

Farmland Conservation Easement Commission Minutes

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

Monday, July 14, 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 12:03 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Commission members present included Molinaro, Zentner, Burlingame, Holterman and Nass. Deb Magritz of the Zoning Department was also in attendance.

3. Certification of Compliance With Open Meetings Law Requirements

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

4. Review of Agenda

Molinaro amended the agenda for a correction on item 5. to read "Review and Approval of *June 9*, 2008 Meeting Minutes"

5. Review and Approval of June 9, 2008 Meeting Minutes

Motion by Holterman, second by Burlingham to approve amended minutes reflecting the change of date to June 9, 2008. Motion carried on a voice vote with no objection.

6. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

7. Possible Land Application for Donation of Farmland Conservation Easements

Molinaro reported that Burlingham had delivered an application for donation of 59.2 acres. Burlingham, when asked, stated that the applicants have not yet contacted an appraiser.

Molinaro went on to say that he is aware of interest in the program by more landowners, and that they will be contacted by letter. Discussion ensued regarding a property in the urban service area of the City of Fort Atkinson.

Molinaro will contact John Wilmet to talk about the City's plan for this property. Burlingham spoke to Walter Ciaglo regarding a letter he'd received from the Commission. He spoke with his children, the farm's current owners, and they are not interested in donation at this time.

Another interested party is consulting his son regarding donation.

8. Update on Farm Bill from Corporation Counsel

Molinaro had spoken with Phil Ristow, who was not able to attend the meeting. It was noted that the bill was in effect until 2010.

9. Discuss Criteria for the Purchase of Conservation Easements

Molinaro reminded those present that some points of the Michigan 12-point system were removed from consideration through an earlier discussion. Holterman stated that the modified Michigan system was a good basis from which to start. Theoretically, the Commission could also work from the Vision Statement and Commission Work Plan Outcomes as compiled by Steve Grabow.

Molinaro spoke about county budget shortfalls as explained by the County Administrator, and the fact that the Highway 26 property monies were specifically mentioned.

Molinaro initiated a discussion regarding whether land productivity should be heavily weighted, accounting for perhaps 10% of point totals for the purchase of easements. Ten such categories were considered and discussed; they were:

Productivity – possibly categorizing the land into four classes of soils

Nutrient Management Plan/Conservation Plan – it was recommended that the conservation plan be credited simply as either a yes or no

Parcel Size – properties would be awarded points based upon whether they were 25 acres or less, 26-50 acres, 51-99 acres, or 100 or more acres

Parcel Location – thing to be considered in this category were development pressure, clustering, whether the property adjoins other farmland, and whether it adjoins other farmland either already under easement or with an application for easement

Historic, Scenic and Environmental Considerations – does the property buffer parks and/or public lands

Local Farmland Preservation Commitment – is there local land use planning that limits parcel splits; is there other monetary commitment to purchase of development rights

Matching Funds – perhaps bonus points could be awarded for funds from outside sources such as Pheasants Forever, Ducks Unlimited, Audubon Society, etc.

Easement Donation

Tillable Lands – lands could be categorized as 100% tillable, 75% tillable, 50% tillable, 25% tillable

Percentage of Landowner's Property Proposed for Easement

It was suggested that centennial farms might collect bonus points.

10. Discuss Potential Farmland Advisory Board Members

Persons recommended included Tom Lyons, Jim Mode, Dan Poulson, Tom Novak, Kevin Griswold, Greg Sambs and Bill Rohloff. Holterman will contact Sambs and Griswold to gauge their interest.

Holterman excused herself at 1:40.

11. Discuss Possible Partners of the Farmland Conservation Easement Commission

Mention was made of the local private land trusts as partners.

12. Discuss/Evaluate Responses of Public From Display at County Fair

There was very limited public contact at the fair.

13. Review Zentner Letter for Possible Future Article

It was determined that Zentner's letter was covered in depth with item 9.

14. Discuss Commission Schedule for the Year

Meetings will continue to be held on the second Monday of each month, beginning at 12 p.m.

15. Suggestions for the Next Agenda

There should be continued discussion regarding criteria for the purchase of conservation easements and weighting of those criteria.

16. Future Meeting Dates

- a. August 11, 2008 at Noon **Room 203 – Burlingham will be absent**
- b. September 8, 2008 at Noon Room 202
- c. October 13, 2008 at Noon Room 202
- d. November 10, 2008 at Noon Room 202

17. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 1:48 p.m. was made by Nass, seconded by Burlingham. Motion carried on a voice vote with no objection.