

SUSSEX COUNTY AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

MEETING REPORT

FEBRUARY 17, 2015

The meeting opened at 8:03 p.m. by Vice Chairperson Day in the Freeholder Meeting Room at the Sussex County Administrative Center, One Spring Street, Newton, New Jersey. The meeting was held in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-1 of 1975, as amended. Notice has been forwarded to the newspapers and posted on the bulletin board maintained at the Sussex County Administrative Center for public announcement.

**ROLL CALL:**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Lori Day, Vice Chairperson  
Jim Hunt  
Joan Snook Smith

EXCUSED MEMBERS: Jane Brodhecker, Chairperson  
Cece Pattison  
Peter Southway

STAFF PRESENT: Autumn Sylvester, Program Manager  
Rudy Dragan, Planning Aide  
Antoinette Wasiewicz, Recording Secretary

ALSO PRESENT: None

A quorum was not present for this meeting.

**MINUTES CORRECTION/APPROVAL:**

Minutes from the January 20, 2015 meeting could not be approved due to a lack of quorum.

**CORRESPONDENCE:**

A. ARTICLES OF INTEREST:

Legislature approved a measure to allocate \$71 million to Open Space Programs from the Corporate Business Tax. Only \$21 million will go to Farmland Preservation; \$45 million will go to the Green Acres Programs; \$3 million for the Blue Acres; and \$2.1 million for historic structures. Farmland Preservation funding originally had \$146 million and is dropping down to \$21 million and Green Acres had \$218 million and is dropping down to \$45 million. The State Parks and all of the capital budgets will be fully funded.

On February 6, the Frankford Township Committee adopted a Resolution to approve the reintroduction its Open Space tax which would increase local taxes on the average assessed home by \$26.00.

Governor Christie approved a Bill to further compensate property owners who've seen their property values drop under the State's Highlands Region environmental protections. The Bill passed both houses of the legislature in December. New Jersey already had in place a special appraisal process for the property owners, but it expired in 2014. Under the Bill, that process is extended through 2019.

The New Jersey Supreme Court ruled that municipalities are permitted to rezone areas for open space and preservation. The rezoning is not considered a down-zoning or inverse condemnation.

In "This Week in Farm Bureau" an article appeared which said that farm equipment will now be covered by the State's Lemon Law and defective manufacture protection.

Two articles were on the internet relating to Agritourism and Farm Safety. The article about Farm Safety was about integrating safety into agritourism. There were useful resources and tools to help farmers minimize the liability when they have agritourism events on their property. The other article recommended using the off-season to focus on farm safety.

B. RIGHT-TO-FARM OUTREACH:

A letter was received from the SADC looking for recommendations and input from each CADB on the Right-to-Farm Process and Outreach. They asked what audiences would benefit from Right-to-arm Outreach, what topics should be addressed and what type of outreach format would work best.

Lori felt that the appropriate audience for Right-to-Farm issues would be farmers, municipalities and Health Departments. There should be a separate audience of neighbors of farms. The delivery of information (webinar, etc.) would depend on the

audience but she felt a public presentation would be best for most cases. She also said CADB's would benefit from a meeting, especially for mediation training. Ms. Day said their suggestions for 2015 were all good.

C. BOB CANACE RE: CAROUSEL FARMS:

Autumn reported that she received an e-mail from Bob Canace regarding Carousel Farms. Carousel Farms is again interested in preserving their farm at Linn Smith Road. The property owner said there is a bird sanctuary behind them and that it may make their property more desirable.

Joan said what the property owner is describing as the bird sanctuary is the property that Frankford Township had to buy in order to get approvals for the outlet mall at Ross' Corner.

D. BOB CANACE RE: MUNICIPAL PIG APPLICATIONS;

An e-mail was also received from Bob Canace regarding the Dana Ray Farm and the incoming Bert Smith Farm. Eventually, formal language to support both farm will be needed. Autumn reminded the Board that they agreed to provide funds for the Dana Ray Farm.

Joan asked if the Bert Smith Farm would also be a cost-share. Autumn said it would. They just received Green Light Approval on January 30, 2015; however, an agreement has not been worked out yet.

