

**OHIO FARMLAND PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD  
MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING**

**Ohio Department of Agriculture  
Reynoldsburg, Ohio  
August 29, 2013**

**Minutes taken by Amanda Bennett**

\*Disclaimer: Many individual opinions have been captured by the recorder but do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the entire Advisory Board.

**Advisory Board Members present:** John Schlichter, Chair; Brian Williams, Vice-Chair (arrived at 10:25 a.m.); John Detrick (arrived at 10:25 a.m.); Lucille Hastings; Dean LaRue; Timothy Lynch; Thom Mazur; Jay Rausch; Roger Rhonemus; John Watkins.

**ODA Staff Members present:** Howard Wise, Assistant Director; Julie Phillips, Assistant Chief Legal Counsel; Denise Franz King, Executive Director, Office of Farmland Preservation (OFP); Amanda Bennett, OFP; Jody Bowen, OFP.

**Visitors:** Charlie Guarino and Patrick Hornschemeier, Southern Ohio Farmland Preservation Association; Jim Spurgat and Bill Roshak, West Central Ohio Land Conservancy; Steve Goodwin, Appalachia Ohio Alliance; Liz Woedl, Three Valley Conservation Trust; Julia Cumming, Madison County SWCD (on behalf of the Madison County Board of Commissioners); Michele Burns, Tecumseh Land Trust; Maryanna Biggio, Killbuck Watershed Land Trust; Rob Krain and Mike Powell, Black Swamp Conservancy.

**Opening Remarks**

An informal welcome was provided by Howard Wise, Assistant Director of the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA). He felt it was time to “pass the baton” as Chairman of the Advisory Board to Deputy Director John Schlichter. Howard has been very appreciative of the interest shown by John in the efforts of the Office of Farmland Preservation (OFP). Howard also thanked the staff of the OFP and Julie Phillips, Assistant Chief Legal Counsel for ODA, for taking on the challenge of implementing the localized agricultural easement purchase program he proposed.

The Meeting was called to order at 10:05 a.m. by John Schlichter, Chair and Deputy Director of the ODA. John S. thanked Howard and all in attendance wished Howard a Happy Birthday. John S. introduced new Board member John Watkins, representing Northwest Ohio Farmers. John W. shared that he is pleased with this opportunity to serve.

## **Approval of August 1, 2013 Advisory Board Minutes**

MOTION: Lucille Hastings moved to approve the August 1, 2013 Advisory Board meeting minutes as presented. John Detrick seconded; Vote 9-0; motion carried.

## **Travel Expense Reports**

Jody Bowen reminded Advisory Board members about Travel Expense Reports.

## **Local Agricultural Easement Purchase Program (LAEPP) Landowner Applications Recommended by Local Sponsors**

Denise King thanked Howard for being the driving force behind the pilot funding round of the LAEPP. Howard knew the OFP could pull it off, and we are now pleased to be reaping the rewards of that work. Denise also asked each visitor to introduce themselves and share which organization they were representing.

Denise then described the document provided to the Board showing each local sponsor's landowner rankings. She noted that Board members would see wide ranges in total points and landowner donation percentages. Each ranking shows the payment plan that the local sponsor plans to use in acquiring the agricultural easement, including ODA's contribution, the local sponsor's contribution (if applicable), and the contribution of the Federal Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP), if applicable. Not all local sponsors have elected to apply their landowner applications to FRPP this funding round, but the OFP will continue to encourage participation.

Appalachia Ohio Alliance (AOA) – Denise mentioned that the landowner application submitted by AOA would result in an agricultural easement in a new county (Pickaway), and that the farm contains an Indian mound. Steve Goodwin, representing AOA, added that their landowner has sustainable farm operations and has other farms they are considering applying to LAEPP in the future.

Fairfield County Commissioners – Denise explained that the local sponsor representative could not be here, but that all available ODA funds are being put towards the Wiley/Berry property because the farms scoring higher were too expensive to be purchased with available funds.

Killbuck Watershed Land Trust – Denise shared that the local sponsor submitted three applications for approval, and they are expecting to fund the top two farms, utilizing every penny of their ODA award to do so.

Licking County Soil and Water Conservation District – Denise mentioned that they submitted four applications, and the organization is focusing on preserving their highest scoring application. Jay Rausch noted that Licking SWCD may not utilize every ODA dollar, and asked what becomes of the left over money. Denise answered that the funds will be added to a future funding round.

Madison County Commissioners – Denise explained that Madison County will be utilizing FRPP dollars in hopes of preserving at least their top two farms, Bumgardner and Hunter. The Bumgardner farm received the highest score of all the farms this funding round.

Owl Creek Conservancy/Philander Chase Corporation – Denise mentioned the unique circumstances of funding for their one submitted property. In addition to their entire ODA award, Philander Chase will be contributing additional funds from their own organization to purchase the agricultural easement. Denise noted this was the only organization she was aware of that had the ability to reimburse their landowners for their landowner contribution.

Southern Ohio Farmland Preservation Association (SOFPA) – Denise explained that SOFPA is looking to fund two of their three submitted applications, and is still considering an application to FRPP. Roger Rhonemus asked the SOFPA representatives which counties their applications come from. Patrick from SOFPA said that the top two applications were from Highland County, and the backup farm is from Brown County.

Three Valley Conservation Trust (TVCT) – Denise noted that TVCT demonstrates the true value of extending the ODA dollar utilizing FRPP. While the process may seem more complicated, the value is demonstrated by all of the applications they are seeking to fund during the 2013 LAEPP. Denise noted that one landowner turned down their offer because they were not expecting to be funded and wished to complete their estate planning before reapplying to the LAEPP. Liz from TVCT added that she met with Matt Harbage at FRPP and highly recommends working with FRPP to bring in more farms.

