



Harford County Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board

Meeting Minutes
October 6, 2020

Opening

The meeting of the Harford County Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board was called to order at 7:00pm on October 6, 2020 via conference call

Board Attendees

Jeff Holloway, Dave Dougherty and John Stump

David Keyes and Zach Rose were unable to attend.

Staff: Bill Amoss & Jen Wilson

Guests: Aimee O'Neill, Bea Ann Phillips, Charles Bosley, James Taylor, Marty Ayres

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Dougherty moved to approve minutes from the August 4, 2020 meeting with Mr. Holloway seconding. The minutes were approved unanimously.

New Business

- The Board reviewed a request by the Estate of Ruth Jones for an Ag Subdivision of the approximately 120 acre property under a County easement. The purpose of the subdivision is to distribute the assets of the estate to Mr. Bosley and Mr. Taylor. Mr. Amoss indicated the request has been reviewed by the County's Law Department. Ms. O'Neill reviewed the proposed line of division and new access easements needed to facilitate access to a portion of the property once division is complete. Both portions will be over 20 acres in size. Mr. Bosley is to receive the portion of the farm that includes the existing dwelling. Mr. Taylor's portion will have no existing home and will not have the right to construct one in the future. The estate will pay for all costs associated with the proposed division and update to the easement. Board members discussed the proposal. Mr. Dougherty made a motion to accept the proposal. The motion was seconded by Mr. Holloway. The motion passed.
- The Board reviewed a request by the Phillips Family to create a wedding & special events venue on their 107 acre farm under a MALPF easement. Mr. Amoss reviewed the recent change in MALPF policies to permit a 2-acre use envelope on easements for wedding venues. Mr. Amoss also indicated federal funds were used to secure this easement, so additional review will be needed prior to MALPF approval. The proposal will also require local zoning review and the details of the layout may evolve as the project works through the various approvals. Ms. Phillips described her proposal to use the existing barn for events. Ms. Phillips has 35 years' experience

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as an event planner and is hoping to provide additional income to the farm without disturbing the agricultural use of the property. No additional buildings are to be built, and Ms. Phillips intends to host events including 120 people or less. The Board discussed the proposal and asked if anything would need to change in the ag operation to accommodate the use. Ms. Phillips indicated there will be no change to the farm operations. Mr. Dougherty indicated he was able to visit the site and speak with Mr. Arch Phillips and felt it would be an appropriate use of the existing barn without impacting the farm operation. Mr. Dougherty made a motion to approve the proposal with Mr. Holloway seconding. The motion passed.

- The Board reviewed a request by Marty Ayres to purchase a portion of the 105 acre farm owned by Nancy Jones. The Jones Farm is under a County easement. Mr. Amoss indicated Ms. Jones expressed her support for Mr. Ayres' proposal via email, and this proposal has also been reviewed by the County Law Department. Mr. Ayres explained he proposes to purchase approximately 9 acres directly behind his existing 12 acre lot in order to start a nursery with cold frames and a heated greenhouse. Mr. Ayres indicated his wife has multiple years of experience in the landscape trade. Mr. Ayres also explained Ms. Jones requested any new property line allow for an in-fee strip of land to remain with the farm to permit access to the wooded area not being purchased by Mr. Ayres. The Board discussed the proposal and asked if such a division was allowed under the Code. Mr. Amoss indicated the current law would permit this proposal. The land would remain under easement and have to be combined with Mr. Ayres' current lot. Mr. Ayres would have to pay for the costs associated with the proposal including the update to the easement. Mr. Dougherty made a motion to approve. Mr. Holloway seconded. The motion passed.
- Mr. Amoss updated the Board on the status of MALPF offers and applications. Almost all of the FY19 easements have settled and one of the FY20 easements. Other FY20 easements are getting close to settlement and working on various requirements as quickly as possible. Mr. Amoss indicated the state Department of General Services (DGS) has hired a second attorney in order to move quickly on the pending offers. The nine (9) FY21 applications are being appraised, which are expected to be complete within a month or so. The request by Turney McKnight to donate an easement on land being combined with his existing easement has been approved by MALPF and is working toward settlement. MALPF staff has sent proposed policy updates for the Board to review and discuss at the next meeting.
- Mr. Amoss reviewed the status of the Harford County easements. Bond Counsel is working on the proposed legislation for each farm, which will be introduced at the County Council next week. Twenty (20) offers were made with fifteen (15) owners accepting. Mr. Amoss encouraged Board members to attend the Council hearing to show their support. The Department expects to make a second round of offers in January and will continue taking offers until December 1.
- Mr. Amoss reviewed the status of the Rural Legacy program. He is currently preparing three (3) easements for settlement, which is expected at the beginning of November. Three (3) more are being prepared for submission to the state for DNR and Board of Public Works review. If approved, these three (3) easements will use all the Rural Legacy funds currently committed by the state. The process takes at least 3 months once the package goes to the State and is not approved until voted on by the Board of Public Works.

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Updates

- The Board discussed the recent Davis farm acquired by the County with Harford Land Trust. The property is expected to be managed similarly to Swan Harbor Farm with some type of permanent protective easement.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45pm

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