

**Millstone Township
Agricultural Advisory Council
Meeting Minutes
March 3, 2008**

Vice-Chairwoman Pinhas called the meeting to order at 7:07 PM.

The Secretary read the adequate notice.

Roll Call:

Present – Mr. Asprocolas, Ms. Butch, Mr. Halka, Ms. Pinhas
Absent - Mr. Romano

A motion was made by Ms. Butch to approve the September 10, 2007, minutes with a second offered by Mr. Halka and all in favor.

A motion was made by Ms. Butch to approve the January 7, 2008, meeting minutes with a second offered by Mr. Pinhas and all in favor.

Old Business

➤ **Correspondence**

- **Farm Service Agency Newsletter dated January 15, 2008** – Ms. Pinhas reviewed the newsletter.
- **D&R Greenway Land Trust Appreciation Plaque** – The plaque was available for Council members to view.

➤ **Open Farm Market**

- **Survey results from farmers** - Ms. Pinhas reviewed the survey results, which included 21 out of 22 responses in favor of a local farm market; responses indicated preference for a weekend market and June through October time frame; discussion included options for inclement weather and rain dates; Mr. Asprocolas indicated that a Sunday rain date for a Saturday market would not be suitable for farmers who have previously scheduled Sunday markets and that his market utilizes pop-up tents and operates in inclement weather.
- **Survey for residents** - The Secretary will prepare a separate survey for residents; upon approval of the Council, the survey will be included in the annual Township mailing which is scheduled to be distributed at the end of March; an electronic version of the survey will be posted on the Ag Council website and residents will be provided with the option of mailing, faxing or emailing responses.

➤ **Farm Lease/Lee Farm** – Ms. Butch notified Council members that the Township Committee received a letter from the current leaser of the Lee Farm requesting an extension of the lease to allot for time to remove the cover crop. Council members discussed a variety of issues that would need to be addressed in a municipal farm lease including:

- **Lease Term** – discussion included different time frames and which would be most appropriate for a municipal lease

- **Lease start/end dates** – Lease start and end dates may be dictated by the crop planted; Mr. Jonathan Pinhas explained that October 31 to October 31 would be best for hay production but that October 1 to October 1 may be best for other crops
 - **Crop removal date** – the lease should specify a crop removal date to ensure crops are harvested in a timely manner so that the cover crop can be planted in sufficient time to be effective over the winter months
 - **Cover crop/erosion controls** – the lease should require the planting of a cover crop to prevent soil erosion as well as specifying a “plant-by” date to ensure that the cover crop is planted in time to be established enough to prevent erosion during winter months
 - **Permissible crops/crop sequence** – discussion included crops that would be best for preventing erosion, those that may be undesirable due to susceptibility of deer damage, crops that require irrigation and pesticide applications and those that need to be harvested on an annual basis; suggestions included recommending that a specific crop be planted, such as hay, which doesn’t require irrigation, provides erosion control and can be remain planted for up to five years
 - **Acreage** – the lease should be prepared on a “per acre” basis rather than for the entire farm parcel to allow for acreage reductions as the farm transitions to recreational use
 - **Right of first refusal** – Mr. Jonathan Pinhas explained his experience with the ROFR where the contract states that the land owner can recoup acreage during a specified period of time prior to spring fertilization/planting and the expenditure of money by the farmer
 - **Deer controls** – the Secretary will contact Mr. Simon Kaufman regarding deprivation permits for Green Acres funded Open Space; farmers may be reluctant to farm land that is not protected against crop damage; the absence of a hunting program may reduce the value of the lease
 - **Irrigation** – the use or restriction of irrigation should be documented in the lease; council members agreed that it would be best to plant crops that don’t require irrigation
 - **Herbicides/pesticides** – the lease should specify that all spray applications must be applied by a licensed individual or licensed commercial spray company; the lease may also restrict the use of certain chemicals
- **Farm Conservation Plan Seminar** – Ms. Nicole Ciccaglione of the USDA NRCS presented the seminar on February 28, using the Lee Farm as an example; Council members who attended the seminar agreed that the information provided was beneficial and Ms. Butch noted that there was positive feedback from attendees.
- **2008 New Jersey Agricultural Convention** – Mr. Asprocolas attended the convention and will provide notes at the April meeting
- **OEM Large Animal Action Plan**
- Ms. Pinhas informed Council members that they have been invited to attend the Upper Freehold Township OEM meeting on March 13 to view their large animal emergency plan; the meeting is scheduled for 7:30 PM at the UFT municipal building on Route 539.

