

Farmland Conservation Easement Commission Minutes

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

Monday, September 8, 2008 12:00 pm

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

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Molinaro at 12:04 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Commission members present included Molinaro, Zentner, Burlingham, Holterman and Nass. Members absent Schmeling. County staff present was Michelle Staff.

3. Certification of Compliance With Open Meetings Law Requirements

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

4. Review of Agenda

There were no changes proposed.

5. Review and Approval of August 11, 2008 Meeting Minutes

Motion by Holterman, second by Burlingham to approve the August 11, 2008 minutes as presented. Motion carried on a voice vote with no objection.

Nass arrived at 12:08

6. Public Comment

No public comment.

7. Discussion about Annexation Issues Relative to Farmland

Holterman e-mailed Molinaro about the annexation situation in Johnson Creek. Commission discussed that this area is within the urban growth area and a response may not be appropriate. Commission discussed that the annexation law is flawed and it should be changed. **Motion** made by Zenter/Nass to send a letter to our State Representatives to change the annexation law. Burlingham stated that the Village of Johnson Creek already has 200 acres available that is vacant. Sue Marks who was in the audience, stated that the State of Wisconsin must sign off on the annexation and a letter to the state may be more appropriate. Molinaro

stated that since the property is within the urban growth area, the letter should be general and highlight that there is a problem in the annexation law and that there are lands vacant already annexation. **Motion** made by Zenter/Nass to amend previous motion to send a letter to the Department of Administration with copies to state representatives. Amended motion **carried** on a voice vote with no objection. Commission discussed other contents that should be added to the letter such as it was unfair to make unwilling farmers to be annexed to municipalities. Zentner volunteered to draft a letter and will forward to Staff to send to the Commission. The Commission will discuss the letter next meeting. Original motion **carried** on a voice vote with no objection.

8. **Possible land application for donation of Farmland Conservation Easements**
None at this time.

9. **Discuss Reimbursement of Fees to Landowners Donating Easements**
The Millers have asked to be reimbursed for cost of fees for donating their easement. The County Board will be voting tonight to appropriate \$260,000 to this Commission for the 2009 Budget. If this vote passes, then it will go to the budget process and it also needs to pass at that time. Commission discussed that they would like the interest to go back to the Commission. Molinaro was going to talk to Ristow on this issue. Then the Commission discussed their current operating budget, if there were monies they could use at this time. Molinaro was going to get the financial report for the Commission and see what is available to the Commission. Burlingham stated that fees are also a tax deduction as part of the donation. It cost approximately \$3,000 - \$4,000 for the appraisal and lawyer. Commission talked about putting a cap on how much it will reimburse. It was discussed that \$1,000 would be given to each donation with a total of \$10,000 to be used for this purpose. Nass thought \$1,000 was fine. **Motion** was made by Zenter/Nass to reimburse \$1,000 with a cap of \$10,000 for donations of Conservation Easement and landowners would receive monies upon completion of a donated conservation easement. Holterman asked if this is for next year's budget. Molinaro was going to see what is left in the budget at this time and see if it can be used for this purpose. Motion was **carried** on a voice vote with no objection.

10. **Discuss criteria for the Purchase of Conservation Easements**

Molinaro started the discussion by reviewing the criteria from Pennsylvania's program that Professor Paulson gave to the Commission. Burlingham asked if we could map the criteria we currently have. The Commission discussed giving equal weights for each one of the criteria. Molinaro will give criteria from the July meeting to Paulson and ask for a map. After the Commission reviews the map, they can discuss any changes to the criteria.

11. **Discuss Possible Partners of the Farmland Conservation Easement Commission**

Molinaro states that he has talked to the Town of Oakland which has a stricter

land use plan than the county's and this would be the type of entity that would be a partner. It was discussed that maybe these properties would have more priority than others. Zenter asked if there would be guidelines for partners. Molinaro already talked about partnering with Townships. Zentner asked for a definition of partnership. Commission discussed putting together a list of potential partners. The Commission discussed partners could be financial supporters, influencers, can expand to other organizations, etc. Molinaro will ask Ristow if the Commission can join other organizations such as Gathering Waters. Commission started to name off other organizations that could be partners such as NRCS, Madison Audubon, DNR, Ducks Unlimited, American Land Trust and Pheasants Forever. Molinaro stated the Commission needed to discuss what they needed from these partners such as financial or policy support.

12. Suggestions for the Next Agenda

Discuss partners of the Commission
Review Zentner's letter on annexation.
Relate to Commission the September 29, 2008 WCA meeting
Paulson follow up with map of criteria.

13. Future Meeting Dates

It was discussed that for a future meeting it would be nice to invite a person who has been on the trip east offered by UW-Extension. Staff will not be at the next meeting due to her daughter having a surgery on that day.

- a. November 10, 2008 at Noon Room 202
- b. December 8, 2008 at Noon Room 202

14. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 1:30 p.m. was made by Zentner, seconded by Holterman. Motion carried on a voice vote with no objection.