

Farmland Conservation Easement Commission

**Jefferson County Courthouse, Room 202
320 S. Main St.
Jefferson, WI 53549**

Monday, May 10, 2010 12:00 pm

Members: Steve Nass, Blane Poulson, Amy Rinard, Margaret Burlingham and Mariah Hadler.

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Molinaro at 12:01 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Commission members present included Molinaro, Rinard, Hadler, Poulson and Burlingham. Nass was absent. County staff present were Steve Grabow (Community Resource Educator, UW-Extension) and Michelle Staff (Zoning Technician, Zoning Department). Also, Jim Welsh, Natural Heritage Land Trust was present.

3. Certification of Compliance with Open Meetings Law Requirements

Staff verified that the meeting was being held in compliance with open meetings law requirements.

4. Election of Officers

A motion was made by Poulson, seconded by Rinard to elect Margaret Burlingham as chair of the Farmland Conservation Easement Commission. The motion carried on a voice vote with no objection.

A motion was made by Paulson, seconded by Burlingham to elect Amy Rinard as vice chair of the Farmland Conservation Easement Commission. The motion carried on a voice vote with no objection.

A motion was made by Poulson, seconded by Rinard to elect Mariah Hadler as secretary of the Farmland Conservation Easement Commission. The motion carried on a voice vote with no objection.

5. Appoint member of the Farmland Conservation Easement Commission to the Farmland Preservation Plan Steering Committee

A motion was made by Poulson, seconded by Rinard to appoint Hadler to the Farmland Preservation Plan Steering Committee. The motion carried on a voice vote with no objection.

6. Public Comment

Tom Lyon e-mailed Staff that he could not make the meeting.

7. Review and Approval of March 8, 2010 and April 21, 2010 Meeting Minutes

Will wait to approve minutes when Nass returns. Staff will put them on the June meeting agenda.

8. Correspondence

None

9. Discussion and possible action on PACE applications

- a. Timothy Hunn (Carol Ann Hunn Joint Revocable Living Trust)
- b. Weenonah Brattset
- c. Robert Schultz

- d. Jonathan Hartwig
- e. Rodell Lea
- f. Dale Neupert
- g. Edward Soleska
- h. Jeffery Hillmann
- i. Greg Wilke

Welsh stated there is a June deadline for the applications of Lea, Schultz and Soleska. Welsh needs a county representative to sign each contract. Molinaro would contact Atty Ristow for a legal opinion on who should sign them. Welsh asked if the County was going to partner with the Natural Heritage Land Trust on the applications. Discussion between the Commission members on the benefits and downfalls of having co-holders. Motion was made by Poulson, seconded by Burlingham to have Natural Heritage be a co-holder on the easements. The motion carried on a voice vote with no objection.

Welsh stated the county is making three applications. Lea's property is 93% working lands and does have three farmsteads on the property. The farmstead to the north and along Lea Lane will be excluded from the easement, the remaining farmstead will be included in the easement. Lea will be giving up 2 land splits, including the remaining farmstead.

Next is the Schultz farm, Welsh stated he would be restricting 3 development rights with the existing farmstead. Welsh noted while on the site visit that there was a lot of junk on the property. Welsh didn't know if the County wanted to deal with this issue before they bought the easement. Staff explained that this has been an ongoing violation with the Zoning Department for many years. Burlingham stated that he has a lot of workland on the property that we would want to preserve. Molinaro stated that these are two separate issues. Preserving the farmland and than the zoning issue which they are handling. Molinaro stated that Zoning should proceed with the junk violation as they normally would. Grabow pointed out when looking at the Farmland Commission Easement criteria we had three qualifying criteria before the detailed criteria; if there was a LCD, FSA, NRCS farm plan and if at some point in time the Commission would like to add to this they may. Molinaro again stated that these are two separate issues. Burlingham suggested that maybe in future application we have a line indicating if there are any outstanding violations on the property. Welsh stated that he wanted the Commission to be aware of the issue.

Welsh moved on to the Soleska property and explained that 80 acres of Soleska land is in CRP and much of the land is in wetlands. Welsh stated that Soleska is applying for this program, the wetland reserve program and is proposing a split on the property. The Commission discussed the property and alternatives in purchasing the development rights. Molinaro states that the Commission could just buy everything north of USH 18, wait until the next enrollment or submit as is and can not split off. Burlingham talked to the State and they would like 50% or more of the land to be workland. Welsh stated that CRP is classified as workland. Staff mentioned that for the State program there is a minimum farm income that must be met before landowners can qualify for the program. Welsh also confirmed this and Molinaro asked if he meets this minimum requirements with the CRP. Welsh said that CRP income is also included in this figure and he asked all applicants this question back in March and they all answered they would. The Commission again discussed more options for the purchase of this farm easement. A motion was made by Molinaro, seconded by Poulson to give Mr. Soleska two options, to either wait until the next application cycle or only put land in the program that is located in the Town of Farmington, approximately 90 acres. The motion carried on a voice vote with no objection.

9. Update and Discussion on new LESA maps

The Commission discussed for the new members the work that Professor Paulsen has done for the Commission and extends their gratitude to him on all the work he has done.

11. Discussion Agricultural Enterprise Areas proposed by DATCP

The Drumlin Area Land Trust is applying for the Agricultural Enterprise Area as proposed by DATCP. Sue Marx from the Drumlin Area Land Trust gave an update on the application to the State. The Land Trust had to revise the map because the area proposed was too close to the Village of Palmyra. Burlingham reported that the State has quite a few applications across the state so the State asked applications to be downsized.

12. Discussion on Chapter 91, State Statutes, Farmland Preservation Program

Staff explained that the bill to delay the conservation fee did not get passed and until the legislative session reconvenes we will not expect any changes to the law. Hadler is the Commission representative for the Farmland Steering Committee but will also have Nass and Rinard on the Committee as members of the Zoning Committee.

13. Discussion and possible action/resolutions for Jefferson County and Towns.

Town of Oakland meets a week from Tuesday, Farmington is tonight and Jefferson has done theirs so we should have them all by June 1.

14. Suggestions for the Next Agenda

There will be three months of minutes because we need to wait for Nass. We will need an update from the Farmland Steering Committee.

15. Future Meeting Dates

Poulson stated that he would like to have the meetings early or later in the day such as 4:00 pm. Wednesday June 9 at 8:30 is agreed upon and Burlingham will contact Nass to see if that works for him.

16. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 1:26 p.m. was made by Poulson, seconded by Rinard. Motion carried on a voice vote with no objection.

Minutes by Michelle Staff, Zoning Department