

Farmland Conservation Easement Commission Minutes

**Jefferson County Courthouse, Room 112
320 S. Main St.
Jefferson, WI 53549**

Monday, February 11, 2008 12 pm

Members: John Molinaro (Chairman), Margaret Burlingham (Vice Chairman), Steve Nass (Secretary), Daphne Holterman, Blane Poulson, Carlton Zentner and County Board Chairman Sharon Schmeling, ex-officio.

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chairman John Molinaro at 12:09 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Committee members present included Molinaro, Burlingham, Holterman, Nass and Zentner. County staff present were Watkins, Haukom and Staff.

Committee members absent Poulson and Schmeling.

3. Certification of Compliance With Open Meetings Law Requirements

Molinaro and Staff reported that the meeting was being held in compliance with open meetings law requirements.

4. Review of Agenda

There were no changes proposed.

5. Review and Approval of January 14, 2008 Meeting Minutes

Motion by Burlingham/Zentner to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried on a voice vote with no objection. Nass sustained because he was not present at that meeting.

6. Public Comment

Burlingham stated that the Land Trust Alliance has a conference in Chicago on March 28. She passed around the agenda.

Burlingham reported that the federal tax law is being held up in congress with the farm bill and does not know when it will be passed.

7. Discuss and Review presentation from the Farm Forum

Molinaro reported that the Farm Forum went very well. Haukom started off with presentation on the County Land Use Plan. Molinaro gave a short presentation and then Burlingham and Holterman followed up. Molinaro stated that the audience was very positive. Molinaro stated we should start going to Town Boards and presenting the concept.

Holterman arrived at 12:13 pm

Holterman stated she is going to the Town of Watertown tonight.

Burlingham talked about her experience and handed out a fact sheet on how the tax credit works. She stated it was about \$2500 for the appraisal and \$2300 for the Attorney fees. The tax credit can be spread out for 15 years for federal and the state it 30% over 5 years. Burlingham stated in Kentucky that it's more profitable to donate your rights then have them purchased. Zentner pointed out that in the Washington County information, page 52, there is a comparison between the two.

8. Review and Approve County Board Resolution to Commend the UW-Students for the Jefferson County Farmland Preservation Report

Motion by Nass/Holterman to approve as presented; motion carried on a voice vote with no objection.

9. Review, discussion and possible approval of criteria for the Conservation Easement Purchase (See Michigan Agricultural Policies)

Molinaro asked the Commission to open to page 5 of the Michigan Agricultural Policies to start discussion. #1 Agricultural Capacity and Productivity – discussion between the Commission on what is the goal of the program. Zentner stated all monies will go to only the “best” farmland and we should not be discriminate on the type of land being protected. He added that only certain areas of the county would be targeted such as Town of Milford. The majority of the Commission agreed that its goal was to protect the best soils and should be on the list to discuss further. Zentner did not agree.

#2 Conservation Plan or Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan – Commission asked Watkins about how many farms are in FPP. Watkins replied that approximately 65% of Jefferson County's farms are in the Farm Land Preservation Program. Commission agreed that conservation plan would be one of the criteria but not nutrient management plan.

#3 MAEAP – We do not have that program in Wisconsin.

#4 Parcel Size – Discussion between the Commission that we should protect larger parcels because better to farm than smaller parcels. Comment was made that we aren't just preserving larger large farms but smaller farms also. Burlingham said that donation can make up for part of that such as in Kentucky were 10-15 acres do not qualify for PDR but up to this date most of the parcels being preserved are 10-15 acres. Commission agreed that parcel size would be part of the criteria.

#5 Parcel Location – Nass referred to the UW study map showing the urban expansion and where to target areas to preserve. Holterman explained the importance of clustering farmland so farmers can move their equipment a short distance. All members agree this should be concerned but won't know how.

#6 Local Farmland Preservation Commitment – Some Towns have more restrictive land use plan. This shows a local commitment to FPP. Commission agreed it should be a factor but how will be decided later.

#7 Matching Funds – Other matching funds such as DU, Pheasants Forever, etc should get more points. All agreed should be weighted more.

#8 Intergovernmental Cooperation – This would be boundary agreements between cities and townships. Commission agreed this may be a factor, will discuss it more at a later date.

#9 Local Planning Training – Commission thought it was a good idea but did not think it would be good to judge a municipality on this and don't know how many training opportunities there would be. All agreed would not be used as a factor.

#10 Local Capacity to Execute – Is more a state wide concern. Commission agreed not a factor to be weighted.

#11 Local Agricultural Planning – Might come into play if Townships leave County zoning but not a factor at this time.

#12 Agricultural Economic Development Plan -- The County is in the process of an Economic Development Plan. Again probably will be a State concern, not a factor at this point.

Zentner referred to the Town of Dunn requirements and stated they give extra points for landowners that will donate some of their development rights. The Commission discussed this concept. Commission agreed this would be a factor to be weighted. Molinaro asked Staff to send Commission items they agreed to weigh. The Commission should think about how they should be weighted for next meeting.

Commission then discuss that they may have some factors to remove points as seen in the Town of Dunn. For example, remove points if they do not have any building sites available. It was agreed upon that the Commission will discuss parcels already restricted. Maybe the county only pays for appraisal and attorney fees for a permanent easement on already restricted lands. Molinaro asked Staff to provide a list of all frozen parcels.

Nass thought that Historical and Scenic values should also be valued because this would add to quality of life, tourism dollars and environmental qualities. Commission agreed that this may be part of a bonus point system. We discuss it at a later date.

Soil Types

Conservation Plan

Size

Parcel Location (i.e. continuous, close to urban service center, etc.)

Local of FPP Commitment

Matching Funds (other than landowners)
Landowner Donation
Historical, Environmental and Scenic (Bonus Points)
Intergovernmental Cooperation (MAYBE)

10. Report, discuss and possible approval of Wisconsin Working Lands Program

Staff read e-mail received from State on the direction they are going for farmland preservation in the future.

Burlingham contacted Jim Arts, and currently the State is writing a legislative rule for Swarthip monies but at this time no particular group is lobbying for it. October is the WCA conference, we should ask that Counties send resolutions to support the program. At a minimum, our County Board should send a resolution to support it. The Farm Land Commission will need to send e-mails to legislators for support.

11. Review New Applications for Conservation Easements for Donation

a. William and Susan Halser

Watkins contacted the Halser and they were only interested in the purchase of development rights, not donation. Molinaro will write a letter to them and give them Burlingham example. For discussion purposes, Staff handed out a finding of fact to the Commission. Nass explained the form to the Commission.

Commission discussed that there would not be any monies available from the state until at least 2010. Nass stated the Commission needed to 1st deal with donations, then maybe in the near future helps landowners with attorney and appraisal fees and the 3rd step would be receiving state monies.

12. Review and discuss of the Jefferson County Farmland Preservation Report

This item will be placed on next months agenda for discussion.

13. Suggestions for the Next Agenda

Discuss the eight items listed on number 9 and start weighting them.

14. Future Meeting Dates

March 10, 2008

April 14, 2008

15. Adjourn

Motion by Nass/Holterman to adjourn at 2:10 pm. Motion carried on a voice vote with no objection.