

Solebury Township Farm Committee
January 31, 2023
Hybrid Meeting

Minutes

In attendance: Lars Crooks, Tim Luccaro, Graham Phillips, Gary Manoff, Buz Teacher, Kaitlin Farbotnik (via Zoom), Hanna Howe (Supervisor Liaison), Renee Scally (Township Administration)

Absent: Jonathan Grossman and Stephen Phillips

Call to order

Lars Crooks called the meeting to order at 7:08 pm

Approval of Minutes

November 2022 meeting minutes approved 1st Tim Luccaro, 2nd Lars Crooks, all in favor.

Announcements

There is a Solebury Township Farmers Club, if anyone wants to be involved. It has been around for many years. Not sure if too many active farmers are in the club. Possibility of putting this on the township website.

Old Business

I. Land & Zoning Use

a. Housing Ordinance

Mark Freed, Solicitor of the Township, is working with the Board of Supervisors and Chris Garges on the language for the ordinance on different options on housing on agricultural properties. Once the proposal is finalized, it will then be advertised in the newspaper. The Farm Committee can then make any changes and if so, then it would need to be advertised again with those changes. There is a 30-day advertising window.

b. Events/Agritourism/Agritainment

The committee received a copy of North Whitehall Township's Agritainment ordinance and the committee thinks this is a good template to start with on

Solebury Township ordinance. The committee will need to set up boundaries, especially with activities, sound and light pollution as to not in violation of any township ordinances.

Acreage should be also be in consideration with regards to having agritourism/agritainment on their farm. 50 % of what is sold must be sold on the farm. Need to be specific on what farmers are growing on their farm as to what is considered agritourism/agritainment.

Another thing needs to be considered is the light pollution. Needs to be very specific and clear and only for special events. Need to be respectful to the neighbors. Some farms have greenhouses with the lights on 24 hours, which could be an acceptable use.

In regards to when cannabis becomes legal in Pennsylvania, it would be considered agricultural if grown in the township. The light pollution and fumes from growing cannabis indoors, needs to have restrictions. Some suggestions are needs to be grown in an enclosed facility, set number of hours and a good ventilation system, to help with the smell. Hanna is going to check into the current ordinances of the township, so see what the township has in regards to cannabis growing.

Another thing to consider is the tax millage and the tax breaks that farmers receive. If you are also going to be considered agritourism/agritainment, would you lose these tax breaks. What are the long-term effects?

c. Zoning & Permits

Gary would like to have a grading permit exemption on agricultural buildings in the township. The grading permit, triggered a Stormwater Management permit. Most farms have a conservation plan on their farms, so stormwater flow is already managed. If a farm has a working conservation plan, perhaps SWM should be addressed NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service) and not the township or the township engineer. The NRCS works with farms to manage erosion and water nutrient management.

The state was giving farmers a break by saying no permits are needed on a agricultural building, but the township is requiring a permit, which can be very expensive. Retention basins are not needed on a farm, leads to more issues. Kaitlin will look at other townships which allows farms that have a working conservation plan in place from being exempt for having a retention basin.

- II. Lars made motion to skip over Agricultural Promotion Objectives**
- III. Administrative Business**
 - a. Subcommittees**

- i. Resource Management & Agricultural Subcommittee**
Lars Crooks
- ii. Zoning Subcommittee**
Gary Manoff and Kailin Farbotnik
- iii. Land Preservation Committee**
Tim will be Liason from the Farm Committee

b. Ways to get more residents involved in the Farm Committee (was mentioned at the beginning of the meeting)

Lars makes a motion to reach out to the Township Supervisors to request approval to add Farm Committee members that reside outside of the township for the purpose to improve diversity who are actively involved in agriculture operations/farming in Solebury township. Gary seconds the motion. All in favor.

Each new member would have to have an interview process in front of the Board of Supervisors and Farm Committee chair.

Public Comment –

Robert McEwan mentioned the deer pollution has drastically reduced in 4 evenings in January.

Josh Perlsweig recommends to ask the supervisors pay for an Agricultural Attorney to make sure the zoning and ordinances are in line with the state ordinances. Some of the ordinances do not make too much sense when it comes to the farmers and their land.

Meeting adjourned at 8:31 am.