

FARMLAND PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

Wednesday, October 13 2010

Administrative Building Conference Room 3330 – 3rd Floor

10:30 AM – 11:44 AM

MEMBERS PRESENT: Tina Wehrs; John Lautz; Keith Valiquette; Mike Weibel; Marilyn Pedretti; Ilona Hansen; Don Bina

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Mike Dummer; Deena Murphy

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

STAFF & GUESTS: Charles Handy; Gregg Stangl; Karl Green

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL 10:35 by Chair – Tina Wehrs

Minutes could not be approved as they were not on the Agenda – enter them on next month's agenda to be approved.

INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME – Skipped

REPORT ON PACE COUNCIL MEETING

Mike Dummer is on PACE Council and was at the meeting.

The council reviewed the letter we drafted and sent; it was part of their packet of materials.

Considered number of different recommendations:

- They DID NOT accept the geographic area discussion – they felt that by making other adjustments they could deal with distributing PACE grants throughout the state;
- They DID NOT approve – it was moved and seconded but denied to add points to people that applied again;
- They DID approve reducing the double counting of the scoring points in the criteria for soils for high quality soils – removed scoring for percentage of forest land;
- They DID take a number of the applicants and redistribute them based on the new proposed criteria and we would have received one with the new proposed scoring criteria – Paul Wehrs/Standing Rock Farms application would have been accepted;
- For a farm to have a standing at the state, scoring would have to be in the 80s or at least very high 70s.

Discussion on whether Charlie should be promoting or educating more farmers about the program.

- Time/Staff constraints;
- This spring Charlie spent about 20 hours per application;
- This year will be more competitive as there will be more applications state wide – bar will be very high;
- Is their staff for this committee to try and get the most successful applications;
- Important to let applicants know up front what the standard is and what their chances are of getting approved – allow them to apply with a score of 75 or above. If they are under 75 we would not spend a lot of time on those as they have a very slim chance
- Charlie meets with each applicant.

One area La Crosse County fell short on the applications was question 9 where the farmer had to answer in narrative format. Waupaca County had assistance in the drafting of their narratives. – They are farmers they don't have any English degree. Should we work with others to help our farmers with their narratives? General consensus is to go ahead and look for students to help out with this.

Does Extension have any resources in helping those people draft those narratives? Karl will check into that.

Time line: November is when they will advertise for applications which are due in February.

Is it possible to have an example to give people for the narrative portion of the application?

General consensus is that is a good idea. Outline you can give them so they have some idea of what they should be writing down.

DISCUSSION REGARDING AG ENTERPRISE AREAS

One very interested group of landowners talking about Ag Enterprise Area (AEA) in La Crosse County – Charlie has copies of very preliminary draft of the start of their AEA petition – this would be Mike Dummer's Farm/Dummer Family Farm, Babcock Genetics, Dave Paudler, Dick Knutson, McHugh Farm– Town of Holland owns land that is conserved as Prairie and the US Fish and Wildlife Service has significant area of land that surrounds this entire AEA. AEA petition training session DATCP is coming up to the Town of Holland, potentially on November 10 to have a training session from 12:30 – 3:45.

Benefits of being in an Ag Enterprise Area:

- Communicating with each other as farmers and talking about Agri Business as an important role and how they work together as farmers in that Ag Enterprise Area; that communication is real important
- Make a verbal commitment or a petition commitment to preserve their farmland
- 15 year petition, but doesn't hold anybody to anything – has no teeth in it
- \$2.50 per acre additional in Farmland Preservation tax credits so that brings them up from \$7.50 per acre to \$10 per acre
- Score additional points on their PACE application – they get 10 more points

Ag Enterprise Areas are one of the tools for preserving farmland and for working with some land owners to get an education.

GOAL SETTING EXERCISE: UPDATE OF FARMLAND PRESERVATION PLAN

The idea at this point is to start the actual drafting of the amendment to the Farmland Preservation Plan.

Charlie's recommendation is to plan a public involvement meeting, or a few public involvement meetings to set goals for the Plan update. Discussion on public participation, committee recommended three (3) meetings consisting of three (3) areas - middle, northern and southern parts of the county.

ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

Approve Minutes from August 17th and October 13th Meetings and take out Welcome and Introductions.

SET UP NEXT MEETING

Thursday, November 11th – 1:30 to 3:00

Motion Hansen/Bina to adjourn at 11:44 AM.

7 aye – 0 no – 2 excused (Dummer, Murphy) motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 11:44 AM

*The above minutes may be approved, amended, or corrected at the next committee meeting
Annette Kirchhoff, Recorder*