

**Minutes
Hope Township
Agricultural Advisory Committee
Wednesday December 3, 2014**

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 pm by Chairman, Bob May.

Open Public Meetings Act:

Under the provisions of the “Open Public Meetings Act” adequate notice of this meeting has been provided by publishing notice in the legal section of the Express Times and by posting notice in the Hope Post Office and on the Township bulletin boards—all on December 3, 2014.

Present at this meeting were members: Bob May, Richard Goodbody and Sandy Uργο of the Land Conservancy of New Jersey. Absent from the meeting was member: Josh Miller.

- The minutes from the last meeting, October 8, 2014 were approved.

Old Business:

- The impact of the Federal Estate Tax Rate on Preservation efforts was discussed. The Federal Estate Tax exemption for 2014 was \$5,340,000. The rates are indexed for inflation.

Correspondence:

- A letter dated December 1, 2015 from Sandy Uργο to Steffanie Miller of the SADC was reviewed. The Township requires no new additions to the Municipal Planning Incentive Grant (PIG), and two (2) farms were preserved in Hope this past (2014) year— Beaver Brook Farm and the May (formerly Jude Delane) Farm. In addition, the Land Conservancy is working on PIG Grant for the Campbell Foundry Farm. Finally, the letter listed the Township’s current Trust Fund Balance is approximately \$303,997. This letter was served in advance of the December 15, 2014 deadline for our Township’s PIG update.

Update on Farmland Preservation Efforts:

- Sandy Uργο gave the members an update on the efforts of the Land Conservancy, on behalf of Hope Township’s Farmland Preservation Program. In particular she spoke of the evolving efforts to preserve the property known now as the Campbell Foundry Farm, and the issues involved in mediating such an effort.
- Ms. Uργο told of her efforts to contact various farm owners in Hope, and she and the committee spent some time going over a number of these potential properties.
- Ms. Uργο reminded the committee that Hope Township has been accumulating funds in its Farmland Preservation and Open Space Trust Fund and that the timing was right to pursue the purchase of additional development easements to preserve farmland before State monies in the PIG are designated for other municipalities.
- Ms. Uργο related that many of the potential farm owners have unrealistic expectations as to what the value of their properties is. Those expectations, however, can be mitigated, she suggested, with explanations of current market prices and development realities. Ms. Uργο reminded the committee that Hope Township

has \$1,250,000 in its Planning Incentive Grant account and commented that sooner or later those monies will be reallocated if the Township doesn't make use of them.

New Business:

- The committee and Ms. Urgo then discussed when another out-reach effort should be pursued with owners of targeted farms in Hope Township. It was agreed upon that March, 2015 might be a good time for such contact.
- The committee then discussed if funds allocated for Farmland Preservation could be used in other "Open Space" opportunities. As no definitive answer presented itself, the answer was left to Ms Urgo to research.
- The members present discussed the need to designate existing preserved farms with the official State signs provided free by the SADC to both promote and announce those properties as Preserved Farms.
- Finally, the committee discussed the sale of the now preserved Beaver Brook Farm.

Adjournment:

- There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:35 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Richard Goodbody
Secretary