

Farmland Preservation Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes
September 29, 2016
10:00 am
Freund Farm
324 Norfolk Road
East Canaan, Connecticut

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Jim Zeoli, , George Malia, Henry Talmage, , Ben Freund, George Hindinger, Terry Jones

MEMBERS ABSENT: Jim Krissel, , Robin Chesmer, John Guskowski,), Joan Nichols, Joe Bonelli, Lucy Nolan

AGENCY STAFF PRESENT: Commissioner Steven K. Reviczky, Bureau Director Linda Piotrowicz, Jason Bowsza

- 1) CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Zeoli called the meeting to order at 10:12am
- 2) REVIEW OF June 2, 2016 Minutes
 - a. It was moved by Mr. Malia, seconded by Mr. Hindinger, to approve the minutes as presented. Chairman Zeoli asked that the spelling of his name be corrected. The motion passed **UNANIMOUSLY**.
- 3) OLD BUSINESS
 - a. Commissioner's updates
 - i. Commissioner Reviczky provided an update on the state budget situation and its impact on DoAg. Currently, the department has been asked to reduce its General Fund appropriation by 10%. Some savings have been found through attrition, but the agency is trying to maintain funding for its core statutory mission.
 - ii. Mr. Talmage suggested that the department consider privatizing the large animal rescue facility at the York Correctional Institution.
 - iii. Chairman Zeoli asked if increasing fees to cover the costs of services provided was an option.
 - iv. Mr. Freund asked what options are available when an emergency situation arises. Could local farmers be utilized?
 - v. Mr. Talmage asked if the 10% reduction target and attrition will lead to problems filling positions in farmland preservation. Commissioner Reviczky noted that the Farmland Preservation program isn't funded in any way through the General Fund, and that DoAg has submitted a hiring plan to OPM that includes funding positions in Farmland Preservation.
 - vi. Mr. Jones noted that the farmland preservation program is hitting full stride, coming off of a very successful year protecting farms in Connecticut.

- vii. Commissioner Reviczky noted that the sweeps of CIA and the revenue diversion has impacted the department significantly. Discussion ensued around the Community Investment Act.
 - b. Farmland Preservation Update
 - i. Commissioner Reviczky introduced Bureau Director Linda Piotrowicz. Ms. Piotrowicz gave an update on the current project pipeline and where each project currently stands. Mr. Malia noted that the title searches can slow things down when partnering with other entities. Understanding debt leveraging early is a way to streamline the process. Commissioner Reviczky noted that three farms have been preserved already this fiscal year, including Mountain Dairy.
 - ii. Commissioner Reviczky also discussed the work being done by the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection concerning solar projects and their impact on agriculture. Eight hundred acres of prime and important farmland soil have already been impacted, and this is expected to rise to 2,000 acres. Nearly 100% of smaller solar projects are on active farmland. Discussion followed concerning solar projects and the associated assessments, virtual net metering, etc. Commissioner Reviczky noted that Department of Public Utility Control Commissioner Michael Caron is interested in putting together a group to discuss farm energy issues.
 - iii. Commissioner Reviczky suggested that the board may want to consider another field trip, this time to Massachusetts to see other farm energy projects.
 - c. State Owned Farmland Update
 - i. Commissioner Reviczky and Ms. Piotrowicz updated board members on the land trust easement at Southbury Training School, which had been signed earlier in the week. Requests for proposals had been issued for appropriate uses at Southbury Training School.
- 4) NEW BUSINESS
 - a. None at this time
- 5) ADJOURNMENT
 - a. The meeting was adjourned at 11:45a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jason E. Bowsza
Office of the Commissioner