



MINUTES
ROCK COUNTY LAND CONSERVATION COMMITTEE
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2009, 6:00 P.M.
LAND CONSERVATION DEPARTMENT - CONFERENCE ROOM
USDA SERVICE CENTER
440 N US HWY 14, JANESVILLE WI

1. **Call to Order:** Chair Bostwick called the meeting of the Land Conservation Committee to order at 6:00 p.m.

Committee Members Present: Richard Bostwick, Larry Wiedenfeld, James Quade, Katie Kuznacic, Robert Fizzell, Ron Combs, Eva Arnold, and Alan Sweeney.

Others Present: Tom Sweeney, LCD and Randy Thompson, UWEX.

2. **Approval of Agenda:** Supervisor Wiedenfeld motioned to approve the agenda as presented, seconded by Supervisor Arnold. **Motion Carried.**

3. **Citizen Participation, Communications, and Announcements.** NONE

4. **Purchase Agricultural Conservation Easements Program - Discussion with Jim Welsh, Executive Director Natural Heritage Land Trust:** Highlights of the discussion by Mr. Welsh. Mr. Welsh distributed a discussion paper generated for this meeting. Mr. Welsh has been active in the PACE program for some time and the organization he represents has accumulated 23 Agricultural easements protecting approximately 3,000 acres. The Natural Heritage Land Trust is currently providing assistance to Jefferson County and the towns of Dunn and Windsor in Dane County. PACE is a simple concept but complex to implement due to the following factors: differing program requirements by supporting agencies, the easement itself is very long and complex, and PACE must be a part of a larger program to protect the agricultural economy, not just farmland. A strong local support and leadership can make PACE a very successful way to meet community goals. At this point, Mr. Welsh noted the AD HOC Committee roster and stated that Rock County has appointed a very good group due to the large cross section of interest groups.

Requirements of agencies providing matching funds, state and federal, have overlapping and uncoordinated application deadlines and review procedures for appraisals, easement terms, transaction/closing requirements, which may lead to delays and frustrations. It is advised to tailor the local criteria and requirements to state and federal guidelines as much as possible.

Perpetual responsibility to monitor and uphold the terms of the easement is very important. IRS regulations also require that easements be monitored to keep landowners eligible for income tax credits. Key points are: create a very thorough baseline document, maintain contact with landowners and transitioning landowners.

Other things to think about when developing a PACE program: High development pressure vs. protecting large blocks of farmland. Use measurable criteria, which are not based, on current land use/practice but on the quality of the land itself (objective vs. subjective criteria). Consider how the program can protect the whole farm, not just the farmland. A bargain sale donation of a portion of the easement value) can be one of the factors that make the PACE program responsive to the most committed landowners. And finally can the county's PACE program provide incentives for higher levels of participation by town governments.

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5. **Adjournment:** Supervisor Arnold motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:30 p.m., seconded by Supervisor Fizzell. **Motion Carried.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Thomas Sweeney
County Conservationist

Minutes are not official until adopted by the Land Conservation Committee.

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