1,370 for fencing on both Leedom and Longshore.

The engagement letter was signed with Robert Small of Newtown for the accounting and tax work. They will backfill all of the 2020 data onto QuickBooks and do 2021 in real time as the year continues. This will help with reporting income and expenses recognizing that over the coming years expenses will continue to grow as it relates to tree work and farm work. An Executive Session will be scheduled to develop a plan for buffer maintenance and, in doing so, consider recent spending history by parcel and by farmer and to consider future expectations.

UPDATE ON BUFFER ISSUES

Allocation of Board Member Parcel Responsibility for 2021

- Mr. Blank – Longshore, Farmview II
- Mr. Bankoske – Farmview I (includes Beth El), Heather Ridge
- Mr. Steadman – Clearview, Makefield Brook
- Mr. Carney – Leedom, Stackhouse
- Ms. Bock – Bridle Estates

Farmview (1604 and 1642 Fairfield Rd): Mr. Bankoske:

There will be an update on these properties at the next meeting. A site visit will be set up for 1642 Fairfield Road. The Board will be advised of the date if anyone want to join. At 1604 there are some trees down on the Farmland property, but there is no imminent issue.

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

There are no longer any issues at 2048 Farmview Drive. 2088 Farmview Dr. will be turned over to Mr. Carney. There is no imminent issue. The homeowner had reached out to the Township last year complaining about the overgrowth on the back side of the fence, and he was advised the Board would be in touch. This relates to the larger buffer maintenance issue.

Stackhouse (1578 Brookfield Dr.): Mr. Carney:

A report was provided along with pictures to the Board. A large tree had fallen from the fence line out into the buffer area, and was snapped at the base, which was growing into the fence so it is a tree and fence issue. A post has been damaged and is out of the ground.

At 2052 Farmview at Leedom a home recently turned over in ownership, and there is a tree that has fallen from the buffer area toward the fence. The overgrowth prevented the tree from hitting

the fence.

Clean-up will be needed at 1578 Brookfield. The homeowner has not been contacted. In this case, the fence is damaged; and should be looked at to prevent further damage. The downed tree is Farmland's, and more fence damage will be done in removing the stump. The Board agreed the tree needs to be removed. The Board will walk the whole line with Mr. Corcoran to address not only this one property, but also the whole span along that line. The hope is that Mr. Corcoran can provide a price and have the work done before Mr. Stewart needs to get into the field in April. This will be added to the Executive Session as an item to be discussed.

Longshore (1524 Pownal Dr.): Mr. Blank

The chain link fence had been bent in; and as part of the work done by Apex Fence this fence was repaired.

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

The work at these properties has been completed.

PLANS FOR BUFFER MAINTENANCE

The Board postponed the Buffer Maintenance Executive Session.

Proposal for Parcel Issue Management: Mr. Bankoske

Over the last two years there was a lot of discussion about bamboo and managing Farmland Preservation, Inc.'s cash. The goal last year was to have protocols and procedures in place for bamboo. During 2021, buffer maintenance should be discussed. Operating Income and Expenses should be broken out by parcel and by farmer. Money spent over the years should also be shown. Consideration should be given to getting proactive buffer management programs in place to do larger, clean sweeps where they need to be done. The goal is to be in a position to more easily maintain the property line, fences, and the buffer so there are not as many 'surprises' coming up on a regular basis. Potential solutions should be discussed at the Executive Session.

'Respect Our Trees' signs for sycamore trees @ Longshore: Mr. Steadman

Bob Shaw Signs did an excellent job making the signs. Mr. Steadman will meet with the Township maintenance crew on the property, and the signs will be installed at the locations discussed by the Board. Mr. Blank stated Public Works has been very cooperative with Farmland Preservation with signage.

'Dear Neighbors' Letter: Mr. Steadman

The letter that is up for approval was shown to the Board. The letter introduces Farmland Preservation, Inc. as the owners of the property that borders the neighbors receiving letters. It includes how to find out more information on the Township Website. It discusses land stewardship and gives credit to the farmers who farm the land. It includes information of acreage, length of boundaries and number of bordering properties. It concludes that both Farmland Preservation and our neighbors should work on their respective side of the fence to

help make it a clean fence line, and that there should be no trespassing on either side, without permission of the owner. Contact information is also provided. Mr. Blank thanked Mr. Steadman for working on the letter which carries a friendlier tone than the 2012 letter.

