

# CT DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

## FARMLAND PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD

### Minutes of Meeting

**June 15, 2011, 9:30am**

CTDoAg large conference room, Hartford, CT

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** George Hindinger, Ben Freund, Joseph Bonelli, Paul Larson, John Guskowski, Lucy Nolan, Jim Krissel, Susan Rose, and Terry Jones

**ALSO PRESENT:** For the Department – Commissioner Steven K. Reviczky, Director J. Dippel, Katherine Winslow, and Denise O’Meara; Others – Henry Talmadge of CT Farm Bureau, Ben Bowell of Working Lands Alliance, and Dan Morley and Tyler Kleykamp both of OPM.

#### I. **Call to Order:**

Chairman Hindinger called the meeting to order at 9:38 a.m.

#### II. **Review of March 13, 2011 minutes:**

The minutes of the March 13, 2011 meeting of the Farmland Preservation Advisory Board (Board) were distributed and approved (Hindinger/Guskowski – Unanimous).

#### III. **Reports:**

1. **OPM- Conservation and Development Policies Plan Update.** Dan Morley, of OPM, passed out a summary that relates to the policy guidelines and requirements towards updating the State’s Conservation & Development Policies Plan for Connecticut, (C&D Plan), due to be submitted for the 2013 Legislative session. Morley discussed the overview of the Conservation and Development Plan, stating that the C&D Plan Process has been a State Statute for 30 years, revised every five years. It is an incentive-based approach to encourage local land use decisions that are consistent with C&D Plan policies. The last C&D Plan Policy was adopted in 2005, however, 2010 revisions have been delayed three years, to be submitted in 2013. Morley discussed changes and goals to the 2005 Plan, regarding priority funding, or target funding the specific resources that mirror the Policy of the Plan; bringing clarity to the Plan, be more measurable with appropriate benchmarks; and get better coordination with the Municipalities. Morley stated that priority areas need to be recognized, and agriculture needs to be viewed as an Industry, and viewed more as a positive aspect of economic development, and not only as a defensive preservation component. Morley discussed the timeline, which is comprised of drafts, allowing for input, and for people to respond, and public hearings before the final submission of the Plan for the Legislative Session in 2013. The initial draft is due September 2011, which allows for people to respond. A second draft, due March 2012, allows the input from municipalities. Morley stated that a letter is going to go to Commissioners within two weeks, requesting a point person be designated for sharing ideas.

#### IV. **Other Business:**

1. **Budget and Legislative Update.** Commissioner Reviczky stated that the Farmland Preservation Program has fared well in the Legislation. The budget included \$10 million for the program in bonding. The Sunset Clause with CIA Funding has been removed, with distributions

reset back to the formula from 2005. The Department will be receiving funds based on the previous 25% formula. The conveyance fee has been raised from \$30 to \$40 dollars, with the extra \$10 dollars to support the Dairy Industry. Legislation has also provided licensing for Farmers Markets. The Commissioner stated that the Community Farm Bill did not go forward. However, he indicated that applications that did not meet minimum criteria of the PDR Program might possibly be considered as trial projects.

**2. FLP Program update summary and related matters.** Director Dippel passed out a status summary of closed and pending farms, and an excel spreadsheet summary showing project timelines. Dippel indicated that the Agency is projecting to close between 20-25 farms this year, on approximately 2,200 to 2,500 acres. Dippel discussed the breakdown of time frames that relate to the acquisition process ranging from the Commissioner's offer to actual closing date, and discussed the variable factors. Dippel stated that most farms are closing within 1 year to 18 months. Acquisitions can be complicated due to title issues, survey boundary disputes, mortgage issues, estates and family situations, etc. He indicated each farm is unique; no two negotiations are the same, with circumstances that can occur beyond the Agency's control. Dippel discussed the Lebanon Agricultural Reserve, (State's Demonstration Farm), and improvements recently done, restoring the barn, updating the milk room, and upgrading the dwelling. Dippel stated that the tenant is interested in processing milk and having groups of people out to the farm to show the benefits of conservation farm practices.

**3. State Owned Farmlands.** Jones stated that the State owns thousands of acres of good farmland. He discussed Southbury Training School, as an example, which is a big entity, comprised of the farm, and the infrastructure of the school. Jones relayed that the Governor wants the Commissioners to look at the school as a whole, due to many moving parts that comprise Southbury Training School. Jones and Commissioner Reviczky cited Newton as an example how not to handle State-Owned property, and a dismantling as such should not be repeated. Reviczky mentioned that prisons and mental health facilities had farms, which are currently leased by DoAg to private farmers, and indicated that the Governor would like to have the inmates and clients farm the land.

**4. Uses of Preserved Farmlands including Greenhouse and Nursery.** Jones stated that a special committee should be formed and report back to the Advisory Board, to identify issues that the Greenhouse and Nursery commodities may have. He indicated it would be important to have outreach education to identify any issues. Commissioner Reviczky indicated that there could be research and study to show ways best management practices can be utilized.

**V. Subcommittee Reports:**

1. **Stewardship and Policy Report.** No report
2. **Community Farms Program Criteria Report.** No report.

**VI. Adjournment:**

Next meeting, Monday, September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2011, 9:30am, at Department of Agriculture, Large Conference Room, Hartford. The meeting was adjourned at 11:10 a.m. (Guszkowski/Larson – Unanimous).

Respectfully submitted by Denise O'Meara.  
Date 6/23/11