



AGRICULTURE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

September 5, 2019

8:00PM

CALL TO ORDER

Bob Puskas called the meeting to order at 8:09PM.

PRESENT

Bob Puskas

Cathy Blumig

Al Puchalek

Craig Feibel

Councilman Ted Chase – Liaison from Township Council

Tara Kenyon, AICP/PP – Land Preservation and Management Consultant

PUBLIC COMMENT

(The meeting will be opened to the Public to provide time for comments and/or questions related to the agenda)

James Harris, local farmer and Franklin resident (221 Bennetts Lane), stated that there is a need for more hunting signage on leased farms.

He also stated that brush from a neighboring property is being pushed on the Toto Property, which is leased by him. Tara Kenyon responded that she will alert Franklin Township's Department of Public Works so that it can be removed.

Mr. Harris inquired about the leasing process for Township-owned lands that are leased to farmers. Tara responded that a new lease template, approved by the AAC and the attorney for the Township, is being rolled out as each lease nears expiration. This new lease will be employed only after all renewal periods are expended.

APPROVAL OF MAY 2019 MEETING MINUTES

Craig Feibel made a motion to approve the April 16, 2019 meeting minutes, which was seconded by Al Puchalek. All agreed and the motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

Updated Farm Leases

Tara informed the Committee that the Kulley lease was out for auction over the last few weeks, as the initial lease and all renewal periods expired. The auction was held earlier today, and awarded to the previous lease, John Drake. The Township did not receive any other responses to the auction. The new lease, approved by this Committee and the attorney for the Township, was used and will be acted upon by the Council in October.

Monitoring Program

Tara informed the Committee that the required monitoring of all Township-held preserved farms will take place in late September/early October. If any member of the Committee is interested in joining Tara for the fieldwork, they should let her know and she will confirm the schedule.

Outreach for Farmland Preservation

Bob Puskas would like to find a way to creatively solicit more farms for our Farmland Preservation Program. He recommended doing an in-person meeting, like an open house, where potential landowners can speak directly with the Open Space Consultant and the Committee. In the past, the Township has sent out individual letters to targeted farm properties, however the response is minimal.

After discussion, the Committee decided to ask Tara to put together a brochure about the Farmland Preservation Program and its benefits. Tara mentioned that she will have an Intern from Rutgers starting next week, and will ask him to start on this. A draft will be presented at the October AAC meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

Franklin Township Municipal Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan

Tara Kenyon updated the Committee that the Plan was adopted by the Franklin Township Planning Board at their August 7th meeting. The final version has been sent to the State Agriculture Development Committee for filing. The next update to the Plan is anticipated in 2029.

Deer Management

Bob Puskas updated the Committee on his work with Rutgers to open up parcels in the Hutchenson Memorial Forest for bow hunting. He and Tara met with staff from Rutgers earlier today and finalized the application for hunters. These applications will be forwarded to Rutgers, with the Township copied. All hunters will be required to follow the State rules, submit a valid hunting license, provide insurance (with Rutgers and the Township held harmless) and pass a proficiency test. Rutgers hopes to be able to begin this hunting program in mid-October.

Farmers Market

Tara Kenyon reported that there are just two weeks left in the Farmers Market for this season.

A mid-season meeting was held on September 9, 2019 with the Farmers Market Committee. The following items were discussed/decided upon:

- The fee shuttle transportation has not been used by the public as much as anticipated. Due to the costs associated with the shuttle driver, gas and maintenance of the shuttle, the Farmers Market Committee recommends the discontinuation of this service.
- Tara suggested moving the Market to a weekday instead of a Saturday, as the Municipal Complex has much more vehicular and pedestrian traffic during the week. The Committee did not want to move the Market and prefers to keep it on Saturdays for next season.
- Tara suggested that the Market begin at least a week later for opening day so that the vendors have more produce to sell and so that it does not coincide with National Trails Day. The Committee agreed so opening day will be moved to the second or third week of June.
- The Committee suggests that the signage be paired down in terms of verbiage. The recommendation is that the signs read "Farmers Market – Saturdays – June – September". Staff feels that the signs should be consistent with the format used by Recreation (Event, Date, Times, Location, Logo). It was agreed that a mock-up of the signage will be shared with the Committee prior to printing.

- There is a need for more vendors. Staff will continue to reach out to vendors for the next season.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Al Puchalek made a motion to open the public portion of the meeting, which was seconded by Cathy Blumig. All agreed and the Committee entered Executive Session to discuss current and potential land negotiations.

Following the business addressed in Executive Session, Craig Feibel made a motion to close the public portion of the meeting, which was seconded by Cathy Blumig. All agreed and the Committee entered back into the public session of the meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Craig Feibel made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Cathy Blumig. All agreed and the meeting closed at 9:20PM.