



Farmland Conservation Easement Commission Minutes

Jefferson County Courthouse, Room 203

320 S. Main St.

Jefferson, WI 53549

Monday, August 13, 2012 12:30 pm

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

1. Call to Order

Burlingham called the meeting to order at 12:32 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Members present were Burlingham, Rinard, Hadler, Nass and Molinaro. Member absent was Poulson. County staff members present were Michelle Staff (Zoning Department) and Gerry Kokkonen (LWCD).

3. Certification of Compliance With Open Meetings Law Requirement

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

4. Review of Agenda

No changes to the agenda.

5. Public Comment

No public comment

6. Communications

Burlingham reported that Rod Lea and she went to the PACE Celebration in Waupaca County which honored the 16 farms that were purchased from State DATCP monies. Burlingham stated that the celebration was organized by the daughters of Brooks Dairy Farm in Waupaca, one of the recipients of the PACE monies. Lea was honored and spoke at the celebration. Burlingham stated that the PACE program needs the younger generation as spokespersons for this program.

Burlingham received a flyer from the Farm Union for a workshop on September 19th about session planning. Burlingham asked Molinaro to post it on the County's Facebook page and Staff to mail out to the landowners that have expressed interest in the PACE program.

Burlingham went to a training presented by the Land Trust Alliance and Gathering Waters on community outreach for PACE programs. Burlingham asked that this item be placed on the next agenda for further discussion.

Hadler went to the Jefferson County Farm Bureau to promote the PACE program. She handed out brochures and did a presentation to the members. Lea was also there and did a presentation.

7. Review & Approval of the July 9, 2012 meeting minutes
Motion by Rinard, seconded by Hadler, to approve the July 9th minutes. Motion carried on a voice vote with no objection.
8. NRCS/Federal update on Conservation Easements
There was a brief discussion on the status of the Farm Bill in Congress. It was noted that Ronald Johnson was against the Farm Bill but Burlingham encouraged the Commission members to still contact his office to express their support of the bill. All other Congresspersons and Senators from Wisconsin were co-sponsors and were in support of the bill.
9. Discussion on State of Wisconsin PACE program Report
No report. This item will be removed from the next agenda.
10. Discussion on Baseline Report Documentation as required by the IRS
Kokkonen introduced himself to the Commission. Kokkonen attended training in Minocqua, WI sponsored by the Land Trust Alliance on baseline reports for PACE easements. Kokkonen handed out a baseline documentation property report checklist. Kokkonen related the standard practice as recommended by the Land Trust Alliance and stated that a baseline report takes approximately 40 to 45 hours to complete. Kokkonen discussed the importance of the information in the baseline report for future enforcement of the easement and possible litigation to enforce the easement if necessary. Kokkonen will e-mail a more detailed policy for baseline studies to the Commission after the meeting. Burlingham asked that this item be placed on next agenda for further discussion on this policy.
11. Discussion and possible action on 2011 PACE applications
Dale Neupert, Jeffrey & Monica Gerner, and Greg Wilke.
Burlingham reported that Caleb Pourchot from Natural Heritage Land Trust updated her about the three potential PACE easements. NRCS is willing to fund all three easements and should be sending the template cooperative agreement to the County to sign within the next couple of weeks. Title searches have been done on all three properties. Burlingham will be sending letters to all three landowners to make sure the lands are free and clear. If they have mortgages, the mortgagees have to sign off on and agree to the easement. Burlingham felt that we should let the landowners know of this ahead of time to get it taken care of.
12. Discussion on Possible 2013 PACE Application Submittal
Commission discussed ways to promote an application period such as press releases, mailings, etc. Staff passed out a breakdown of the costs for the three potential easements for 2012 and the County's cost for the three easements noted above. There was discussion on potential funding from the County for the PACE program. NRCS program is a matching grant so the County would have to provide half of the easement cost. It was noted that if the program could not get any funding, it would be back to only accepting donations.

Burlingham asked the Commission to strategize about possible funding sources and talk more about it next meeting.

13. Commission's Overall Strategy/Work Plan for 2012-2013

Commission agreed it would like an application period for next year. They discussed that they may have some landowners interested and should contact them directly. In addition, the Commission will work with the UW-Extension agent, Heidi Johnson.

14. Future Meeting Dates

Burlingham could not make September 10th meeting due to a planned vacation. The Commission agreed to move the next meeting to September 17th at 12:30 pm. Burlingham stated she had a conflict in October also but will discuss that next meeting.

15. Suggestions for the Next Agenda

There were several suggestions for the next agenda throughout the meeting which were noted in the minutes.

16. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn by Rinard, seconded by Nass. Motion passed on a voice vote with no objection.

Minutes by Michelle Staff, Zoning Technician, Jefferson County Planning and Zoning Department

Secretary Signature

Date