

**Plainfield Township  
Environmental Advisory Council Meeting  
November 22, 2016**

A special meeting of the Plainfield Township Environmental Advisory Council was held on Tuesday, November 22, 2016, at 7:00 pm at the Plainfield Township Municipal Building, 6292 Sullivan Trail, Nazareth, PA 18064.

Those in attendance were:

Terry Kleintop, EAC Chairman	Robert Cornman – Vice Chairman
Robin Dingle – EAC Member <b>absent</b>	Don Moore – EAC Member
Bruce Rabenold – EAC Member	Robert Simpson – EAC Member
Jane Mellert, EAC Secretary and Member	Tom Petrucci – Plainfield Twp. Manager

Also in attendance –

EAC Chairman Terry Kleintop called the meeting to order at 7:31 pm.

The pledge of allegiance was performed.

**MINUTES**

**Motion – 2016 Minutes -** A motion was made by Bob Cornman and seconded by Bob Simpson to approve the November 7, 2016 minutes. **Vote: Passed 4 Yes votes and an abstention from Don Moore**

**OLD BUSINESS**

**Northampton County Farmland Preservation – County/Municipal Partnership Program**

Each year Northampton County commits money toward Farmland Preservation in the County Budget. The committed fund information is sent to the State of Pennsylvania for matching with State funding for the program. In 2011, 2012, and 2015 Plainfield Township was permitted to commit funds to Northampton County for matching with State funds.

Terry Kleintop handed out a chart showing the Pennsylvania State match amounts received by Plainfield Township. The chart shows the amount returned to the Township. This money is then utilized by Plainfield Township to preserve acreage in partnership with Northampton County:

<b>Plainfield Township Commitment</b>	<b>Pennsylvania State Match Received</b>
2011    \$700,000	\$250,600
2012    390,000	167,700
2015    350,000	122,500
<b>TOTAL \$1,440,000</b>	<b>\$540,800</b>

In 2015 the Township only received a portion (.35) of the money received by Northampton County from the State. Members of the Township EAC and Board of Supervisors addressed this

matter with Maria Bentzoni and the Northampton County Farmland Preservation Board. The Board believes the Township should have received the full match amount instead of a portion of what was received. According to information Tom Petrucci received, there is a possibility that Plainfield Township could receive as low as 25% of the match amount from the State in 2017. The decision to only give a portion of the State match amount back to the municipalities is being made at the County level.

At the November 2016 Board meeting the Plainfield Township Supervisors approved a letter to be sent to Maria Bentzoni at Northampton County explaining that Plainfield Township would move forward with committing \$250,000 of EIT funds for the 2017 PA State match program provided that the full match amount received is allocated to the Township. Tom Petrucci noted that Maria has not responded to the letter as of this date. Terry Kleintop spoke to Maria today and he explained that the matter was discussed at length.

The letter was copied to Moore Township and Upper Mount Bethel Township. A representative from Upper Mount Bethel expressed concern to Terry regarding the Northampton County Farmland Preservation office proposing to only give a portion of the State match funds back to the municipalities that put money forward for matching. The EAC is unsure of how Moore Township and Upper Mount Bethel Township will move forward with a commitment to Northampton County for matching with the State.

Tom Petrucci and several EAC members were recently contacted by a Morning Call reporter and asked questions about the County/Municipal Partnership Program.

### **2017 Northampton County Farmland Preservation Application Process**

Another property owner applied to the Township for the Ag Security area. The Board of Supervisors conditionally approved the application. The document has to be finalized with signatures and recorded at Northampton County in December.

It was noted again that in the past the Board sent out letters to land owners to solicit interest in the preservation program. The letters had greater detail about the benefits of the preservation process than the letter sent out by Northampton County. The letters were also sent to landowners that are not currently in the Ag Security District with information on how to apply. The property owners that are not in the Ag Security District do not receive a letter from Northampton County about the preservation application process.