West Central Ohio Land Conservancy (WCOLC) – Jim Spurgat and Bill Roshak, representatives of WCOLC, explained that their highest scoring property (Schmitmeyer) is a grain and dairy operation, and that they have other family members possibly interested in applying in the future. Their backup farm (Miller) is in Allen County, a new area for LAEPP. They mentioned that Amanda Wischmeyer from their organization could not be in attendance today, but was instrumental in pulling the applications together. Finally, Jim and Bill noted the high market values in their area (\$5,000+/acre).

Western Reserve Land Conservancy (WRLC) – Denise explained that while WRLC applied to represent 16 counties, there were only able to submit one application for consideration. They hope to do more outreach and improve their number of applicants in future funding rounds.

Black Swamp Conservancy (BSC) – Denise mentioned that BSC is putting their entire ODA award into one 544 acre agricultural easement, in conjunction with funding they previously received through reimbursement under the FRPP.

Ohio Valley Conservation Coalition (OVCC) – Denise explained that the organization applied to represent three counties in 2013 LAEPP – Jackson, Gallia, and Lawrence. They received three applications, all from Jackson County. This is a brand new area for the program, and OVCC intends to utilize every dollar of their award in preserving all

three. Denise noted that two of the applications are from the same landowner (Ruhl). She recommended that the Board consider allowing both Ruhl properties to be funded in 2013, since OVCC is looking to utilize every dollar of their ODA award and because this is a new local sponsor. Denise also mentioned that the scores are lower on these applications due to factors like soils, amount of landowner donation (all were 25%), and lack of proximity to already-preserved property.

### **Board Discussion and Recommendations**

MOTION: Roger Rhonemus moved that the Ohio Farmland Preservation Board recommend approval of the applications as presented for funding in the *Proposed 2013 Clean Ohio Local AEPP Applications Local Sponsor Cumulative Report for Advisory Board Meeting 08/29/2013 by Local Sponsor – Rank* document. Lucille seconded; Vote 9-0; motion carried.

Brian Williams said he was pleased to see Jackson County become a part of the program; it was one of the goals of the LAEPP to recognize locally important agriculture.

### **2014 LAEPP Application for Local Sponsor Certification**

Denise presented the LAEPP Application for Local Sponsor Certification to the Board. Since the next Board meeting will not be until December, the OFP is seeking the recommendation of the Board today in order to open the Local Sponsor Certification Application period in October, per the timeline provided to the Board. Denise highlighted changes made in the 2014 application: total staff (to better understand staff capacity); removal of a question about the Memorandum of Agreement (no longer a requirement); and a new question asking how many counties the organization serves statewide. Denise mentioned that more clarification was provided on the nonprofit requirements section of the application, and that the maps in the Service Area Statistics section are being updated for the new funding round. Denise told the local sponsors present that it is the intention of the OFP to work with them to not make them unnecessarily resubmit documents they already submitted under the 2013 LAEPP when at all possible.

MOTION: Tim Lynch moved to recommend approval of the Application for Local Sponsor Certification as presented. Jay Rausch seconded; Vote 9-0; motion carried.

### **Public Comments**

None.

### **Announcements**

Denise shared that the Technical Meeting is scheduled for September 10, 2013 at ODA. It is a chance for the OFP to hear from local sponsors that participated (and potential future local sponsors) what worked and what didn't under the pilot LAEPP.

Denise again drew the Board's attention to the proposed timeline for the 2014 LAEPP. More detail will be added to the timeline as it develops (deadlines for submitting proposed local Step 14 questions, for instance). Denise mentioned that Rob Krain was the only local sponsor that utilized a localized Step 14 in the 2013 LAEPP, she looks forward to hearing from him at the Technical Meeting how that process went. Rob said he learned some lessons and looks forward to sharing with the group.

Denise thanked John S. and Howard for additional office space that the OFP has acquired.

Roger said he believes history was made today by moving into new areas of the state. He is proud to be a part of it. John D. agreed with Roger, noting that the program has seen an increase in participating counties. He hopes efforts continue to reach out to other counties, such as Logan and Champaign. He would be happy to help talk to other County Commissioners about the program. Brian would like to see Logan, Union, and Champaign converge their farmland preservation efforts since those counties do other things collaboratively already. Denise added that the OFP has been making presentations to some Boards of County Commissioners, and welcomes this Board's suggestions of organizations to speak to. Lucille noted there are still new counties to reach out to, but is happy to see new people involved this year. She asked Jody to prepare a new Advisory Board roster and a contact sheet of local sponsors that applied this year. Jody said she would prepare and distribute these to the Board.

Steve from AOA announced that he and Denise would be speaking together at a farmland preservation town hall presented by a State Representative in Marion County.

John S. shared that there will be farmland preservation information available at the upcoming Farm Science Review, and noted that the Coalition of Ohio Land Trusts would also be on site at the Farm Science Review, promoting farmland preservation.

Brian said planning is underway on the next Ohio Farmland Preservation Summit, tentatively scheduled for late January or early February. Planning committee members include Katie Myers at Countrywide Conservancy and Mike Hogan with OSU Extension. They are considering a keynote on farm succession planning, and expect to keep a two-track system (one for landowners, one for practitioners). He encouraged Board members to share their ideas about potential Farmland Ambassador Award nominees. Denise asked that potential nominations be sent to her as the Director must approve. Finally, they intend to honor farmland preservation champions lost during the last year (such as Roger Wolfe, Bob Teater, and Tom Spellmire).

## **Adjournment**

MOTION: Lucille Hastings moved to adjourn the Board meeting at 11:00 a.m. John Detrick seconded; Vote 9-0; motion carried.