

Township of Franklin Agricultural Advisory Committee
Meeting of September 11, 2023 minutes

In attendance (6) Michelle Doyle, Ralph Travaglione, Kelly Welsh, Harry Lucas, Jim Ketchum, Cindy Roberts.

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Michelle Doyle at 7:00 PM after the Flag Salute. OPMAC guidelines were adhered to.

The minutes of the last meeting (July 10, 2023) were approved.

FARM PRESERVATION STATUS

Ralph relayed Ken Atkinson's report

Farms That Are Talking To Our Facilitator To Start Preservation:

Grochowski Farm. 260 acres Block 1902 lot 1 on Fries Mill Rd. This farm is zoned Business Mixed Use and is not in any of our Project Areas. This farm is on hold while a solar option on the land is in effect-until 2023. There has been no contact since February 2019. At the May Zoning Board meeting, Gloucester Solar LLC, appeared on behalf of the Grochowski family for a Conceptual non-formal Application to see if Solar was an accepted use in the Business Mixed Use Zone (BMUO). Under NJ Zoning 66.11, solar is an accepted use in any Industrial Zone. The applicant asked our Board if our BMUO zone included industrial uses. The Board voted 4-3 no, that the language in our BMUO zone does not include Industrial uses and therefore does not accept solar as an accepted use and that any solar applicant would have to come in front of the Board and request a use variance for solar. Recent activity: Ralph attended a County meeting on June 13th for this property. Gloucester Solar LLC wishes to construct a underground transmission line on County owned property in conjunction with Green Acres (Scotland Run Park) and is seeking approvals. A lawsuit between Gloucester Solar and Twp. of Franklin Zoning board is awaiting a final decision. If approvals are achieved, this parcel will be developed as a solar field. We discussed the Solar aspect today.

Rohs Farm. 30 acres Block 6805 lot 30 on Forest Grove Rd. This farm is zoned RA and is in our PIG area. We informed him that we will be ready to assist him when he feels that the time is appropriate. There has been no contact since November 2020 until Ralph spoke to the applicant in January 2023. No recent activity.

Jeff Faubell Farm. 78 acres. Block 702 lots 14 & 15 on Malaga Rd in the Janvier Project Area. Zoned PRR. This farm qualifies as a Direct Easement with the SADC. Mr. Faubell will consider an application in the future. No recent activity. Shane Garrett farm. Grant Ave. Not in County or Township's ADA. They need to clear cut 1-3 acres to comply for tillable acres and then the County may amend their ADA to include their horse farm in 2024. Cindy Roberts reported that they would have to include an "Animal Waste Management Plan" since they board about 30 horses on their farm. No recent activity.

Previtera Farm. 28 acres. Block 7002 lot 11. Catawba Ave. Forest Grove Project Area, RA. Ken and Ralph met with the owner on July 27, 2022 to discuss the preservation process. They appeared in front of the Zoning Board for approvals for Marijuana Farming on May 2, 2023. The NJ CDC handbook states that Marijuana Farming should only be in the Industrial Zoned areas in municipalities. A variance would be required for this project. Close to 100 town's people were in attendance of the meeting. Zoning Board unanimously voted to reject the application. No recent Preservation activity.

Andy Zenger has a 52 acre farm on Stanton Ave. Block 1101, lot 105. This farm is not in the Township's ADA but is in the County's. Information has been forwarded to Eric Agren at the County. No recent activity.

Nixholm Reality. 67 acres Block 6805, lots 25-29 in Q farm, Airport, Harding Highway, Downtown. The owner talked to Cindy Roberts in June and early November 2022 and is interested. The Q farm portion of the airport is zoned Light Manufacturing (LM). This farm is large enough for a SADC Direct Easement. Mr. Nixholm indicated that his contract for the VOR (communications tower) with the FAA was normally a 3-4 year contract, and now it is a yearly contract. He has spoken to a potential buyer for the tract. Cindy Roberts is working with the potential applicant. No recent activity.

Carlino Farm. 20 acres Block 6804 lots 27 & 29, Forest Grove Rd, Forest Grove Project Area. Ken and Ralph met with the applicant on June 6, 2023. He currently is talking to the County Tax Assessor to review his total acreage after a recent subdivision. No recent activity.

DiGioia Farm. 15 acres Block 6401 lot 11 zoned PRR, Dutch Mill Rd, Main/Piney Hollow Project Area. They received an application on October 9, 2019. We contacted them in January 2020. They did not respond until early October 2022.

Ken and Ralph visited with them on April 26, 2023 to discuss their application. They are now evaluating their exception option. No recent activity.

FARMS THAT HAVE GREEN LIGHT APPROVAL ONLY

None.

