

AGRICULTURAL LAND PRESERVATION COMMISSION

MINUTES OF THE MARCH 10, 2005 MEETING

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT: Mike Sullivan, Dave Wallace, Everett Stuart, Kevin Nelson, Jim Opaluch, Ken Ayars (for Acting Director Vincent, DEM)

COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT: Bob Sutton, Judy Bailey, Jason Pezzullo

STAFF PRESENT: Vicky Drew, USDA/NRCS

GUESTS:

The meeting began at 5:10 pm at USDA, 60 Quaker Lane, Warwick.

The meeting agenda was amended to delete Election of Officers (this item conducted at the February meeting, and left on the March Agenda in error).

Kevin Nelson made a motion, seconded by Jim Opaluch, to approve the minutes of the February 17, 2005 meeting with amendments. The motion passed unanimously.

The Commission discussed Separation of Powers bills in the General Assembly which reference the Commission. Provisions of various bills range from just replacing the two legislative members to putting the Commission within DEM, and having several members also employees of DEM etc. Jim Opaluch made a motion, seconded by Kevin Nelson that the Chairman be authorized to testify on the Commission's behalf in favor of its current independent standing. The motion passed unanimously.

The Cousineau Farm, Richmond was discussed and scored. Mike Sullivan spoke to the Richmond Land Trust in this regard, who expressed no significant interest in actively seeking protection of the farm. The farm was scored and achieved a primary score of 8.33. Secondary scoring was not completed as the highest achievable score (10) would not be sufficient for acceptance into the program, based on the primary score of 8.33 (cutoff is 24.0 points).

The Rambone Farm, Foster was discussed. Ken Ayars has had several recent discussions with the Rambones and USDA (who hold the mortgage), and there was a recent article in the Providence Journal on the possible foreclosure on the farm. The Rambones are considering another application for the sale of development rights to the Commission. The Commission scored the farm over one year ago, and it did not receive a high enough score for acceptance into the program. The Commission reviewed the previous application, and asked staff to obtain additional soils information etc. for possible scoring of an updated application at the next meeting. Kevin Nelson made a motion, seconded by Dave Wallace, to defer scoring of the Rambone Farm until the next meeting of the Commission. The motion passed

unanimously. The Commission also agreed the Chair should write a letter to USDA stating their interest in re-scoring the farm for possible development rights acquisition.

The Jevne Farm, N. Smithfield was discussed and application for development rights handed out to members. The farm will be scored at the next meeting.

The Commission discussed farms in negotiation:

Green, N. Smithfield – Purchase and sale agreement signed, proceeding with survey, title etc.

Lebreaux, Tiverton – Undergoing appraisal by the Nature Conservancy.

Richmond, L. Compton – No recent discussions with family. Commission has agreed to continue negotiations under the proposed conservation plan, with plan details to be refined in concert with DEM and The Nature Conservancy.

Manfredi, Westerly – The Weekapaug Foundation for Conservation will take the lead on discussions with family. Commission to allocate \$250,000.

Escobar, Portsmouth - Appraisal recently received, reviewed and approved by DEM. Commission has approved allocation of \$500,000, and USDA approximately \$900,000. The Aquidneck Island Land Trust is in the process of raising additional funds.

Salisbury, Scituate – Appraisal being updated to include an additional 21 acres of woodland, per request of Salisbury.

Knight, Scituate - The Knights have approved an offer of the appraised value of 2.2 million for development rights to the farm (approximately 85 acres). The Commission previously authorized a commitment of \$500,000 and has received a grant from USDA for \$350,000. The Nature Conservancy will participate in funding the project, and there will be discussions with the Town of Scituate in this regard.

Pancieria, Hopkinton – Purchase and sale agreement signed, survey complete. Pancieria's are waiting for approval of a wetlands permit from DEM before subdivision of one house lot is allowed by the Town, which is the final step before closing.

Tuckahoe Turf, Richmond – Application approved by Commission at the January, 2005 meeting. A meeting was recently held with Steve Donahue, Tuckahoe Turf, DEM, the Water Resources Board (WRB) and Nature Conservancy to coordinate regarding funding the project, and discuss in particular the issue of WRB proposed public water supply wells on the property in relation to farm usage of ground and surface waters for irrigation. It was agreed that the WRB will look into a separate easement on the parcel(s) of the farm where the Board has interest in placing wells for public water supply, to avoid a conflict with the development rights easement.

J. Peckham, Tiverton – Offer letter being prepared by DEM.

Wallace, So, Kingstown – No resolution, though continuing discussions between Wallace and Cottrell regarding boundary issue. Any further progress on sale of development rights dependant on resolution first of boundary issue.

Smith, Gloucester – appraisal to be amended to include additional 4 acres.

Ceppi, Jamestown – Undergoing appraisal.

Neale, Jamestown – Undergoing appraisal.

Dutra, Jamestown – Undergoing appraisal

L. Peckham, Tiverton – Undergoing Appraisal

Hibbad, Tiverton – Undergoing Appraisal.

Smith, Tiverton – Eric and Catherine Watne seek to purchase the Smith farm contingent and in collaboration with the offer by the Tiverton Land Trust and Commission to purchase the development rights to the farm for \$100,000 (Tiverton Land Trust and Commission each contributing \$50,000). Discussions ongoing between Smith, Watnes and Tiverton Land Trust.

The Federal Farmland Protection Program application is being prepared for submission to USDA/NRCS, due by April 5, 2005. Vicky Drew mentioned that a previous grant from NRCS to the Commission for the Manfredi Farm, Westerly, must be used to protect the farm or transferred to and used in another applicable project by September 30, 2005

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kenneth D. Ayars, Chief
Division of Agriculture, RIDEM