

Millstone Township Agricultural Advisory Council

Meeting Minutes

April 7, 2014

Mr. Asprocolas called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm.

The Secretary read the adequate notice.

Roll Call

Present: (4) Asprocolas, Butch, Dancer, Pinhas

Absent: (2) Peck, Posten

Approval of Minutes

A Motion was made by Ms. Butch with a Second offered by Mr. Dancer to approve the March 3, 2014, minutes.

AYES: (3) Butch, Dancer, Asprocolas

NAYS: (0)

ABSTAIN: (0)

Public Comment: No comments from public in attendance.

Correspondence

- Ordinance No. 14-02 had its second reading and was adopted at the March 19th Township Committee meeting. The Ordinance amends the responsibilities of the Ag Council.

Old Business

- **Large Animal OEM Plan:** Nothing new to report.
- **Farm Leases:** A letter was sent to Mr. Porutski, of the NJ DEP, on January 16, 2014, regarding the status of Final Management and Use Agreement and the proposed farm lease for the Lichtman property. A response has not been received.
- **Horse Keeping Businesses and New Jersey Sales and Use Tax:** Assemblyman Dancer introduced legislation that would exempt stable stall rentals from sales tax. The bill, A-4479, has not been voted on yet.
- **Baird Homestead Project:** Ms. Butch provided an update on the project. The contractor will break ground within the next two weeks for the foundations for the barn and carriage house. The bid was renegotiated and all foundations will be poured at the same time which will save time on the project. A group of youth volunteers worked in the greenhouse filling in holes, leveling ground and pulling weeds. The greenhouse is now ready for a delivery of donated stone.
- **Farmland Preservation Process:** Ms. Butch explained the Ag Council's responsibility regarding the farmland preservation process. The Ag Council will be responsible for ordering appraisals for applications that receive Green Light Approval from the SADC and will move the application through the process to closing. There is a difference of opinion among members of the Township Committee regarding how the Open Space Council will be involved in the farmland preservation process. Committeewoman Grbelja will attend the May Ag Council meeting to address the Ag Council's responsibilities regarding the farmland preservation process. Ms. Butch informed Council members that she was contacted by the State and the Township has additional funding in their Municipal Planning Incentive Grant allotment that may allow the Township to preserve one additional farm.
- **Land Conservation Rally:** This year's rally was held on Saturday, March 22nd, in Piscataway. Ms. Butch, Mr. Asprocolas, Mr. Peck and Ms. Maher attended the rally.

Mr. Asprocolas and Mr. Peck attended a land acquisition workshop, which went through the details of real estate transactions from negotiating the contract through to closing; Ms. Butch attended the workshop on non-contiguous clustering; Ms. Maher attended the Hot Topics in Farmland Preservation, which covered emerging policy issues.

Events

- **8th Annual Clambake Fundraiser:** The Clambake will be held on Sunday, June 8th, at Wagner Farm Park. Mr. Denardo of the Open Space Council will be chairing the event this year. Mr. Asprocolas will supply his grill. The Secretary will contact the Allentown High School FFA regarding volunteers to assist with the event.

New Business

- **Board of Governors Meeting:** Ms. Butch and Ms. Compton, of the Board of Managers' Budget and Advocacy Committee, met with Gerald Harvey, Chair of the Board of Governors, presented an annual report and requested to be put on the agenda and to speak at the April 1st Board of Governors meeting. Mr. Harvey provided Ms. Butch and Ms. Compton with a proposed resolution from the April 1st Board of Governor's meeting agenda and explained that he felt he had the votes required to pass the resolution. The resolution would change the method of nominating members to the Board of Managers by eliminating nominations made by county boards of agriculture and seeking nominations from county freeholders and regional organizations. Ms. Butch explained that the proposed resolution would allow NJAES Executive Director Goodman to hand pick and appoint members to the Board of Managers. Ms. Butch further explained that Mr. Goodman is looking for representation on the Board of Managers in areas such as obesity, food science and public policy and is moving away from production agriculture. Ms. Butch and Ms. Compton contacted several elected officials and organizations to voice concerns about the proposed resolution and to request that the resolution be tabled pending further discussion and input from the members of the agriculture industry. The proposed resolution was pulled from the Board of Governor's agenda. Assemblyman Dancer is preparing legislation to ensure the selection process for the Board of Managers is always an elected process to prevent this situation from happening again. This topic was covered in the March 28th edition of the Farm Bureau's newsletter.
- **Agricultural Tourism Activities and Events:** The Senate version of the bill is S-837 and the Assembly's version is A-1272. Ms. Butch provided a copy of the legislation, which extends Right-to-Farm protections to certain agricultural tourism activities and events, for Council review. Copies of letters from the President of the State Board of Agriculture and the President of the New Jersey Farm Bureau were also provided for Council review. The letters express concerns and opposition to the legislation in its current form.
- **Farm Lease Renegotiation:** Council members discussed the bidding process and terms of municipal farm leases. The Ag Council had the opportunity to review and provide recommendations for the current municipal farm leases. After considerable discussion, the consensus of the Council is that municipal farm leases should not be renegotiated midway through the lease term. Providing the lessee with the ability to renegotiate the lease would be unfair to other bidders and potential bidders.

At 8:01 pm, Ms. Butch made a Motion with a Second offered by Mr. Dancer to move to executive session for the purpose of discussing the current farmland preservation application.

At 8:20 pm the Council returned to open session. Having no further business to discuss, a Motion to adjourn was made by Ms. Pinhas with a Second offered by Mr. Dancer and by unanimous vote the meeting adjourned at 8:20 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lorraine Maher
Council Secretary