

Farmland Preservation Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes
March 23, 2017
10:00 am
450 Columbus Blvd
Hartford, CT 06103

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Jim Zeoli, Henry Talmage, , Ben Freund, Terry Jones, Joan Nichols, Lucy Nolan, Joe Bonelli

MEMBERS ABSENT: Jim Krissel, Robin Chesmer, George Hindinger, George Malia

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

PUBLIC PRESENT: Clark Chapin, Project Director for Working Lands Alliance

- 1) CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Zeoli called the meeting to order at 10:05 am
- 2) REVIEW OF January 19, 2017 Minutes
 - a. It was moved by Mr. Talmage, seconded by Ms. Nolan, to approve the minutes as amended. The motion passed **UNANIMOUSLY**.
- 3) OLD BUSINESS
 - a. DoAg updates
 - i. Chairman Zeoli noted that John Guskowski has resigned from Farmland Preservation Advisory Board.
 - ii. Farmland Preservation Update
 1. Commissioner Reviczky reported that DoAg has closed on 8 projects this fiscal year, and have another 16 projects that are in the near final stages. Total of 71 active projects equating to about \$40 million in projects.
 2. NRCS has approved a new template deed for use in NRCS-partnered projects. This template has not been approved by the Attorney General as of yet. A statutory change may be necessary. Mr. Jones asked what the likely outcome of this conflict may be.
 3. Commissioner Reviczky walked through the projects that have been successfully completed year to date. Chairman Zeoli was pleased with the commissioner's report.
 4. A discussion ensued pertaining to issues associated with partnership arrangements with NRCS. Mr. Talmage noted that examples like these are going to be important as discussions around the Farm Bill continue.
 5. Commissioner Reviczky reported on the financial positioning of the program, in terms of utilizing federal funding, bond funding and funding provided through the Community Investment Act. Chairman Zeoli asked if it would be possible to have Cam Weimar involved in the FPAB meetings.
 - iii. State-Owned Farmland

1. Commissioner Reviczky provided an update on the farm leases at Southbury Training School (STS), and outlined some of the improvements planned for the property. Commissioner Reviczky reported that DoAg is now in possession of a baseline document for STS as provided by the Southbury Land Trust. The report will not in any way restrict the agricultural use of the property. It was suggested that a future FPAB meeting should take place at STS.
 2. DEEP has completed a dam restoration project on Savin Farm. DoAg has ongoing, long term responsibilities associated with the upkeep of the dam, as well as stewardship associated with recreational activities on the property.
- iv. State Budget
1. Commissioner Reviczky noted that Governor Malloy's budget proposal largely left DoAg harmless. There remain many outstanding, unanswered questions about what the final outcome will be. Commissioner Reviczky also reported on the many vacancies currently within the agency and our efforts to refill them.
 2. Mr. Talmage noted that the governor's proposal no longer sweeps a portion of the Community Investment Act, which is welcomed news, but there is a significant amount of work still to be done.
- 4) NEW BUSINESS
- a. Connecticut Grown magazine
 - i. Commissioner Reviczky presented the first annual Connecticut Grown Magazine, funded through advertisements and highlighting many of the bright spots about Connecticut agriculture, as well as some of the challenges.
 - ii. Copies will be distributed broadly, including to legislative leaders, research offices, public libraries, etc.
 - iii. This will be an annual publication.
 - b. Solar Energy Projects
 - i. Commissioner Reviczky discussed some of the collaborative efforts that have taken place between DoAg and the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) to review solar project proposals and limit the impact on prime and important farmland soils. Mr. Jones stated that DoAg should be applauded for their efforts to preserve prime and important farmland and to steer solar projects away from viable farmland.
- 5) ADJOURNMENT
- a. Motion made by Mr. Talmage, seconded by Mr. Bonelli, to adjourn. Motion carried **unanimously**. The meeting was adjourned at 11:53 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jason E. Bowsza
Office of the Commissioner