



AGRICULTURAL LANDS PRESERVATION COMMISSION (ALPC)
MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 26, 2015 MEETING

DRAFT

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT: George Mason, Kevin Nelson, Martha Neale, Dave Wallace, Fay Strongin. Michelle Sheehan voted on behalf of K. Ayars and presented Letter of Delegated Authority to do so.

COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT: Everett Stuart, Jon Reiner, Will Wright

STAFF: Lauren Farley – DEM, Mike Kenyon – USDA / NRCS, Michelle Sheehan - DEM

The meeting was called to order at 4:07 pm at USDA, 60 Quaker Lane, Warwick, RI by G. Mason, Chair.

On a motion by K. Nelson and a second by M. Neale, the Commission voted unanimously to accept the minutes of the September 17, 2014 and December 18, 2014 meetings.

(G. Mason abstained)

Setting the ALPC Schedule for 2015 Commission meeting dates for the remainder of 2015 will be on the fourth Thursday of each month at 4:00 pm in the conference room of USDA, 60 Quaker Lane, Warwick RI.

ALPC Budget

M. Sheehan gave an update on the ALPC budget. The current balance is \$5,127,500 and includes: Fiscal Year 2015 bond apportionment (\$1.5 million), current project and overhead commitments (\$1,480,000) and \$3 million apportionment due July 1, 2015. Current project commitments are \$150,000 to Rippin in N. Kingstown, \$395,000 to Bettencourt in Tiverton, \$550,000 to Bailey, \$185,000 to Regnier/Fletcher Road, and \$200,000 to Whaley Farm in South Kingstown. Current overhead commitments (appraisals and survey) total \$85,000.

Bettencourt: Bettencourt Lane, Tiverton. Request to increase ALPC contribution. NRCS FRPP funding was forfeited due to onsite issues and ALPC funds are needed to cover shortfall. Staff is confident environmental issues will be mitigated using NRCS

EQIP funding in upcoming years. Additional ALPC funding required is \$257,500 for a total of \$395,000 ALPC contribution.

St. Marys: East Main Rd, Portsmouth. Request to accept into ALPC and contribute funds. Aquidneck Land Trust had to forfeit NRCS funding to an appraisal issue and are seeking additional \$200,000 to cover shortfall. This project was previously scored by ALPC and achieved a score of 49.3.

On a motion by G. Mason and a second by K.Nelson, the Commission voted unanimously to increase ALPC funding for Bettencourt and to accept St. Mary's into ALPC and contribute \$200,000 to the project.

Westerly Land Trust: Request for ALPC acceptance of the donation of Development Rights to the Madison property, 149 South Woody Hill Road in Westerly. This property did not meet minimum of 35 points to be accepted into ALPC. Westerly Land Trust has requested that ALPC accept a donation of a conservation easement on the property. WLT is in the process of purchasing the fee title, and cannot hold both the fee and the conservation easement interest. . ALPC will be required to monitor the property. The Westerly Land Trust plans to maintain the fields in active agricultural use via a lease. G. Mason reported that ALPC has the statutory ability to accept donations. On a motion by D. Wallace and a second by M. Neale, the Commission voted unanimously accept the donation of conservation easement.

Payne Farm: Payne Farm Rd, New Shoreham. Request to erect a barn and bury utility lines L. Farley informed commission of request by C. Payne to run underground utility lines on her farm. The property currently has no electricity. Plan entails digging three foot deep ditch from Lakeside drive 2,700 feet along right-of-way terminating at AP 10 Lot 23-1. C. Payne has future plans to erect barn in designated building envelope west of 3.4 acres excluded from easement. On a motion by K. Nelson and a second by D. Wallace, the Commission voted unanimously to approve underground utility lines and to approve the conceptual plan for a barn subject to final plans being presented prior to construction.

Status of Farms in Negotiation

M. Sheehan provided a brief summary of current active projects:

- 1.) Bettencourt: Bettencourt Lane, Tiverton – Will close in March
- 2.) Rippin: 100 Lafayette Road, North Kingstown – Project led by NK, completing final NRCS requirements. Will likely close by May.
- 3.) Hibbad: 273 Puncatest Neck Road, Tiverton - February 2015 appraisal came in , staff is awaiting response from landowners.
- 4.) Pippin Orchard: 751 Pippin Orchard Road, Cranston – February 2015 appraisal came in low, unlikely to move forward

Review easement monitoring plan and schedule – Farms that received NRCS funding were all monitored in 2014 and compliant with NRCS rules. Farms without NRCS funding will be monitored every three years in accordance with ALPC Rules and Regulations. Monitoring will start this year on a staggered schedule by Division of Agriculture staff and local partners.

Compliance with RIGL 42-82-2 and ALPC Rules and Regulations – Brief discussion of statutory compliance of commission in regards to Code of Ethics, Access to Public Records and Open Meetings Act. K. Nelson distributed guidelines and information about aforementioned. M. Sheehan will schedule upcoming training for new members.

Farmland Bond/Acquisition Program: update on creation of rules and regulations – Rules and regulations are in initial discussions. There will be open meetings involving all stakeholders to develop processes. Issues include ways to identify prospective farms, farmers, their qualifications, and mechanisms to keep farmland affordable. Different models of similar programs have been researched. Anyone with an interest in program aspects is invited to participate.

NRCS Agricultural Conservation Easement Program: update on application deadline and new rules – M. Kenyon shared information about changes to ACEP-ALE program (formerly FRPP). New rules of 2014 Farm Bill program changes are due to be released within days. There will be a public comment period. NRCS National Office is reviewing current application and entities are encouraged to submit projects.

Update on the 100th Protected Farm celebration planning – Plans are in the works for a celebration of 100th protected farm in April. Events will include a visit to Lial Farm and speaking program at Hope & Main culinary business incubator in Warren.

Respectfully submitted,

Lauren Farley
Division of Planning and Development
RIDEM