

MEETING MINUTES
BUTLER COUNTY
AGRICULTURAL LAND PRESERVATION BOARD

Farm Service Agency, 625 Evans City Road, Butler 16001

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2021 – 7:00PM

Members In Attendance	Members Absent	Visitors in Attendance
Ken Moniot	Rick Stuchal	
Bill Duncan		
John Allen		
Luke Fritz		
Rob Burr		
Larry Baumgartel		
Alvin Vogel		
Eugene Bergbigler		
Commissioner Kimberly D. Geyer, Ex-Officio		Staff in Attendance
		Sheryl Kelly

The meeting was called to order at 7:05pm by Chairman Ken Moniot on Thursday, February 25, 2021. A quorum was present.

1. Public Comment

- There was no public comment.

2. Commissioner’s Report

- Commissioner Geyer reported on, and answered board member questions on a variety of topics including:

- Solar panels on farms was discussed at the Conservation District meeting earlier that morning. Many farms and municipalities are being approached by solar companies to sell or lease land bringing up questions about hazardous waste, landfilling and recycling the panels when they are no longer operational.

- The county is exploring the possibility of forming a 5-county regional health department.

- In this round of the county’s Infrastructure Bank, there is \$23 million available for municipal water, sewer, road, etc. projects.

- The Glade Run Lake Conservancy has asked for a letter of support from the Board of Commissioners for a DCNR grant. This is being explored.

- The county's new Election Review Commission has met and will review every aspect of the county election system.

- Regarding PennDOT's idea to toll certain bridges in the state, Butler County has not been contacted by about any bridges within the county – the closest seem to be in Allegheny and Clarion counties.

3. Approval of Meeting Minutes

- Chairman Moniot asked for a motion to approve the January meeting minutes. There was a motion by Vice-Chairman Bill Duncan with a second made by Alvin Vogel. All were in favor and the motion was approved.

4. Old Business

- **2019 #1 Thurber Farm** – The Board discussed the difference in the regular appraisal on this farm versus the NRCS-required self-contained appraisal that was completed. There was a motion made by Secretary Rob Burr to table this discussion until the March meeting, seconded by Treasurer Larry Baumgartel. All were in favor and the motion was approved.

- **2020 #2 Foertsch Farm** – Sheryl reported that this farm was approved for easement purchase by the state at their February 18 meeting.

- **2020 #3 Riddle Farm** – Both survey and title work were ordered for this farm.

- **2021 Allocation** - Butler County's 2021 allocation ended up being \$1,527,565. This includes Clinton Township's match of \$150,000. Vice-Chairman Duncan calculated and explained to the board the formula used to calculate the township's portion which ends up being \$851,658 for the countywide program and \$674,562 for the township program. With this, the two Clinton Township farms in the countywide application will be removed and will be handled within the Clinton Township program.

- **2021 Application Round and Ranking** – The Board reviewed the scores and ranking of the 27 applications for 2021. Three were new applications and were visited by some members of the board on February 18 for final scoring. Chairman Moniot asked for a motion to approve the 2021 ranking and proceed with possible easement purchase of the first two farms on the list – Maple Shade Farms and Pizor. There was a motion made by Vice-President Bill Duncan with a second by Luke Fritz. All were in favor and the motion was approved.

- Regarding the Clinton Township program which will be operated through the county board but using only Clinton Township match funding and state allocation generated as a result of this match, Chairman Moniot asked for a motion to proceed with the two Clinton Township farms that are on the 2021 applicant list. A motion was made by Vice-Chairman Bill Duncan with a second by Luke Fritz. All were in favor and the motion was approved. Board member John Allen abstained from this vote.

- **Senate Bill 64** – Sheryl reported that Senate Bill 64 is currently in the Appropriations Committee. This is the bill that the Ag Board voted in opposition to in 2020 and sent letters to all local legislators. The bill if enacted directs a portion of state ag easement purchase funding to land trusts in Pennsylvania for farm preservation. There was a motion made by Vice-Chairman Bill Duncan to send another letter regarding the board’s opposition with a second by John Allen. All were in favor and the motion was approved.

- **Western Pa. Conservancy** – There was discussion on the Board’s visit in 2019 to Western Pa. Conservancy and whether they may have funding available to help with ag preservation in Butler County. Vice-President Duncan made a motion to contact them again with a second by John Allen. All were in favor and the motion was approved.

5. New Business

- **Cooper (2002) Farm** – Mr. Cooper contacted Sheryl about the possibility of building a butcher shop on the federally-funded portion of his farm (easement recorded in 2002) in the previously disturbed area where silos, hay storage area and graveled parking area is off West Liberty Road. Sheryl has already contacted the state about this and whether there might be any federal restrictions. They are getting back to her about this. The board discussed the county regulations regarding Appendix N – Permitted Customary Part-Time Off-Season Minor or Rural Enterprises. Sheryl will send this to Mr. Cooper and wait for a reply from the state. She will also advise him to contact the township regarding land development. There was a motion made by Treasurer Larry Baumgartel with a second by Luke Fritz to table this discussion until March.

- Additional Discussion:

- Board member Luke Fritz reported on a grant received by the Armstrong County Conservation District which is being used to preserve a farm in the Buffalo Creek Watershed. Sheryl will contact Andy Gaver about this and report back to the board with the details.

6. Adjourn

Chairman Moniot called for a motion to adjourn. There was a motion made by Treasurer Larry Baumgartel with a second by Luke Fritz. All were in favor and the motion was approved. The meeting was adjourned at 8:05pm.

Next Meeting:

Thursday, March 25 at the

Farm Service Agency Building, 625 Evans City Road, Butler, PA 16001

Respectfully submitted by Sheryl Kelly for Board Secretary Rob Burr.