

FLORENCE COUNTY LAND CONSERVATION DEPARTMENT



501 Lake Avenue, Room #249 Courthouse
P.O. Box 410, Florence, WI 54121
PH: 715-528-5940
Administrative Support Supervisor: Rich Wolosyn
Department Administrator: Margie Yadro

Minutes of Land Conservation meeting March 7, 2016

Ed Wenger called the meeting to order at 6:30 P. M.

Members present: Ed Wenger, Ed Kelley, Yvonne Van Pembrook, Jeanette Bomberg, Susan Theer, Gary Steber and Kim Broullire

Others present: Margie Yadro, Rich Wolosyn, Celie Borndal and Michael Stinebrink, NRCS

Kim Broullire moved to approve the agenda, second by Gary Steber, all voted aye. Motion carried.

Susan Theer moved to approve the minutes of the meeting held on February 1, 2016, second by Gary Steber, all vote aye. Motion carried.

Agency Partner Reports/Open Forum

Rich Wolosyn reported that Michael Stinebrink from NRCS indicated he would attend this meeting, however; he must be arriving late. Ed Wenger stated we can keep this open for his arrival.

County Conservatationist Summary

Wolosyn reported he attended a farm management update workshop on February 25, 2016 and reported on the Farmland Preservation Plan update. One producer presented the following question, if a landowner wants to withdraw from an Agriculture Enterprise Area (AEA) agreement prior to the agreement expiring, what would happen? Wolosyn sent the question to Katy Vosburg – DATCP and received the following response: The way an AEA application works is a minimum of 5 landowners need to get together to petition in support of an AEA. The more landowners that sign a petition in support of an AEA, the more likely it is to be designated (keep in mind, not all of the landowners who sign a petition in support or whose land is covered by an AEA have to be farmers). Once that petition is submitted to the department, it is reviewed by a group of external parties that will make a recommendation to the DATCP Secretary on whether a given petition should or should not be designated.

Once an AEA is designated, it in effect establishes a boundary, however it does not impose land use restrictions by itself. Landowners within that boundary become eligible to apply for a farmland preservation agreement with the state, thereby establishing eligibility to get the tax credit, however not every individual who signs the petition in support of the AEA has to sign an agreement. The agreement is the element that implements a land use restriction. A landowner who has not signed an agreement will not have to do anything to personally withdraw support of an AEA. However if a landowner who had an agreement wanted to nullify the terms of that agreement before it expired, they would be required to buy out.

The issue here is that the landowner is interpreting the AEA itself as a contract. The AEA establishes a foundation for landowners to voluntarily apply for a Farmland Preservation Agreement which stipulates the landowner will keep their land in agriculture for 15 years.

Discussion/Action: Farmland Preservation Plan (FPP)

Wolosyn presented the committee with an updated draft Farmland Preservation Plan map and public lands map. The draft Farmland Preservation Plan map represents the land that is called out in the text of the draft Farmland Preservation Plan. Some minor mapping errors were mentioned by committee members. Wolosyn was aware of some and will fix the errors during the planning process. The next step is presenting this to the towns. March 14, 2014 is the first meeting scheduled with the Town of Florence.

Discussion/Action: Grant funded projects and proposals

Wolosyn is working with Margie Yadro on the annual report for 2015 and is preparing the 2017 grant application with the new grant application work plan for 2016. All is due no later than April 15, 2016. Wolosyn wants to submit by the end of March in case there is some fix-up on the submittal. The new work plan appears to support the Florence County Land & Water Resource Management Plan and may extend the plan from five years to ten years.

Michael Stinebrink and Celie Borndal – NRCS arrived, Michael introduced Celie to the committee and then provided a NRCS update. Michael covered staffing additions, Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). The RCPP is a special effort to build young forest for wildlife. Celie gave a short report on her background with a forestry education and the position with NRCS. The committee welcomed Celie to the County.

Discussion/Action: regarding legislation addressing pollinator decline, Yvonne VanPembrook motioned to prepare a County resolution addressing pollinator decline, second by Kim Broullire. All voted aye. Wolosyn will prepare the resolution using the outline as presented.

Discussion/Action: regarding the summer employment opportunities in the Land Conservation Department. Moved by Jeanette Bomberg, to proceed with the advertising for summer employment, second by Gary Steber. All voted aye. Motion carried.

Discussion/Action: February Expense Vouchers–

Ed Kelley moved to send the vouchers to Audit and Budget, second by Gary Steber. All vote aye.

Future Agenda Items/Upcoming Meetings

Yvonne Van Pembrook said she had deep concern with the Land Conservation Department staffing and the possibility of losing grant money. Jeanette Bomberg stated, this is a personal issue due to a Family Medical Leave request and the county is doing the best we can. Wolosyn said he is committed to keeping the program going and at the current funding level or improving on it. Also, there was a possibility of the Land Conservation Office being closed for a period of time. Jeanette Bomberg stated, that is all that is going to be said about the issue as this was a closed session item.

Set next meeting date and call for Adjournment

Moved by Yvonne Van Pembrook to adjourn to April 4, 2016, second by Gary Steber. All voted aye.

Respectfully submitted,

Rich Wolosyn
Administrative Support Supervisor