NORTH WHITEHALL TOWNSHIP AGRICULTURE PRESERVATION COMMITTEE
NORTH WHITEHALL TOWNSHIP MUNICIPAL BUILDING
FEBRUARY 8, 2024

Board of Supervisors Vice Chairman Dennis Klusaritz called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence. In attendance Board of Supervisors Chairman Al Geosits, Supervisor Dennis Klusaritz, Township Manager Randy Cope, Secretary/Deputy Treasurer Jessica Koenig, and members, Marlene Stofflet, Bob Korp, Heather Skorinko and Susan Williams.

Discussion

A motion was made by Marlene Stofflet, seconded by Heather Skorinko to approve the October 12, 2023 Farmland Preservation/Open Space Committee meeting minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

Township Manager Randy Cope gave an overview of the status of current Farmland Preservation applicants. The Weinhoffer Farm (Whitehall Township) reached preservation. Mr. Cope send a letter to Whitehall Township expressing support for the preservation of this farm. The Hoffman farm is officially preserved. Closing took place on December 6, 2023. The Wagner's have received their appraisal from the County and have accepted. The preservation of this farm will be of no cost to the Township and is next on the list to be preserved. The Muth's have received their appraisal but the County has not heard back yet if they will accept. The Rohr/Rabbenold property includes 4 parcels. This property did not make the list of the two properties that are set to be preserved this year. If the Township wanted to fast track the preservation of this farm, it may be a possibility. Mr. Cope will follow up with Donna Wright of Lehigh County Farmland Preservation to inquire if this property would possibly be on the Counties list to preserve in 2025 before the committee makes any final decisions. If the Township would decide to preserve this farm on its own, it would be responsible for 2/3 of the cost and the County would contribute 1/3 of the cost. There is a possibility of the option to pay off the applicant in installment.

The committee reviewed the comparison between Real Estate Tax revenue and potential revenue through EIT for Farmland Preservation funding that was prepared by Director of Finance Seth O'Neill. The Committee was in favor of referendum on an upcoming ballot.

Given the success the program saw after sending the first round of letters to residents, sending a second letter to residents promoting Farmland Preservation was discussed. It was suggested the letter highlight the success of the Program in the last year as well as the benefits of preserving Farmland and Open Space. Mr. Cope agreed Township staff would draft letter.

Mr. Cope presented to the Committee that the Township would be hiring a Grants, Preservation and Trails Manager. He explained this position would be primarily for grants but

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that these grants could assist in supporting land acquisition. He also explained this position would be hands on with the preservation process as well as trails.

The next Farmland Preservation/Open Space Committee Meeting is scheduled for April 11, 2024, at 7:00 pm.

A motion was made to adjourn by Marlene Stofflet, seconded by Heather Skorinko. The motion passed unanimously.

Meeting Adjourned – 7:47 PM
Jessica Koenig
Secretary/Deputy Treasurer

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