

DRAFT MINUTES
PURCHASE OF AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION EASEMENT
COUNCIL MEETING
July 15, 2010

Room 106, DATCP
2811 Agriculture Drive, Madison, Wisconsin

Item #1 Call to Order: Open Meeting Notice, Roll Call

Tom Lyon called the meeting to order at 10:09 am. The meeting was properly noticed. Council members present were: Mike Carlson, Randy Craig, Mark Cupp, Laura Daniels, Mike Dummer, John Koepke Ellen Kwiatkowski, Tom Lyon, Melissa Malott, Brian Ohm, Dan Poulson, Deb Reinhart, and Darin Von Ruden,

Item #2 Approval of March 18th, 2010 Meeting Minutes

The Council approved the minutes from the March 18th, 2010 meeting without changes.

Item #3 Introduction of New Council Members

Tom Lyon introduced the newest members appointed to the PACE Council: Mike Carlson, Melissa Malott, and Darin Von Ruden. The new Council members provided some brief background information regarding their experience and affiliations.

Item #4 Public Appearances

One individual requested a public appearance. Ron Lambert of Waukesha County spoke to the Council regarding his desire to purchase property to turn into a farm. The property is currently owned by a developer and by placing a conservation easement on the property he will be able to afford to purchase the land for farming. Ron commented that his application scored lower than he anticipated and he is looking for suggestions to improve his score.

Item #5 Agricultural Enterprise Area Update

Vicki Elkin provided an update regarding Agricultural Enterprise Areas (AEAs). The AEA program received 12 petitions for designation covering over 200,000 acres of farmland. All AEA petitions were recommended for designation, but a few applicants were asked to decrease the number of acres requested for designation to meet the 200,000 acre cap.

Item #6 Summary of 2010 PACE Applications

Elkin stated the department received 36 applications for the June 1st, 2010 application deadline and outlined how the applications were scored. Two applications were submitted for specialty agriculture. Higher scoring applications displayed strong

agricultural capacity, high levels of local support, strong existing land use controls, and strong qualitative answers. Development pressure did not prove to be a deciding factor in the ranking. The Council reviewed application scores and ranking for all submitted applications.

Item # 7 Presentation of Scored 2010 PACE Applications

Lisa Schultz presented the top five ranked applications in detail, and provided a summary of the overall ranking. Elkin noted that the next Council meeting would be dedicated to reviewing the eligibility and ranking criteria, and making changes where appropriate based on Council input. Mike Dummer questioned why La Crosse applications did not receive high scores in the agricultural capacity section and if it was due to the large amount of forested land in the region. Schultz responded that this is a concern that should be discussed at the next Council meeting and applicants will receive an opportunity to amend applications for the 2011 round. Elkin agreed that under the current ranking system, forested areas are disadvantaged.

Item #8 Council Discussion of 2010 PACE Applications and Funding Recommendations

Lyon noted that the department did not receive any applications from the west central and northwest areas of Wisconsin and asked if there as a known reason for this. Elkin indicated there are areas of the state that are interested in PACE but are not ready to submit applications quite yet. Deb Reinhart commented that some areas of the state are in the midst of planning processes and might be ready for PACE in the coming years. Mike Carlson stated that some land trusts in Wisconsin are interested in agricultural easements but are not ready to apply on behalf of landowners at this time. The Council discussed scores relating to the qualitative section. Multiple Council members noted that this is a learning process and availability of examples and clear instructions for 2011 will help future participants complete applications.

The Council discussed the timeline for the PACE funding process after preliminary approval. Elkin stated that some project timelines are dependent on outside factors or programs such as FRPP. Schultz explained that changes to application materials could be made at the September meeting along with dates for request for proposals and application deadlines.

The Council discussed budgeting projections and how many projects to fund from the ranking. The Council agreed to fund 16 projects with a conservative estimated total cost share amount of six million dollars. It was noted that some projects had also applied for funding through the Department of Natural Resources Stewardship program, and may choose to utilize DNR funding instead of DATCP funding. The Council agreed to evaluate and recommend additional projects for funding at the September meeting should this occur. Dan Poulson made a motion to recommend the top 16 projects to the secretary for preliminary approval. Darin Von Ruden seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

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Item #9 DATCP Draft Agricultural Conservation Easement Update

Elkin provided a summary of the DATCP draft easement and noted that individual easements will be tailored specifically to the property and requests of cooperating entities and landowners. The Council discussed limitations regarding impervious surface for land with a conservation easement, including farm road improvements, conservation practices, and land surface alteration. Elkin encouraged the Council to contact her with additional comments or suggestions regarding the draft easement.

Item #10 PACE Program Updates and Items for September 15th, 2010 Meeting

The Council received an updated timeline regarding Council meetings and next steps for the PACE program. At the September 15th, 2010 meeting, the Council will review eligibility and ranking criteria. Specific issues to be addressed include:

- Distribution and weight of points across the various sections of the ranking criteria
- Any regional bias in the ranking criteria especially with regard to agricultural capacity, soils and percent of cropland, pasture and grassland on the parcel
- Whole farm versus partial farm applications
- Farm size
- Community support
- Qualitative considerations

The Council will also receive an update regarding the 16 selected applications and may recommend additional applications at the September meeting if one or more of the original 16 decide not to participate in the PACE program. The September Council meeting will be held at a location outside of DATCP and will likely include a farm tour.

Lyon adjourned the meeting at 1:28 pm.

Prepared by: LJS
July 22, 2010