It was discussed that there will be a separate letter similar to this one sent to new homeowners although a process for doing that has not been established through the Township. It is expected the 'New Neighbor' letter database would be updated on an annual basis. There was also discussion regarding the frequency of this letter (i.e., should it be sent every year or every few years?). There is effort and expense involved with the mailing, and Farmland is grateful to the Township for their support. Mr. Majewski agreed to generate address labels for property owners, which is a total of 187 residential neighbors. The Board will need to affix the labels, stuff envelopes, affix postage and mail the letters. The Board will consider the frequency of doing this in the future. The Board decided to add the 'Dear Neighbor' letter to the website.

A discussion of collecting email addresses to have a more timely and efficient communication method ensued. Mr. McCartney agreed to find out if the Township has e-mail addresses associated with physical addresses as part of the Township database.

Following a motion duly moved and seconded, the motion to approve the 'Dear Neighbor' letter was approved by the full Board.

BAMBOO REMEDIATION PROGRAM UPDATE: Mr. Blank

Makefield Brook, Stackhouse, and Farmview II had significant growths of bamboo, and a program was put in place through Corcoran Landscaping to manage four times per year.

Stackhouse, LMT review of Drainage & Soil Conservation Plans adjoining Mr. Kaplan's Subdivision: Mr. Blank

Mr. Majewski was asked whether the stormwater drainage changes proposed for the Kaplan Subdivision would impact the Soil Conservation Plan as laid out by the Bucks County Conservation District for the Stackhouse Farm.

Mr. Majewski advised that the Township engineer reviewed this, and there will be no impact. Work is to be done under the Conservation Plan in the spring to help with the drainage issues on Stackhouse. It was suggested Farmland would be proactive and notify Mr. Kaplan about the contouring to be done this spring next to his property. Mr. Carney was asked to handle this and Mr. Blank will brief Mr. Carney on details.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Steadman stated last year Farmland Preservation, Inc. participated in the Pennsylvania Game Commission Red Tag Program to try to help manage deer population because of crop damage and to cooperate with Township efforts controlling the deer population. The Red Tag Program allows an individual farmer on an individual property to harvest antlerless deer outside of the normal hunting season with particular rules and regulations. Only archery, not firearms is allowed in the Township. While the applications are in the name of the farmer, Mr.

Steadman did the administrative work. Farmland intends to participate again in 2021, however, the Red Tag applications will not be available until March. Mr. Carney offered to help Mr. Steadman he would like to learn more about the Red Tag Program.

REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS: Mr. Blank

Mr. McCartney – Determine if zoning restrictions exist to have beehives on Farmland Preservation property

Mr. Steadman – Ask Sam Stewart for his opinion of having beehives on Makefield Brook, the potential impact of his spraying on bees, and creating a draft lease for the same.

Mr. Blank – Ask all farmers for their opinions of giving permission to Doug Johnson and Jason Bozuffi to search their leased farms for historical objects using metal detectors.

Mr. Blank – Work with Township to have address labels generated for “Dear Neighbor” letter, have letters printed on letterhead and mailed. Post letter on website.

Mr. McCartney – Inquire if LMT has email addresses or properties adjoining Farmland Preservation properties

Mr. Blank – Schedule an Executive Session of the Farmland Board to discuss buffer maintenance planning. Among items to be discussed:

- Known issues and issues we need to deal with proactively
- Operating income and expenses by parcel and by farmer
- Potential use of escrow accounts to manage expenses
- Mechanism for contracting for buffer maintenance

All Board Members – Execute Buffer Maintenance Plan, once established at our Executive Session, for their assigned parcels

Mr. Carney and Mr. Blank – Discuss Soil Conservation Plans for Stackhouse in support of Mr. Carney communions with Mr. Kaplan prior to work commencing.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael Blank, President