

FARMLAND PRESERVATION, INC.
MINUTES – MARCH 11, 2021

The regular meeting of the Lower Makefield Farmland Preservation, Inc. (Farmland) Board of Directors (the Board) was held remotely on March 11, 2021. Mr. Blank called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Those present:

Farmland Preservation, Inc.: Michael Blank, President
 Daniel Bankoske, Treasurer
 Dawn Bock, Member
 Sean Carney, Member

Absent: Dennis Steadman, Farmland Vice President
 and Acting Secretary
 James McCartney, Supervisor Liaison

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Bock moved, Mr. Carney seconded and it was unanimously carried to approve the Minutes of February 15, 2021 as written.

FARMLAND BOARD ACCOMPLISHMENTS 2020/2021: Mr. Blank

A slide presentation of the Board's accomplishments during 2020/2021 was shown.

To protect the farmland and conserve the soil, there are Conservation Plans done through the Bucks County Conservation District on all of the parcels. Lower Makefield Farmland Preservation (Farmland) has been added to the signature line. There will be a major project done at Stackhouse Farm off of Dolington before planting begins moving soil around and getting better drainage.

As deer are plentiful in Lower Makefield and can impact the crops, Mr. Steadman instituted a Red Tag Hunting Program which allows farmers to hunt deer year round and not just during the deer-hunting season. It is hoped this Program will be expanded this year, and there has been great cooperation from the farmers.

Bamboo has been growing on Farmland and adjacent properties. Township Ordinances require that bamboo be kept back 10' from a fence, and there needs to be a protective barrier installed. A program of bamboo removal has been

instituted by Mr. Bankoske which involves removal/remediation of bamboo four times a year by a contractor.

Expanding the use of Farmland parcels has been started beyond growing corn, soybeans, and other agricultural products. The option of honeybee keeping has been explored at Makefield Brook where there is a wooded area. Honeybees are useful for plants and agricultural purposes as well. This would be in the wooded area of Makefield Brook and not on the farmland that is used for agricultural purposes. This would be a pilot program. It is still in discussion, and it has not yet been fully approved.

Two gentlemen from Langhorne approached the Board to do historical article searches with metal detectors on the Farmland properties. They do this on other properties throughout the County. The farmers did not have a problem with this so these gentleman will be searching our farms. They are reviewing maps and developing a plan at this time.

The Board sent a clarifying letter to approximately 200 neighbors who border Farmland properties. The letter introduced Farmland and the farmers who farm those properties to the neighbors, set expectations for what the Board will do as far as keeping the buffers and fencing clear, and what is expected of the neighbors to also keep their side of the fence as clear as possible.

Some fencing has been replaced where needed. Some areas where vines have grown into the fence have been cleaned up.

Over the twenty-five plus years since the residential developments were put in, the vegetation that was mandated to be installed in the buffer areas has become overgrown. Stackhouse and Leedom have needed a significant amount of work, and clean-outs have been done there in conjunction with a landscape contractor. Plans have been developed for buffer maintenance going forward once the problem areas are cleaned up. There is also a plan to verify on a quarterly basis that the farmers are cutting the buffers.

The Board is now up to full capacity at five members with the addition of Ms. Bock and Mr. Carney at the end of last year.

The Board has Operating Principles which outline how the Board will work together via e-mails, respond to communications, and other principles which will be followed which will help the Board work more smoothly and efficiently.

An Executive Session was held using MS Teams discussing how buffer maintenance will be approached.

Mr. Carney has been instrumental in the Board's implementation of Microsoft Teams and Mr. Bankoske has been instrumental in the Board optimizing the use of SharePoint for all of our documents.

Mr. Bankoske was key in getting Farmland assets moved to a more consumer-friendly environment where the Board can deposit checks using an app, pay bills electronically, and have greater visibility by more than one person of the accounts and investments.

Mr. Bankoske has created a parcel maintenance Excel spreadsheet that shows how much is being spent by field, by farmer, and by season to get a better handle on how much we feel we can spend to keep the buffers clean, make other improvements, and do maintenance as necessary. All of the above makes for a more efficient Board and keeping the farmland in perpetuity for agricultural purposes.

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

PROPOSED HONEYBEE KEEPING: Mr. Blank

Mr. Steadman provided the following update as an e-mail:

1. Draft of Honeybee Farmland Lease with Dr. Strnad reviewed and provisionally agreed to by both parties, subject to final Board approval and agreement with Sam Stewart.
2. Draft of 'Side Letter' agreement with Sam Stewart sent Sam for his review. No issues expected based upon informal conversation with Sam.
3. Letter to Neighbors providing notice and seeking input is drafted and reviewed by the Board and Dr. Strnad.
4. Names and addresses of 28 bordering neighbors to receive letter is compiled.

5. Plan to:

- a. Mail letters by March 20
- b. Walk woods with Dr. Strnad to select exact location – planned for week of March 15th
- c. Have final vote on this matter at May Board Meeting (or sooner) to facilitate timely initiation of Honeybee operation for 2021 season

TREASURER’S REPORT: Mr. Bankoske

The last rent check was received. There have been no expenses over the last thirty days.

