



Agriculture Advisory Committee Minutes
Thursday, January 18, 2018
8:00 PM

PRESENT:

Bob Puskas, Chair
Cathy Blumig, Vice-Chair
Craig Feibel
Fran Varacalli, FAV Consulting
Tara Kenyon, AICP/PP – Land Preservation and Management Consultant

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Puskas at 8:11PM.

ANNUAL REORGANIZATION

Chairman Puskas turned the meeting over to Fran Varacalli so that the reorganization could take place. Ms. Varacalli asked for nominations for Chair and Vice-Chair. Craig Feibel made a nomination for the same slate of officers as 2017 (Bob Puskas as Chair and Cathy Blumig as Vice-Chair). Hearing no other nominations, Ms. Varacalli closed the nominations and asked for a vote. All present agreed with the nomination, and the motion carried. Ms. Varacalli turned the meeting back over to Chairman Puskas.

APPROVAL OF 2018 MEETING DATE

The Committee agreed to hold meetings on the third Thursday of each month at 8:00PM in the Large Conference Room.

APPROVAL OF THE OCTOBER 17, 2017 MINUTES

Cathy Blumig made a motion to approve the October 17, 2017 minutes as drafted, which was seconded by Mr. Feibel. All agreed, and the motion carried.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Ms. Varacalli stated that the Audit Report has not yet been received by the Township's Finance Department, therefore an updated Financial Report is unavailable. Tara Kenyon will reach out to the Finance Department prior to the February meeting to obtain a report, if available.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The meeting was opened to the Public; however, no public were present. The public portion of the meeting was then closed.

NEW BUSINESS

Land Preservation and Management Consultant

Tara Kenyon was introduced as the new Land Preservation and Management Consultant for the Township of Franklin. Ms. Kenyon worked for the Somerset County Planning Division for eleven years, where her chief responsibilities included administering the Farmland Preservation Plan, providing guidance and assistance to the Somerset County Agriculture Development Board, working with Counsel on Right-to-Farm matters, overseeing the Environment and Utilities Section of the Planning Division, updating the County's Farmland and later overall Preservation Plan, and managing Interns throughout the office. In addition, Ms. Kenyon is a licensed Professional Planner and Certified Agricultural Mediator.

2018 Goals

The Committee discussed some preliminary goals for 2018:

- Create and distribute historical and/or educational material about agriculture in the Township
- Preserve more farms
- Use a variety of funding for farmland preservation
- Complete Farmland Preservation Plan
- Enhance Farmers Market – investigate SNAP, EBT and WIC programs

2017 Accomplishments

The Committee discussed accomplishments achieved in 2017:

- First year of Farmers Market – very successful
- Online directory of agritourism in the Township
- Farmland Preservation Plan is 90% complete

Beekeeping Bills

Recently, the Legislature proposed rules for beekeeping that are not viewed favorably by the agricultural community. The New Jersey Farm Bureau has actively spoken against it. The Committee will watch the progress of these rules.

OLD BUSINESS

Farmers Market

A post-season meeting was held with the vendors from the first Franklin Township Farmers Market. Valuable feedback from this meeting included:

- The market should be shortened by one hour (10:00AM – 2:00PM in 2017)
- Addition of food trucks and entertainment would bring more customers into the Market
- More vendors are needed
- The first season was very successful, and many vendors are interested in coming back!

Ms. Kenyon will work with Saffie Kallon, Special Projects Director, to register vendors and promote the Market for the 2018 season. They will also research opportunities for entertainment for the Market, along with additional methods of advertising.

The Franklin Township Community Farmers Market was honored with an award from Healthier Somerset in December 2017 for its achievements in promoting and providing locally-grown, healthy food as well as healthier lifestyles.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Blumig mad a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Mr. Feibel. All agreed, and the meeting was closed at 9:10PM.