- *The 11th Annual Emergency Working Group (AEWG) Symposium* – Ms. Butch informed members that Township Administrator, Jim Pickering, and DPW Superintendant, Ken Gann, attended the symposium on February 25th in Westhampton, NJ; no feedback is available at this time.
- **March Newsletter** – The newsletter is complete and will be distributed with the annual Township mailing at the end of March

New Business

- **2008 Goals** – Goals will be finalized at the April meeting
- **Resolution Opposing Closure of Department of Agriculture** – Mayor Grbelja presented a copy of the resolution passed by Monmouth County opposing the closure of the Department of Agriculture. M/Grbelja requested that the Council revise the document as needed for Millstone Township and provide a resolution for adoption at the March 5, 2008, Township Committee meeting. M/Grbelja thanked Council members and departed; Council members discussed items that should be included in the resolution and agreed to correspond via email and phone to finalize the resolution for the Township Committee meeting.
- **Right to Farm** – 2 SADC brochures, “*Farmer-to-Farmer Advice for Avoiding Conflicts with Neighbors and Towns*” and “*Right to Farm Brochure*”, will be posted to the Ag website and the Secretary will request hardcopies from the SADC to have on hand for distribution.
- **SADC FY 2009 Municipal PIG Application Review Checklist** – Ms. Butch reviewed the checklist and requested input regarding the following items:
 - ***How can Township’s ag industry take advantage of its central location and exceptional highway access?*** Discussion included the central location of Millstone as well as the accessibility to urban markets and wealthy communities surrounding New York City; farmers have modified production to urban and retail markets; marketing of “buy local, buy fresh” produce; transition from wholesale to retail markets in response to wholesale price fluctuations; transition to high-end residential business for nursery stock due to the downturn in commercial business; growing products such as tomatoes and grain that are superior quality due to high-production soils; transportation is by truck and Millstone is within a reasonable distance from desirable market areas for perishable items.
 - ***What are the items Township farmers wish they had easy access to?***
 - affordable land
 - large tractor supplies and service
 - grants and programs to encourage young farmers
 - acceptable farm labor
 - ***Are Ag community representatives active in business and industry development groups?***
 - Millstone Township Agricultural Advisory Council
 - Monmouth County Agriculture Development Committee: C. Halka
 - Millstone Township Economic Development Committee: S. Pinhas
 - NJ Horse Council & Equine Advisory Board: M. Romano

- President & Board of Directors, Tri-County Farm Co-op: G. Asprocolas
- Monmouth County Equine Commission: M/Grbelja & P. Butch
- Board of Directors for Standard bred Breeders & Owners Assoc: T. Romano
- American Equine Practitioners – Dr. Palmer
- ***What does the Ag Council do to avoid Right to Farm conflicts?*** The Council provides SADC documentation to farmers and posts information to the Ag website
- ***Preparation of a vision statement & conclusion*** Discussion included Millstone's successful farm preservation program including continued landowner interest in preservation, a pro-farmer right to farm ordinance, educational seminars for farmers and equine rescue education for OEM and fireman.

Next Meeting

April 7, 2008

At 9:01 PM a Motion was made by Mr. Asprocolas with a Second offered by Mr. Halka and by unanimous vote the meeting adjourned at 9:01 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Lorraine Maher