

**Friends of Worcester Meeting Minutes**  
**Tuesday, March 10, 2010**  
**Meadowood Retirement Community Board Room**

**Review of Minutes.** The minutes of the February meeting were approved as written. They will be posted to the website.

**Executive Committee Reports.**

**President's Report.** President Kim David introduced and welcomed guest speaker Elizabeth Emlen, the Senior Farmland Preservation Administrator for the Montgomery County Agricultural Land Preservation Board.

Elizabeth began her presentation by noting that the Montgomery County farmland preservation effort is the most active in the state. Elizabeth shared some of her "top 25 reasons" why saving farms is important including: farms are good for families, farms feed the nation, and, her favorite. that farms have positive economic impact for the community vs. a housing subdivision. Farms require minimal community services and keep everyone's taxes lower. She made a distinction between open space and preserved farmland. A preserved farm must stay in agriculture and there are unique state regulations for preserved farmland. The farmer still owns the land but gives up the right to develop it. In turn, the owner is paid the value he/she might receive from a developer. Elizabeth invited questions from members present.

Q: Is there a lower size limit for a property to qualify for farm preservation?

A. Minimum of 10 farmed acres, with no upper limit. Farms of 35+ acres have a better chance to be preserved. Farms must belong to an "agricultural security area" to qualify for preservation. (Worcester Twp. has an agricultural security area..)

Elizabeth explained that there are 127 preserved farms, totaling 7,902 acres, in Montgomery County. The goal is 225 farms and 17,000 acres. In Worcester Twp, there are 7 preserved farms totaling 329 acres. The Farmland Preservation program has been in existence for 20 years. This year's funding allocation is \$3 million, enough to preserve 5 to 10 farms.

Q. Does the board work with other groups to buy farms?

A. Yes, the Farm board asks townships to help supply funds. Private land trusts can also contribute. Worcester Twp. has funded some part of all seven farms that have been preserved.

Q. How long is an appraisal good for?

A. Not covered by state regulations. In Montgomery County, an appraisal is good for 8 months.

Q. How can citizens advocate for a farm to be preserved?

A. Farmland Preservation board meetings are open to the public, and are held at 3:30 pm on the second Tuesday of the month at their offices in Norristown. Current members of the board are Jonathan Rinde, chair; Harris Mosher, Salford Twp; John Corkum, Skippack Twp; Keith Freed, Franconia Twp; Rob Ayerle, Parec Homes.

Q. Have applicants in Worcester Twp been ranked?

A. Yes, they are ranked yearly. The next re-ranking is scheduled for April 13. Funding from the state depends on three factors: development pressure, county participation; agricultural production.

Q. Do energy production (i.e. solar or wind) farms qualify?

A. So far, only agricultural production is eligible for preservation.

Kim thanked Elizabeth for her time and the presentation. A brief recess was called to allow members to examine the Farmland preservation map of the county.

### **Education & Outreach Committee.**

Newsletter. Michael Simeone reported that the timeline and some of the article topics are in place for the Spring issue. Topics include: value of trails; land preservation in the present economic climate; Fairview Village plan (Rob Hayes); Treevitalize program; Farmland preservation (Elizabeth Emlen); Rain garden in Twp; Meadowood and open space.

Arbor Day: Maeve Vogan reported that plans are proceeding for this project. Each child at Methacton Elementary will receive a biodegradable plastic bag with a pre-packaged tree, and a booklet. Cost is less than \$1.00 each including printing. Maeve, Susan Caughlan and Al Cuce will present a program for grades K-2. Older children will see an Arbor Day video and have a Q&A session with Maeve, Susan and Al.

### **Current Concerns**

Rain Garden: Maeve reported that the Township approached FOW about supporting the proposed rain garden project. FOW agreed to promote the rain garden idea with an article in the upcoming newsletter.

Board of Supervisors: Susan Caughlan stated that the board will be working to set a policy regarding concession stands in township parks. This year, that will include Heyser Field where the Farmers Union Horse Show is held and where FOW provides food sales. FOW or the Farmers Union must apply for permission to have a food tent. It was reported that Marie Amato holds a food services license which may be required for permission to provide food at an event. Farmers Union will be contacted to see which group will request a food concession permit.

Planning Commission: Rob Hayes reported that the last two sessions were cancelled due to snow. The Fairview Village open meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 11.

Committee Development: still looking for a person to head this committee.

### **FOW 2010 Meetings and Events:**

**Meetings:** Wednesdays 7:30 pm

April 14, 2010: Bean Road Nursery

May 12, 2010: Bean Road Nursery

### **Events:**

Historical Society Flea Market, Saturday, May 1

Farmers Union Horse Show and FOW Food Tent, Saturday June 5, Heyser Field, begins 8:00 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna L. Haskins