

MEETING MINUTES
BUTLER COUNTY
AGRICULTURAL LAND PRESERVATION BOARD

Farm Service Agency, 625 Evans City Road, Butler 16001

THURSDAY, AUGUST 24, 2023 – 7:00PM

Members In Attendance	Members Absent	Visitors in Attendance
Ken Moniot, Chairman	Rick Stuchal	
Bill Duncan, Vice-Chairman	Larry Baumgartel, Treasurer	
Alvin Vogel		
Rob Burr, Secretary		
Luke Fritz		
John Allen		
Eugene Bergbigler		
		Staff in Attendance
Commissioner Kimberly D. Geyer – Ex Officio		Sheryl Kelly

The meeting was called to order at 7:05pm by Chairman Ken Moniot on Thursday, August 24, 2023. A quorum was present.

1. Public Comment

- There was no public comment.

2. Commissioner’s Report

- Commissioner Geyer reported on the following:

- The Commissioners attended the Farm Bureau meeting on August 18 and toured Bill Duncan’s elk farm.
- The state budget has been approved with the following allocations: Conservation Districts =\$10.2m, Agriculture =\$34m, Farmland Preservation =\$43m (+ federal funding =\$6m), County Fairs =\$4m. The state DEP has a shortage of 41 positions they have been unable to fill for job types such as engineers and technicians.
- On Tuesday the Commissioners met with Penn State Extension on their work program for 2024.
- 4-H is planning a fall event.
- On the state level, the Senate will return on September 18 and the House on the 26th.

3. Approval of Meeting Minutes

- Chairman Moniot asked if the Board reviewed the July meeting minutes and if there were any comments or corrections needed and if not, for a motion to approve. There was a motion made by

Eugene Bergbigler to accept the minutes with a second made by Luke Fritz. All were in favor and the motion was approved.

4. Old Business

- 2022 #1 Flinner and 2022 #3 Hartzell

- Sheryl reported that we are still waiting on checks to arrive from the state for easement closing.

- Clinton Twp. 2021 #1 Allen

- The Allens are still working on addressing an issue with the state that is delaying the easement closing.

- 2023 #1 Graham, 2023 #2 Misera, and Clinton Twp. 2023 #1 Edwards

- The Grahams have accepted the Board's offer and Sheryl has ordered the survey and title work for the farm. She will be submitting the agreement of sale and other paperwork to them in the coming days.
- The survey for the Misera farm has not yet been received and title work will be finalized once that is submitted.
- The deficiencies that were found in the Edwards counter-appraisal are being addressed by their appraiser, but not yet submitted for review so the board could take no action. The deadline for the counter-appraisal receipt is 120 days from June 26, or October 24.

- Priority Area Discussion

- The State Office of Farmland Preservation had proposed using the land use map in the County Comprehensive Plan, however this map needs to be updated so there was discussion on continuing to rely on the current map in the Butler County Ag Preservation Guidelines and changing some scoring criteria. After discussion, the Board made the following decisions:
 - After discussing factor #4 under "Clustering Potential," and a possible change to the factor from soils to agricultural security areas, a motion was made by Luke Fritz to table the discussion until the next meeting. There was a second made by Secretary Rob Burr. All were in favor and the motion was approved.
 - Luke Fritz made a motion to change factor #1 under scoring "Clustering Potential," to refer to "Consistency with Ag Board Priority Area Map," eliminating reference to "County Comprehensive Plan" and adding reference to Appendix "O" in the county Program Guidelines. This includes changing the scoring as follows: 20 points for a tract located in an area designated as "Priority Ag Townships," and zero points for a tract not located in an area designated as a "Priority Ag Township." There was a second made by Secretary Rob Burr. All were in favor and the motion was approved.

- The Board revisited factor #4 under “Clustering Potential” and the possibility of keeping the soils factor with some changes to how the score wording appears so that it coincides with NRCS terminology. Luke Fritz made a motion to change the current four scores to three as follows: 20 points for majority “Prime” soils, 15 points for majority “Soils of Statewide Importance,” and 10 points for majority “Other Class 1 through IV Soils that are not designated by NRCS as Prime or Soils of Statewide Importance.” There was a second made by Alvin Vogel. All were in favor and the motion was approved.
- With this discussion, the only changes to scoring being proposed at this time, and subject to State Board approval, will be under Clustering Potential and under Factors #1 and #4. The maximum a farm can earn in this category will be 100 points, as required by the law. Sheryl will submit this to the State Board for their consideration at the October meeting.

- Rural Enterprise Discussion

- Following feedback from the State Office of Farmland Preservation on the Board’s proposed changes to Rural Enterprise (Appendix N) requirements, a few small changes were required that were reviewed by the County Board. Secretary Rob Burr made a motion to accept the state-suggested changes as-is and a second was made by Vice-Chairman Bill Duncan. All were in favor and the motion was approved. Sheryl will submit the final changes for State Board consideration at their October meeting.

5. New Business

- The Board discussed their 2024 meeting schedule and Sheryl reported that the Ag Service Center has offered use of the building in 2024 for Board meetings. Vice-Chairman Bill Duncan voted to keep the same schedule for 2024 (fourth Thursday of each month except for November and December which will be the third Thursday), 7:00pm at the USDA Service Center. There was a second made by Eugene Bergbigler. All were in favor and the motion was approved.

6. Adjourn

- Chairman Moniot called for a motion to adjourn. There was a motion made by Vice-Chairman Duncan with a second by Luke Fritz. All were in favor and the motion was approved. The meeting was adjourned at 7:50 pm.

Next Meeting:

**September 28, 2023 at the
Farm Service Agency Building, 625 Evans City Road, Butler, PA 16001**

Respectfully submitted by Sheryl Kelly for Board Secretary Rob Burr.