FARMS THAT HAVE BEEN APPRAISED AND CERTIFIED

Thies Farm. 79 acres. Block 5802 lot 22 on Dutch Mill & Lake Rds. Main Piney Hollow Area. Zoned PRR & PAP. A 1 acre non severable exception on Lake Rd. They received their Green Light Approval on June 6, 2022. New appraisal work needed to be revised by one of the appraisers. It needed to meet the correct standards for properties that have PDC's. We received their CMV on 6/27/23 and Ralph reviewed it with the applicants on August 27, 2023 after many delays to meet. Thies stated that our map has incorrectly indicated where they would like a 1 acre non severable exception. Cindy suggested that the applicant amend their letter of acceptance to indicate a new location for their exception. Settlement may occur mid 2024.

FARMS THAT HAVE BEEN SURVEYED

Martorano Farm. 138 acres, 38 acres clear. Block 5901-Lots 8, 90, 92, 94, 96, 79.01. Farm is located both on Tuckahoe and Main Roads in our Main/Piney Hollow PIG area. It is in the Pinelands PRR (3.4) acre zone. They first contacted the County in June of 2019. Their application received a Green Light Review on 10-5-21. Martorano has agreed to preservation after a CMV of December 21, 2022. Survey work is about complete. Final SADC approvals should occur on September 21. Township is expected to execute a Grant Agreement on September 26th. Settlement should occur in Spring 2024.

LaRose Farm, 18 acres on Dutch Mill and Tuckahoe Rds. Block 5802 Lot 1. The SADC certified their appraisal on February 28, 2020, and we were unable to go to settlement by 2-28-22, so updated appraisals were ordered. In early September '22, a new application was completed on the LaRose Farm. The SADC issued a new Green Light Review on September 20, 2022 and the SADC issued a new CMV (Dec. 21, 2022) with the new owner. Survey work is complete. SADC final approval should be September 21. Settlement should occur by year's end. Township is expected to execute a Grant Agreement on September 26th. Applicant first contacted AAC in July of 2017.

Bellone Farm. Block 6805 lot 4.01 is 32 acres.
Block 6805 lot 6 is about 18 acres.
Phil Danko Farm. Block 6805 lot 3 is 31 acres.

All three farms are on Harding Highway in the DOWNTOWN area and the front 300 feet of these farms are zoned Highway-Commercial. Their applications were signed on July 22, 2021, and received a Green Light Review on 10-5-21.

The CMV for these farms was re-certified in September 2022. On December 1, 2022, Survey work for the Danko farm had to be updated to include the pump house utility poles and well. The SADC has requested that the applicant combine their lots at settlement with the SADC preparing the consolidation. Settlement on these farms should occur by October, On August 10, Cindy, Ken and Ralph walked both farms for final baseline inspection. Township is expected to execute a Grant Agreement on September 26th for both farms. Applicant first contacted AAC in March of 2017.

Graiff Farm. 22acres. Block 5701 lot 84 on Central Ave. in the Central Project Area. They agreed to a 1 acre non-severable exception on their farm. Green Light approval on April 19, 2022. CMV August 19, 2022. SADC final approval June 22nd. Cindy, Ken, and Ralph walked the farm for SADC's final baseline inspection. Township is expected to execute a Grant Agreement on September 26th. Settlement should occur mid October, 2023.

OTHER WORK

Ken has had numerous correspondences with representatives of the Township's Administrative and Finance Offices, the Township's Municipal Solicitor, representatives from the Township Planning Board, and the Secretary from the Township's AAC on the projects and other items indicated in his Activity Report. He continues to have frequent contact with representatives of the SADC and the Gloucester County Office of Land Preservation to ensure that all of the projects being administered through Franklin Township's Municipal Farmland Preservation Program meet all requirements and protocols.

SADC REPORT

Cindy is working with Eric at the County on the Warren Nothnick Farm in Malaga on Nothnick La. SADC Legal may cost share, Ag buffers were erroneously placed by a prior Franklin Township subdivision, Settlement is soon.

Cindy would like to promote a Direct Easement Program with the larger farms (greater than 63 acres) in our Township. The SADC has the funds. With a SADC acquisition, there is no cost share with the Township. She is currently working with Nixholm Realty. 67 acres Block 6805 lots 25-29 in Q farm at the Downtown Airport. Zoned Light Manufacturing (LM).

The new SADC Soil Protection Standards will have a Public Comment meeting September 27th from 6-9pm. Over 2,000 farms have been preserved in NJ and all of them recently received a map of their farms showing their current soil disturbance. Limits of 12% for most farms will be the maximum impervious cover.

Cindy reviewed an Excel Spreadsheet on current activities and expenses.

The SADC has hired more personnel to develop a program to assist new, young people (next generation) who would like to purchase a farm and start a farm operation.

The next meeting will be held November 13, 2023 at 7:00pm.

Meeting adjourned 8:20pm

Respectfully submitted,

Ralph Travaglione

Secretary