

Farmland Conservation Easement Commission Minutes

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

Monday April 11, 2011 8:30 a.m.

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

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Burlingham at 8:35 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Commission members present included Burlingham, Rinard, Hadler, Nass, Molinaro (ex-officio) and Poulson. County staff present was 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

Burlingham announced that the Land Trust Alliance will be having a national conference in Milwaukee on October 15 & 16, 2011.

6. Review & Approval of the February 14, 2011 minutes

Motion by Rinard, seconded by Poulson to approve the March 14, 2011 minutes. The motion was passed on a voice vote, with no objection.

7. Correspondence

Burlingham received a thank you letter from Bob Wagner, the president of the American Farmland Trust, for sending a letter to Secretary Brancel about the PACE applications.

8. Discuss DATCP/Federal Funding, Closing, Survey, Grant Requirements for the Lea and Schultz Conservation Easements

Lea and Schultz were present. Welsh was present and informed the Commission that the Federal Government approved the Lea appraisal but did not approve the Schultz appraisal due to fact that the land is along the Crawfish River. The federal government will require a new appraisal if the easement is not closed by this month. The question the Commission needs to discuss in the future is that if the DATCP PACE monies do not go through, will the County fund the easements? Lea has indicated that he will be willing to donate some of his easement. Lea will be on public radio talking about his experience with the easement and encouraging farmers to consider it. The County has to close on these easements before December 31, 2011 or they will also lose the federal funding on these two easements.

9. Discussion, Ranking and possible action on PACE applications

All four applicants that were chosen from the 2011 applications were present (Neupert, Gerner, Hookstead and Wilke). Burlingham explained what was happening at the State Legislature and that at this point, all of their applications were on hold until the State budget is passed. She stated that no appraisals had been ordered for these farms and that if the County doesn't do the appraisals, the applicant's money will be returned. Burlingham encouraged the applicants to contact their State representatives and tell them their stories about the PACE program. The applicants were given all the State representative contacts for Jefferson County.

10. Discuss and possibly take action on correspondence with state legislators, DATCP and Friends of Farmland Protection on the Working Lands Initiative PACE program.

Burlingham has gone to the Neenah public hearing for the State Joint Finance Committee, testified that the State should keep PACE program in the law and the State should honor the 16 easements from 2010. In addition, letters will be written to all the State Representatives on the Joint Finance Committee. It was discussed to include the Farm Bureau, Farmland Trust, etc. It was mentioned that Rock County Board passed a resolution to retain the PACE program. The Commission wanted a draft resolution to send to the County Board and asked for it to be on our next meeting. It was commented that it will have to be put on the next Planning and Zoning meeting because the Commission's next meeting was one day before the County Board meeting.

11. Update from the Steering Committee on the 2010 Farmland Preservation Plan and discuss and possibly take action on policies for PACE and donated easements within new land use designations

Nass updated the Committee on the process of the Farmland Preservation Plan. There will be a presentation to the County Board on the plan May 10.

12. Update on Agricultural Enterprise Areas proposed by DATCP

Burlingham stated that there are no bills to eliminate the AEAs. It was mentioned that the Walker Administration supports the AEA concept. Hadler asked the Committee if they should be encouraging AEAs in the County. There was discussion on AEAs in general and no further consensus on Hadler's comment was discussed.

13. Easement Donation Application from Tom & Margaret Burlingham in the Town of Palmyra

Rinard took over as chair. **Motion** by Nass, seconded by Poulson to accept Burlingham's easement. Discussion between the Commissioners on the easement. Burlingham explained the proposed easement and that it is 60 acres with 11.4 that already has a CRP easement. In addition, maps were handled out to the Commission. The motion was passed on a voice vote, with no objection; Burlingham abstained.

Motion by Hadler, seconded by Poulson to reimburse the Burlinghams \$1,000 for the appraisal after the easement is recorded. The motion passed on a voice vote, with no objection; Burlingham abstained.

14. Work Plan, Outreach and Communications Implementation

A) Discussion and development of application for Non-Profits to apply for Grant Monies from Jefferson County and policies

The Commission agreed to use the application as presented for non-profits asking for grant monies.

B) Discuss and possibly take action on brochures, signs, and publicity.

Holly Hartenstein gave the Commission some potential designs for publicity. The Commission reviewed them and discussed the different designs. It was agreed that they will give two designs back to Hartenstein with some color changes and discuss it more at the next meeting.

C) Discussion on farm-related events and Jefferson County Fair materials

Molinaro stated that the County Fair will be held July 6-10 and there will be a limited amount of space available. It was mentioned that Watertown Agribusiness Club will be holding a dairy breakfast on June 18 and 19 at the Dettman farm. Burlingham stated that the Friends of Farmland Protection will be meeting in Madison on April 20th at 1:00 pm if anyone was interested in attending.

15. Future Meeting Dates

May 9, 2011 at 8:30 am, Room 112

June 13, 2011 at 12:30 pm, Room 202

July 11, 2011 at 8:30 am, Room 202

16. Suggestions for the Next Agenda

The Commission asked that the resolution on the PACE Program and the update on the logo be placed on the next agenda.

17. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:32 pm. was made by Hadler, seconded by Rinard. Motion carried on a voice vote with no objection.

Mariah Hadler -- Farmland Conservation Easement Commission Secretary Date

Minutes done by Michelle Staff, Zoning Department