

**MILLSTONE TOWNSHIP
AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
August 28, 2019**

Chairman Butch called the Meeting to Order at 7:32 p.m.

Adequate Notice was read.

ROLL CALL:

Present: Mr. Asprocolas, Chairman Butch, Mr. Dancer, Vice-Chairman Peck, Ms. Posten
Absent: Ms. Pinhas
Guests: Deputy Mayor Grbelja, McKinley Mertz, Elena Gable

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES: May 22, 2019

Mr. Asprocolas made a Motion to approve the Minutes and Ms. Butch offered a Second. Roll Call Vote: Asprocolas, Butch, voted yes to approve the meeting minutes.

Public Comments: None, No public in attendance. Ms. Butch explained that she met a resident before the meeting to discuss his options and progression regarding the purchase of an existing preserved farm. Ms. Butch provided him with contacts for questions and some information.

Correspondence: None

OLD BUSINESS:

Farmland Preservation Plan: - The council reviewed the table of contents with Ms. Mertz and Ms. Gable. The council provided insight as to where they can find updated information. The secretary will review the farmland assessments and provide the information to the planners. The council discussed trends, expansion of ethnic vegetables, retail, marketing, Grown in Monmouth campaign, and Rutgers Ag Experiment station and innovation center. Two main issues the council emphasized are labor and wildlife management. The council discussed deer, geese, ground hog, which are all major issues to agriculture. Farmers need to protect their crops from destruction. Mr. Dancer discussed that in the recent years he has moved from growing soybeans to hay and straw because of the devastation to his crops from the deer. Ms. Posten discussed the installation of deer fencing. The Ag council has been working toward a deer management plan to help manage the deer and bring them to an appropriate and healthy number per square mile. Deputy Mayor discussed the equine industry and the influx of money. There previously was only one standing stallion and now it is up to seven. It is slowly starting to come back. She stated that when Showplace Farms closed the township tried to preserve the land, and unfortunately, that was unable to be accomplished. Showplace will now look to develop for warehousing, which it's zoned for. Deputy Mayor Grbelja noted that currently we are struggling with values from the appraisers for our farmland preservation. Developers are making much larger offers and we are unable to complete. Also discussed was climate change driving new plant breeds that will handle more or less water and breeds for tolerance. Trends of farm to table and farm to school buying local was also discussed. The council also discussed one, five, and ten year goals. The goal is to keep farming viable. NJ Farm Bureau is the largest advocate for farmers and is used as a resource.

Wildlife Management Plan: Chairman Butch advised the council that an OPRA request was submitted for all deer survey information. Ms. Butch discussed a meeting she is scheduled to attend regarding our wildlife plan. They would like to discuss our education program. The council

discussed the need to move forward with the next step of the deer management forum. Deputy Mayor Grbelja noted the importance to have all major organizations in attendance. The council will need to present a plan with our appropriate partners from the state and county. Deputy Mayor Grbelja will also request all Township Committee members be in attendance also. Mr. Peck also inquired about if there needs to be insurance. Ms. Butch has a copy of the Monmouth County plan.

Large Animal OEM Plan: Nothing to report.

Farm Lease: Nothing to report.

Open Space Trust: Council reviewed report.

Pending Legislation and Regulation: Chairman Butch stated the minimum wage goes up on January 1st.

Millstone Day: Millstone Day is Sunday, September 22, 2019. Looking for members to volunteer, Ms. Butch noted that Ms. Scott from Open Space will be in attendance.

NEW BUSINESS:

The council approved a support letter for the 2019 Monmouth County Open Space Grant.

Ms. Butch discussed with the council that the drone was found and returned to the Township. Unfortunately, after being inspected by the manufacturer, the drone had received some water damage and is not covered under the policy. Fundraising funds from the Ag Council and Open Space Preservation council will be used for the purchase. Mr. Asprocolas made a motion to purchase a replacement, Mr. Peck offered a second and by unanimous vote the council agreed on the purchase.

Seeing no further business at this time, Mr. Peck made a motion to leave the regular session and enter into the Executive Session to discuss pending preservations. Ms. Posten offered a Second and by unanimous, the Council left the Regular Session at 9:23 p.m.

Seeing no further business at this time, Mr. Dancer made a Motion to adjourn the meeting and Ms. Posten offered a Second and by unanimous vote, the meeting adjourned at 9:58 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Melissa Peerboom