

**Plainfield Township
Environmental Advisory Council Meeting
September 20, 2016**

The special meeting of the Plainfield Township Environmental Advisory Council was scheduled for Monday, September 20, 2016, at 7:00 pm at the Plainfield Township Municipal Building, 6292 Sullivan Trail, and Nazareth, PA 18064.

Those in attendance were:

Terry Kleintop, EAC Chairman	Robert Cornman – Vice Chairman absent
Robin Dingle – EAC Member absent	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 – No members of the public were present.

EAC Chairman Terry Kleintop called the meeting to order at 7:03 pm.

The pledge of allegiance was performed.

OLD BUSINESS

Plainfield Township Earned Income Tax Collection for Open Space Study

The following reports were submitted:

- Marcia Hahn held a meeting to address questions from farmers regarding their tax bills. It was reported that Jim Hunter from Northampton County is evaluating the taxes for the farmers. Questions were asked regarding Act 4, Act 515 and 319 programs which provide preferential tax assessments for farmland. Some of the farmers received higher tax assessments and had questions. Jane Mellert, Tom Petrucci and Terry Kleintop attended the meeting to hear about the landowners concerns. Some landowners that preserved their land received updated tax assessments with an increase of the tax rate on the excluded area. The houses and buildings are usually excluded from the preservation land area. The excluded area does not have the millage rate frozen under Act 4.
- **Property Owner Tax Increases- Tom Petrucci**
Assessed values of several preserved farms as valued at the time of preservation compared to the 2016 assessed valuation are shown were reviewed.
- **Landowner Interviews – Jane Mellert**
Six landowners that preserved their land were contacted for interviews. A chart showing information from the interviews were handed out to the EAC members.
- **Summary of Prospective Properties for Farmland Preservation – Don Moore**
The total potential acreage within Plainfield Township that could possibly be preserved in the future is 3202.3 acres. It was noted that the State minimum requirements for preserving are 50 acres, Northampton County is 25 acres and County/Municipal is 10 acres. Out of the 3202.3 acres if **1,000 acres are preserved the approximate cost would be \$5,000,000.**
- **Preserved Farms** – Approximately 3,000 acres on 46 farms have been preserved in Plainfield Township.

- **Farmland Preservation Study conducted by Lafayette College** - Bob Simpson noted that all of the information is laid out in the booklet. The information and layout can be utilized in our current study. The report does not take into account the current way the County is breaking out the excluded area for taxation at the regular millage rate.

Terry Kleintop noted that Upper Milford Township evaluated the tax system for preserved lands. The Act which freezes the millage rate at the time the land is preserved is set for a period of time. The Act can be extended for additional years. There are 17 preserved farms. The study noted that the municipality would only lose \$195 of tax dollars if the Act is extended.

Terry Kleintop called Michael Frank to ask if he has done similar studies on what the tax impact is from preserved farms.

The following points were noted:

- Request an updated map from Maria Bentzoni. The map should show the preserved land area, and the land that is not preserved. The map should also show the quality of the land.
- We need to answer the question – Do we continue with frozen millage under Act #4? The excluded area does not have the millage rate frozen.
- The EAC members need to have a good understanding of Act #4, Act #319, Act #515 and Act #43.
- There are only 3 Counties in the whole state that exclude the homestead area from the preserved area. There are 4 Counties that adopted Act #4.

The following information is needed for the study:

- The number of students per year in the Pen Argyl Area School District.
- Evaluation of the millage rate freezes and how it affects the municipality
- Number of Acres that can still be preserved
- Explanation of the Acts
- Interviews revise (add cons and commentary separate)

The next areas for review for the EAC are:

- Protection of water sources
- Official Map – Synchronize with the EIT to utilize the EIT for another 10 years for preservation of other environmental areas. Some of the stream corridor can have easements on in order to protect the stream. The Township will then be responsible for the maintenance. The EIT money can be utilized for maintenance of the land if the land is purchased with local collected EIT funds.

Don Moore – Will work on tax ramifications

Tom Petrucci – Will request an updated map from Maria Bentzoni the Northampton County Farmland Preservation Administrator or Joe Lakey in the GIS Department at Northampton County

Terry – Will get information from the Pen Argyl Area School District through the Business Administrator Walter Schlegel

Jane – Will continue with farmer interviews

All – Official Map

The presentation to the Board of Supervisors will include a short report, pictures, graphs and a power point presentation.

The presentation to the Board of Supervisors is tentatively scheduled for January 26, 2017 at the Board's Workshop.

Each EAC member should do a short concise presentation on the information that they worked to compile.

NEW BUSINESS

None

The next EAC meeting is October 3rd. Robin Dingle will not be able to attend. A special meeting may be held in October to continue the work on the study.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

MEETING ADJOURNMENT

Motion for Meeting Adjournment – A motion was made by Don Moore and seconded by Bob Simpson to adjourn the meeting at 10: 00 pm. **Vote 5 Yes**

Respectfully Submitted,

Jane Mellert, Secretary
Plainfield Township EAC

1st draft September 21, 2016