

Alloway Township Agriculture Advisory Board

Minutes
March 8, 2018

The Regular meeting was called to order by Chairman Schultz at 7:35 pm.

Roll call: Jack Schultz, Al Mitchell, Louis Joyce, Brian Dolbow, Beth Reilly, Liaison.

Absent: Walt Turner, Brian Lorenz, Ron Vassallo

Also attending, Cindy Roberts and Katie Mazzella, SADC and Fran Rapa, NJCF.

Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chairman Schultz.

Approval of the minutes: on motion by Ms. Reilly, 2nd by Mr. Mitchell, the minutes of January 11, 2018 meeting were approved by unanimous vote.

Old Business:

Ms. Robin Bell appeared to submit an application for preservation of her property on Quaker Neck Road. This property is outside of the Township Project she has met with Salem County but her property is smaller than the 25 ac County minimum. She was advised to complete and submit the Township application but advised since she is not in the current project area it may be next year before it could be considered.

Mr. Joyce introduced Katie Mazzella of SADC to say that there are currently 3 farms in closing review, and 2 farms with Green Light phase with one of them having completed appraisals. She reported that the Township's PIG grant balance is \$247,825 which accounts for the set-aside for the current preservation activity. She mentioned the current mapping program being developed by Rowan University (www.NJMap2.com) which has mapping for agricultural lands. The winery pilot program which has expired is expected to renew through new legislation. She offered guidance regarding the "Right to Farm" protections indicating that complaints need to go first to the County Agricultural Development Board (CADB) and if not resolved they go to SADC. She referenced that the farmer must be following approved Agricultural Management Practices (AMP) to be protected from complaints.

Cindy Roberts of SADC next updated the Committee on recent changes to the staff at SADC indicating that they have filled previously empty positions and are now able to process application more quickly than in recent past. Ms. Roberts reviewed the contents of the recent letter to the Township Mayor. The letter stressed that the Township needs to make SADC aware of pending applications so they can allocate FY2019 funds to the Township and not risk recapture of current allocations.

Ms. Roberts reported that SADC has a focus on farming for the next generation as an initiative targeting younger farmers as a effort to preserve agriculture viability into the future. She offered assistance to the Township on outreach efforts to inform the community members about the farmland preservation opportunities and provided maps of the Township to display at community events. The members of the Committee suggested that possibly the Ice Cream Social and Alloway Day will be possible events. She encouraged the Committee to be in direct contact, at least annually, with current applicants even though there is no pending activity.

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Both Ms. Mazzella and Ms. Roberts discussed how to handle applications that are outside of the Township Project Area. They said we should accept the applications and submit them to SADC to see if the map boundaries could be changed during the December update period. These applications could also go to Greenlight Approval phase during the planning process.

They reviewed the minimum acreage criteria for the various programs: State direct easement - 92 ac; Salem County - 25 ac; and Township - no minimum but must be in target area. All required at least 50% tillable acreage. They asked that the Township support a proposed rule change to allow for a municipal competitive grant program similar to the existing county program.

Fran Rapa of New Jersey Conservation Foundation (NJCF) provided an update on the pending applications. He indicated that although the target date for closing is March 31, he had assurance from the federal funding partner that funding will not be lost if it goes past that date. He indicated that he will be looking at additional funding activity later this year. He reviewed two farms outside the Township project area that he is working with.

Mr. Joyce reported an update on the Township Trust Fund balance from the Treasurer . The 2018 beginning cash balance was \$93,869. Currently, \$72,025 are encumbered to cover costs of the five pending applications, leaving a free balance of approximately \$21,856 at this time. The fund was credited with \$14,011 in 2017 from the Farmland/Open Space tax. Mr. Joyce said that the Township receives 50% reimbursement from SADC of soft costs when the pending properties are settled.

New Business:

The Committee reviewed the current applications that are not actively proceeding to preservation. These include: Nixon, Rieck, Zimmer, (approved for Green Light Approval by Township Resolution #17-32) and Reilly and Williams. These applications have been reviewed and scored and are on file. Possible new applications were discussed with members indicating they have heard of interested owners and will follow up personally.

It was announced that the next regular meeting is scheduled on May 10, 2018.

Meeting adjourned at 9:08 pm on motion of Mr. Mitchell, 2nd by Mr. Dolbow and by unanimous vote.

Louis C. Joyce
Secretary

APPROVED: September 13, 2018