UPDATES ON PARCEL ISSUES:

FARMVIEW I – Drainage, Fencing, and Soil Conservation: Mr. Bankoske

A week ago, Mr. Blank and Mr. Bankoske met with Greg Hucklebridge, Public Works, and walked the bottom part of the parcel to review the elevation and the rock retaining wall that prevents water from flowing freely into the basin. This may have been done purposely, but it is keeping water inside the field creating ponding. Mr. Hucklebridge will review the original drainage plans to confirm what was intended. This will be discussed again in the future.

Mr. Steadman will be contacted to see if he spoke with Tim Stewart about this area and not farming the corner at the bottom. While it was not known for certain if they were planting corn or soybeans this year, if they are alternating, it should be soybeans this year. Mr. Bankoske stated with the understanding that water will naturally flow down the hill, we want to do what we can reasonably do to decrease water flow there and slow the drainage. If Mr. Hucklebridge finds that the original intent was for emergency overflow and that is why the berm and rocks were installed, then that area will not be farmed. This could be discussed with Bucks County Conservation to see if there is anything else that can be done. In the center of the field, we have already installed a grassy area running in the center down the length of the field to prevent soil erosion. This was supposed to be widened, and Mr. Tim Stewart indicated that would be done. Mr. Bankoske will search for the correspondence with the Stewarts on this issue.

LEEDOM AND STACKHOUSE – Buffer Cleanout: Mr. Carney

Leedom coming off of Dolington is 1,000 yards long, and the project that will be embarked on beginning Monday will concentrate on about 500 yards of the 1,000 yard fence line moving west up the fence to take care of areas which are overgrown with dense bushes, trees, and vines in the buffer. Matt Corcoran Landscaping will begin on Monday, and it should be a one-week job. Work will also be done that will help with buffer maintenance in the future such as trimming some of the larger trees to a height of 8' to 10' from the ground so that the tractors with mowers can fit under them. The fence line will then be walked with pictures taken so that it will be maintained to that standard going forward.

Issues at Stackhouse will be addressed within a larger cleanout. Corcoran Landscaping will work from the top of Stackhouse down. If Corcoran has cleaned up the main problem area work may end at that time; however, if they are not quite through the problem area or if a few more days would be beneficial for Farmland, they may continue with that work.

Both of the cleanout projects are planned for completion before April so that they do not interfere with spring planting.

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

PLANS FOR ONGOING BUFFER MAINTENANCE: Mr. Carney

An Executive Session was held regarding buffer maintenance. A buffer maintenance quarterly document was created and put into the Shared File for the Board to consider. This will show when the quarterly work is being done, how long it is being done for, and knowing about issues sooner. If the Board is contacted by any neighbors about any problem areas, the Board will be able to go back and look at the documents to see when the farmer was last out there, and if there are any notes about that. This will make the Board more transparent with the neighbors, and the farmers can keep the Board up to date with what they are doing as far as buffer maintenance going forward.

An Agreement has been drafted with Corcoran Landscaping for buffer maintenance and ad hoc and emergency help. Per the draft Agreement, the Board would purchase a set amount of days at different rates for winter or summer to have buffer maintenance done according to Farmland's priorities. Corcoran Landscaping also does the bamboo work, and this Agreement will be all-encompassing. This will be for three-years, as the Board wanted to embark on a three-year program when they considered the priority items.

There was discussion about introducing the quarterly maintenance form to the farmers, and it was suggested that this be handed to and discussed with the farmers. Mr. Carney stated he would agree with this as he would also like to meet the farmers since he is new to the Board.

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

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Blank stated in the past the Board had done a spring tour of the Farmland parcels, particularly those they wanted to look at in depth. He stated Board members have recently done much more on-site review than was done in the past. He feels a spring tour would be a way to introduce Ms. Bock and Mr. Carney to the parcels they have not seen yet and to the farmers. Mr. Bankoske stated they may want to be more targeted and choose a few specific fields. Mr. Blank suggested they choose a date after April 15. Mr. Bankoske suggested they check with Sam Stewart and Tim Stewart first to see when they might be available before planting season.

REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS: Mr. Blank

Mr. Blank - Send to Mr. Bankoske the May, 2020 letter to the Stewarts regarding follow-up conservation item.

Mr. Bankoske – Follow up with Stewarts regarding widening the midfield, grassy area on Farmview I.

Mr. Bankoske/Mr. Steadman – Follow up with Stewarts regarding not farming the southwest corner of Farmview I.

Mr. Bankoske – Follow up with Greg Hucklebridge regarding drainage into the retention basin on the western end of Farmview I.

Mr. Blank – Send Mr. Steadman’s honeybee update to Recording Secretary for inclusion in the Minutes.

Mr. Blank – Schedule Spring Tour to include introducing Ms. Bock and Mr. Carney to farmers and introducing quarterly buffer maintenance ‘form’ to them.

All Board Members – Review by next week draft of Agreement with Corcoran Landscaping for buffer clean-out.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael Blank, President