

Farmland Conservation Easement Commission

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

Monday, March 23, 2009 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 12:06 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Commission members present included Molinaro, Schmeling, Holterman, Burlingham, and Zentner. Members absent Nass. County staff present were Steve Grabow (UW-Extension) and Michelle Staff (Zoning).

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 changes were proposed.

5. Review and Approval of January 12, 2009 Meeting Minutes

Motion by Holterman, seconded by Burlingham to approve the January 12, 2009, minutes. **Motion carried** on a voice vote with no objection.

6. Public Comment

None

7. Possible land application for donation of Farmland Conservation Easements

Sue Marx from the Drumlin Area Land Trust was present. The Drumlin Area Land Trust will be purchasing a 260 acre farm which the owners are willing to donate a portion of the easement. They are asking the Farmland Commission to co-purchase this conservation easement with them. Molinaro had two questions for the Commission; 1. Is the Board ready to take on a PDR, right now? 2. Should we know the details of the landowner, such as where is the parcel? The Commission discussed that they would like to start receiving applications in Sept – Nov to possibly start purchasing next spring. Burlingham stated she doesn't know if she could vote favorably for a PDR without knowing the location of it. Marx stated the Land Trust has done two other projects with matching County funds and started with this Commission. Zentner believes the Commission should work with the Land Trust. Molinaro stated that the applicant would have to go

through the same procedure as other applications, have maps, appraisals, County Board approval, etc. Burlingham stated it should be the goal of the Commission to accept easements by mid September to mid April because many of the grant programs deadlines are in April and May. Molinaro asked Marx to go back to the landowners, see if they are willing to give us their names, and if they are willing to wait until next year for possible purchase.

8. Agribusiness Grant

Molinaro read the letter sent by the Agribusiness Club to receive a \$500 grant from the organization.

9. Discuss and review Burlingham meeting with Vicki Elkin and Jim Welch, American Farmland Trust Wisconsin liaison and Development of Commission Overall Strategy/Work Plan Review

Grabow handed the Commission a proposed 2009 Strategies Activity Chart (Timeline and Critical Path). Grabow and Burlingham explained the document to the Commission. The Commission discussed the first strategy on the time line, "Staff/Resources/Consultant Assistance." The Commission discussed hiring a consultant. Molinaro suggested that Jim Welch write a proposal to the Commission with proposed cost to hire them as a consultant for the Commission. Zentner had an objection. He stated that the Commission would start with a new person and start from scratch. Molinaro stated that the Commission could invite him to review this proposal but it doesn't mean that they would agree to it. Molinaro asked Staff to add an agenda item to discuss Mr. Welch's written proposal. Zentner had an objection.

The Commission discussed the next strategy "Detailing the PACE Program Tasks (Emphasis on Criteria)." It was stated that if the Commission receives grants from other organizations, each organization may have separate criteria before they will match the funds. For eligibility, the commission named the Land Conservation Plan, Zoning Ordinance and other Farmland programs. For criteria the Commission named size of parcel, soil quality, % of lands tillable, other preservation, existing easements. Other possible criteria are preservation areas location, water quality, wildlife enhancement areas, number of splits available, cost effectiveness. Molinaro suggested that after the first round of applications, they look at a point system.

The Commission discussed the next strategy "Authority, Configuration and Responsibilities of the Commission." It was suggested that the Commission go back to a 7 member board. Schmeling explained that the reason for the reduction was to match other committees in the county and save on per diems. Authority and responsibility would include fee processes, management of the Commission, etc. Tom Lyon e-mailed the Commission a proposed Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements Program (JCPACE) outline. Lyon read it to the Commission. Burlingham commented that it was a great outline.

The Commission reviewed proposed strategies for March. Molinaro stated that the Commission has accomplished the items for March. They discussed contacting Jim Walch for a proposal and identified target data for accepting

applications for the PACE program. Molinaro asked the Commission if they wanted to weigh the criteria. Burlingham believes there should be some flexibility. Molinaro suggested it be put on next meeting agenda for further discussion. Molinaro asked the Commission to review Lyon's document, the criteria which the commission already discussed, and the Commission Plan.

Motion by Holterman, seconded by Burlingham
Farmland Conservation Easement Commission 2009 Strategies Activity Chart will be a Official working document for the Commission. **Motion carried** on a voice vote with no objection.

10. Discuss Easements within the Urban Service Area

Burlingham explained to the Commission that the new urban service area for the City of Fort Atkinson expands to Star School Rd, and there is a large amount of farmland in that area. The Commission discussed making exceptions on a case by case basis if all municipalities agree with the proposed easement. Molinaro stated we should respect the old urban service areas. Staff mentioned that the current County Land Use Plan encourages development within the urban service areas and buying easements would conflict with the County's current Land Use Plan. Schmeling recommended that this discussion include the Zoning Committee. Marx mentioned to the Commission the possibility of eminent domain and the Commission couldn't protect lands from eminent domain. Molinaro suggested that this subject may require additional discussions and asked Staff to put it on next months agenda.

11. Suggestions for the Next Agenda

Discuss new proposed Working Land Initiative. Any other items listed throughout the meeting to add to the agenda.

12. Future Meeting Dates

Commission agreed the April meeting will be on the 13th at noon. The May meeting will be on the 11th at noon.

13. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 1:59 p.m. was made by Zentner, seconded by Holterman. Motion carried on a voice vote with no objection.

***The Commission may discuss and/or take action on any item specifically listed on the agenda.

Individuals requiring special accommodations for attendance at the meeting should contact the County Administrator at 920-674-7101 24 hours prior to the meeting so appropriate arrangements can be made.

MJS