

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
*FARMLAND PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD*

**DRAFT**

**Minutes of Meeting, September 30 2015, 10:00am**  
**CT Department of Agriculture, Room 121**  
**165 Capitol Avenue, Hartford**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chairman James Zeoli, John Guskowski, Joe Bonelli, Robin Chesmer, George Hindinger, Terry Jones, Henry Talmage, Joan Nichols, and Ben Freund.

**MEMBERS ABSENT.** George Malia, Lucy Nolan, and Jim Krissel. Henry Talmage and Joan Nichols had to depart during the meeting.

**ALSO PRESENT:** For the Department –Commissioner Reviczky, Bureau Director-Linda Piotrowicz, Director - Cameron Weimar; Others – Sandra Karanian, Secretary, Lisa Bassani of Working Lands Alliance, Dawn McKay of Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, and Kip Kolesinskas

- I. **CALL TO ORDER:** Chairman Zeoli called the meeting to order at 10:11am.
- II. **REVIEW OF March 30, 2015 MINUTES** John Guskowski made a motion, Joe Bonelli seconded to approve the March 30, 2015 meeting minutes. The minutes were unanimously approved by the Board.
- III. **BUSINESS:**
  1. **Commissioner's update**
    - A. **Department of Agriculture.** Commissioner Reviczky explained OPM rescission requests all agencies cut 5% of general fund in current services, equals \$265,000 for Department. Commissioner stated 3 out of 5 farmland preservation employees are from CIA funding. Received letter from First Selectman of Southbury has questions regarding the process for Request for Proposals for Southbury. Received letter from a resident explaining Town of Willington trying to limit someone's ability to remove invasive plants.
    - B. **Governor's Council for Agricultural Development.** The Council holds its meeting next week.
    - C. **Legislative Update.** Commissioner explained nothing to update at this time.
  2. **State Owned Farmland**
    - A. **Regional Market.** Jim Zeoli inquired about a renter at market going out of business, what happened to the square footage? Commissioner explained M&M produce declared bankruptcy. Department did RFP for the vacant space and M&M Wine Grape is tenant. Commissioner explained there is a master plan to maximize the market site, working with DAS and Construction Services on next steps.
    - B. **CT Grown Labels.** Commissioner went to Shelton where Lt. Governor Wyman presented Monahans with signed bill regarding CT grown labelling requirements.
    - C. **Southbury Training School.** Cam explained map provided is agricultural master plan, 12 parcels. Map was part of RFP due October 1<sup>st</sup>. Open house was held on Sept. 12<sup>th</sup>. 16 farms expressed interest in responding to RFP. Commissioner will review proposals. If accepted by farmer and Commissioner, permits go to State Property Review Board then to Attorney General. Hope to have farmers on land by March 2016. Work is needed for water supply – may need new wells, but do not know potential output. Ben advised not to ignore value that current tenant, Ed and Ben Platt, brings to the farm. Terry and George echoed Ben. Terry sees room for keeping Platts while also accommodating other new, beginning farmers. Ben stated Ed Platt would be good mentor.

- D. **Lebanon Agricultural Reserve** - Commissioner explained large dam project, numerous challenges, at intersection of the project is tenants Kim and Mike Abell. There are discussions on who will maintain the dam.

### 3. **Farmland Preservation Program update**

- A. **Director's Update** - Cam described which farms were protected during calendar year and from what funding sources- Beaver Brook Farm was with CIA funding, other six farms through bond funds. Two deeds currently being reviewed at Atty. General Office, two projects being held up at NRCS. Expectation is to close these 4 by year's end. Thirty farms have signed offer agreements. Thirty-seven eligible, active farms not yet to offer stage.

### IV. **OTHER BUSINESS:**

#### **Update from FPAB Sub-Committee on Comparative Farmland Preservation Programs**

J. Guskowski explained a study shows where CT's program sits compared to other states. Most successful states have more partnerships. Guskowski explained what CT has is the acquisition funding for farms, but not for the staff. He explained the study didn't focus on stewardship, can certainly adjust study to pick up 5 or 6 surrounding states. Study focused on lessons we can learn from other states, what is possible within our current statute, and challenges of staff. Guskowski motioned the board to receive the draft report and place on agenda on December 3, 2015. G. Hinderer seconded it. Board unanimously approved. Cam to provide report for the calendar year at each meeting showing the acreage, location, purchase price of closed farms.

Condolences to Terry Jones regarding the loss of his father.

**Meeting Schedule** - B. Freund questioned if a quorum necessary to hold a meeting. Cam explained cannot take action without a quorum. It was decided at the December meeting to approve schedule for 2016 calendar year.

- V. **ADJOURNMENT:** The meeting was adjourned at 12:25 pm. Next meeting December 3, 2015.

Respectfully submitted by Sandra Karanian. Date: September 30, 2015.