

Farmland Conservation Easement Commission

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

Wednesday, September 8, 2010 8:30 am

Members: Margaret Burlingham (Chair), Amy Rinard (Vice-Chair), Mariah Hadler (Secretary), Steve Nass and Blane Poulson.

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Burlingham at 8:32 a.m.

2. Roll Call

Commission members present included Burlingham, Nass, Molinaro and Hadler. Commission members absent were Rinard and Poulson. County staff present was Philip Ristow (Corporation Counsel), Mark Watkins (Director, Land and Water Conservation Department) and Michelle Staff (Zoning Technician, Zoning Department).

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. Review of Agenda

No change to the agenda.

5. Public Comment

No public comment. Audience was asked to sign in.

6. Review & Approval of the August 2, 2010 minutes

Motion by Nass, seconded by Hadler to approve the August 2, 2010 minutes. **Motion carried** on a voice vote with no objection.

7. Correspondence

The Wisconsin PACE Council will be meeting in Cambridge, WI with a tour of the Lea farm. Burlingham notified the Watertown Daily Times, Daily Union and the State Farmer of the tour.

8. Discuss Agreement that would obligate the Federal Funds on the Lea and Schultz Conservation Easements

Welsh updated the Commission on the next steps for purchasing the conservation easements on the Lea and Schultz properties. The Federal Government agreed to pay 50%. The State agreed to pay the other 50% of the purchase of the easements but up to 80% of reimbursement costs, which means both easements are 100% grant funded; hopes are to close on them in mid-winter. Welsh handed out to the Commission the environmental assessment for the Schultz property which was required by the Federal Government. The recommendation from that assessment was that before the closing date, the property should be cleaned up of excess junk. Welsh explained that there are three options: removal of the junk, exclude the 5 acres from the easement or include it all with the request for the cleanup. **Motion** by Nass, seconded by Burlingham to require the cleanup of the property by December 15th, 2010 before the closing on the property. **Motion carried** on a voice vote with no objection.

9. Memorandum of Agreement between the County and the Heritage Land Trust on co-holding and monitoring the Conservation Easements.

Burlingham asked Watkins if the Land and Water Conservation Department would be willing to monitor the conservation easements. Watkins stated that they would be willing to do the annual inspection and reporting requirements. A brief discussion was held regarding co-holders of easements. The State of Wisconsin will be a co-holder of the easements but the Federal Government will not be a co-holder unless the County and State fail in the easement; then they will step in.

11. Discuss and possible action on Drumlin Area Land Trust request for a 15% Cost Sharing Request for the purchase of Farmland Conservation Easement

Marx asked the Commission if the \$250,000 was available to non-profits. Welsh stated that the State will be willing to cost share 50% of easements presented by the Drumlin Area Land Trust. Marx stated she is aware of this but wants to know if the County money is available for non-profits. Burlingham explained that the monies available are limited and would like to stretch it as much as possible. Molinaro explained the history of past monies that were available to non-profits from the County. The discussion moved to agenda item number 12.

12. Discuss and develop an application of non-profits for Grant monies for conservation easements.

The Commission had a discussion regarding whether the monies available should be available to non-profits. There was a consensus that monies should be available for non-profits but that there should be an application form for interested parties. The Commission needs a procedure, process to apply and an application. The next question for the Commission is that if the County is going to give grants, will they want to be co-holders on the easements? The Federal Government application for non-profits may be a good place to start.

13. Review and Revise the Farmland Conservation Easement Commission application and criteria sheets for future applications.

Welsh handed out proposed revised application and criteria sheets for the Commission. In the criteria sheet, there were three areas that Welsh discussed with the Commission, #4, #5 and C. There was a brief discussion on the urban service areas and if that criteria should be changed. At this time, the Commission agreed that the urban service areas should not be eligible for the PACE program but may discuss that issue in the future. Welsh asked the Commission if they would want to add a nutrient management plan to the criteria. Watkins explained that livestock producers may have more requirements than crop farmers. Watkins also explained the new requirements with the Farmland Preservation Program. Currently the Commission only asks if applicants have a conservation plan, doesn't mean they are in the Farmland Preservation Program. Commission agreed to just ask the question to the applicant but not to make it part of the criteria. The application fee was to offset the appraisal cost. Molinaro asked for it to be rephrased with that explanation. Other items were briefly discussed. **Motion** by Nass, seconded by Hadler to approve the application as amended today. Motion carried on a voice vote with no objection. **Motion** by Nass, seconded by Hadler that the application deadline be November 1, 2010. Motion carried on a voice vote with no objection.

14. Update from the Steering Committee from the 2010 Farmland Preservation Plan

All Commission members present have been to a quadrant meeting and all were present at the September 2, 2010 Steering Committee meeting.

15. Discussion on Agricultural Enterprise Areas proposed by DATCP

Marx stated that the State has a draft agreement and the landowners within the AEA must sign it.

16. Suggestions for the Next Agenda

Discussion of application process for the non-profits.

17. Future Meeting Dates

Hadler asked if the October 13th meeting could be changed to Monday October 11th at 8:30 am so she could attend. Other future meetings are November 10th at 8:30 am and December 8th at 8:30 am.

WORKSHOP FACILITATED BY STEVE GRABOW

18. Revise the Commission's Overall Strategy/Work Plan for 2010-2011

19. Communication Plan Review

20. Discuss possible signs for farms with the purchase of conservation easements

21. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:30 a.m. was made by Hadler, seconded by Nass. Motion carried on a voice vote with no objection.

Minutes transcribed by Michelle Staff, Zoning Department

Mariah Hadler -- Farmland Conservation Easement Commission Secretary Date