**Motion – Letter to Plainfield Township Property Owners Regarding the 2017 Farmland Preservation Process** – A motion was made by Bob Simpson and seconded by Bob Cornman to have Township Manager Tom Petrucci seek approval from the Board of Supervisors in order to send out a letter to property owners that have potential for preservation. **Vote: 5 Yes**

Terry noted that the last letter in the file had good information and can be utilized for the draft letter.

### **UPDATE**

- **Update on the 2015 applicants**
  - Greggo #1, #2 and #3, is in the process to finalize
  - Monocacy Heights on Jones Hill should close this year

- **Update on the 2016 applicants**
  - Lock located in Lower Mt. Bethel and Plainfield Township is moving forward.
  - Witmer has now withdrawn

### **Plainfield Township Earned Income Tax Collection for Open Space Study**

#### **The following reports were submitted:**

- Don Moore revised the Plainfield Township Agricultural and Natural Features Easement map. Tom Petrucci placed the map in the Drop Box and made copies for review. Bob Simpson provided large copies of the map for display. The Northampton County properties and Plainfield Township properties are now color coded separately. Don will revise the map to include the total amount of acres preserved. The map includes the prospective natural features easements and prospective agricultural easements.
- The Township has 2.6+ million in the EIT funds for Open Space Preservation. This amount could potentially preserve 500 acres.
- Terry Kleintop previously handed out the Average Pen Argyl Area School District Enrollment for 1999-2016. Walter Schlegel will provide the 2016-2017 information. The information indicates that the class size will decrease. Despite the decrease in students the cost per student is escalating from 2001 from 7,000 per student to current of over 17,000 per student.

Tom Petrucci reported that Jim Hunter is still in the process of evaluating Northampton County assessments of the farm owners that were present at Marcia Hahn's meeting. The landowners were questioning how the assessment on their properties changed. The process is tedious due to the different Acts that apply. State Representative Marcia Hahn spoke to a representative at the State level regarding the preservation process and Act 4.

Bob Simpson spoke to David Backenstoe regarding Act 4. There are only three Counties in the State that adopted Act 4. There is no provision in Act 4 that excludes the building envelope. Northampton County decided to exclude the building envelope from the preserved area. This is noted on the farmland application paperwork. In Northampton County the exclusion area was implemented in order for the farmer to have more options if the property needs to be sold, or subdivided. Property owners erroneously believed that the building envelope would still be eligible for the Act 4 tax freeze.

The excluded area and how it is taxed needs to be fully explained to farmland preservation applicants. The potential additional uses that can be placed on the property should also be explained. In Plainfield Township Zoning laws allow for certain additional uses.

Act 319 Clean and Green provides for the homestead to be assessed at agricultural use value in certain situations.

Bob Simpson noted that we need to include an explanation in the study regarding Act #4, #319, #515 and Act #43.

Several EAC members request that David Backenstoe, Solicitor to Northampton County Farmland Preservation and Maria Bentzoni the Northampton County Farmland Preservation Administrator attend the December 5<sup>th</sup> EAC meeting in order to get a clearer understanding of how Act 4 is being interpreted and applied. Clarification is needed on the excluded area. It was noted that

there is language on the Farmland Preservation application that notes the area around the buildings is to be excluded. Tom Petrucci will extend an invitation to Maria and David.

**Items on the review sheet to be addressed:**

- Land assessments - The entire list is in process
- Plainfield Township millage and history – needs to be refined.
- 3,000 plus acres are still available for preservation if 1,500 acres ends up being preserved then what would the impact be.
- The Lafayette College study took into consideration all of the scenarios. Tom Petrucci will review the information and take a look at how the formulas were used for the data in the charts. He will compile that data and then the EAC will review and organize it for presentation.

Don Moore noted that shown on the map are three large parcels. It was noted that a lot of the land area is within the PA American Water land area. The US Fish and Wildlife will become the owners of part of the property.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

None

**MEETING ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion - Meeting Adjournment** – A motion was made by Bob Simpson and seconded by Bob Cornman to adjourn the meeting at 9:47 pm. **Vote 5 Yes**

Respectfully Submitted,

Jane Mellert, Secretary  
Plainfield Township EAC