**RIGHT TO FARM:**

None

**AG. AGENT'S REPORT:**

Steve Komar said there were Agritourism Workshops at Hershey, PA and Atlantic City. There will be some web-based workshops on February 26 and again during the first week of March. They are going to do each module online. Steve said he will be presenting the workshops and invited the Board to come to the Rutgers office to watch them.

Steve also said they are going to schedule pesticide credit classes for those who took their pesticide test in his office a few years ago. The test will probably be offered every couple of years.

The Sussex County Community College Ag. Program is moving ahead. Steve said he worked on this program as a consultant. They started working with Rutgers on the articulation agreement for the four-year program. SCCC is one of three County Colleges

in New Jersey that will have a designated Ag. program. One of the programs is not designed to go into an articulation agreement. The Ag. Business Major is more of a local program. The Ag. Horticulture Program is designed to go into a four-year degree.

Freeholder Liaison Vohden asked Steve if he knew when the Farmland Assessment Classes will be held. Steve said he believes the classes are being hosted by Farm Bureau. Autumn said that was correct but that she did not hear anything about a date yet. She will send an e-mail to the Board and Freeholder Vohden when she has a date.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

A. UPDATES ON SOIL DISTURBANCE REGULATIONS:

The Farm Bureau prepared a Resolution regarding the SADC's proposed Soil Disturbance Regulations for preserved farmland. They stated that the adoption of the rules, as they presently are proposed, would threaten current and future viability of the agricultural and horticultural industry. They would like the SADC to acknowledge that only non-ag. development rights are purchased for preserved farms and not the agricultural development rights. It urges the SADC to withdraw the current proposal and adhere to the explicit language in the Deed of Easement.

Autumn said she received this Resolution from a CADB Administrator in Monmouth County. They have been actively involved in this issue because it involves a lot of their equine farming operations and because a lot of their farms provided the baseline data for the report. The Monmouth County ADB is in support of the Farm Bureau Resolution. Autumn reported that other CADB Administrators replied that their Boards were also in support of this Resolution. This Board was not able to make a decision whether or not to support this Resolution due to a lack of a quorum.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

A. FARMLAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM:

Palumbo Application – An application for Farmland Preservation was received from Maria and Peter Palumbo for their farm on Dewitt Road in Wantage. Rudy prepared two maps, one showing all of the wetlands and the woodland acreage on the property. This is a 45-acre farm, 40 of which are classified as woodland and four are tillable today. They grow persimmon trees on the four acres and sugar maples. There are no prime farmland soils or soils of local or State-wide importance. There is a single family dwelling on the property. The landowners are requesting a one-acre, severable exception but they will have to revise this because the area regulations for that zone require a five-acre minimum for a traditional single-family residence. If there are environmental constraints, the minimum lot area is reduced to 2.5 acres. This lot would qualify since more than half is constrained by wetlands.

Autumn said she did a quick build-out of the lot and said that it will require a roadway. Wantage has a 50' right-of-way width minimum. With all of the wetlands on this property, the maximum number of lots is four. (Without the wetlands, there could be eight conforming lots.) There was a brief discussion about this application.

Offer Response Update – Autumn said she spoke with the Systema's today and said that they are declining their offer. Four applicants have accepted their offers so far; we are still waiting to hear back from the State appraiser on the Miskovic application. The Miskovic have concerns about an appraisal they had done when they were settling their father's estate. The Miscovic's were granted an extension of time to accept or decline their bid.

A Resolution for final approval was prepared for the four farms that have accepted their offer. The Resolution will have to be voted upon at the next meeting because of a lack of quorum. Autumn also provided the Board with information on approximate final scores and costs.

Frankford Municipal PIG Green Light Approval – S.C. Farm & Horse Show Association, Inc. – Green Light Approval for the Bert Smith Farm was received on January 30, 2015. Frankford Township is moving along with the appraisals for this property.

Green Municipal PIG Application – Carretta Huntcliff Farm – A copy of the Municipal PIG Application for the Carretta Huntcliff farm was received from Green Township at the end of last week. Green Township submitted the application to the SADC for Green Light Approval. Autumn said this application came out of the town's outreach efforts.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

None

**ADJOURNMENT:**

All business having been completed, the meeting adjourned at 8:37 p.m.