

MINUTES

Sustainability Committee

Workshop: Tuesday March 13, 2018

Attendees: Yvonne, Jennifer, Dave, Tom, Sam

Non-member attendees: Bernie Couris, Brian Curry

Guests: Ken Miller, Jesse Miller, Tom Olszanowski.

Chairman

JENNIFER MUNSON

VICE CHAIR

LAURA GRABLUTZ

SECRETARY

DAVE WEBER

MEMBERS

SAM CANTRELL

STEVEN BAZIL

TOM KALUSKY

GALE RIPPEL

YVONNE BROWNLIEE

BARBARA VAN HORN

Liaison Reps

Bill Dietrich

Planning

John Jacobs

Township Supervisor

Suzanne Roth

EAC

Bill Holderness

Parks & Recreation

MINUTES:

No minutes read

WORK:

1. Meeting was called to order by Jen at 7:30 PM in back room of Township Building.
2. Jen introduced guests to committee. Guests farm township properties. Attended for discussion of land use practices. Jen filled them in on Sus Comm's initiatives and considerations and the need for their input.
3. Yvonne to forward online PDF of Penn State Agronomy Guide to members.
4. Bernie stated taxpayers should get land back in good condition.
5. Tom O said geese and deer are a big problem – waterway pollution from dropping and browsing crops. Uses coyote forms, balloons and propane cannons as deterrents but animals get used to them all. Crows also a problem. Estimates 4 to 5 acres of crop loss yearly from geese. Neither farm is involved with the hunting program. Both farmers rotate crops and use minimal amounts of herbicides, less than mandated limits or recommended use. No need for herbicides for hay. Mare's tail and pigweed primary pest plants.
6. Yvonne – do we need an update on hunter program? Geese too close to housing to use guns. Archery maybe.
7. Tom K – we have highest number of deer and red tag participants in the county. Stated chronic waste (deer) disease getting close to our area. Ken hopes it will not cross species. Foliage planted around ponds helps keep geese out. Worked at Township Building pond. Fishing line around ponds might also work to deter geese. Bernie suggested that might be committee's duty.
8. Ken has 80 acres of organic pasture. Son, Jesse, states they are increasing that amount. Tom O works with Lundale Farm (organic). Organic farming labor intensive. Farm help hard to find and regulations for hiring prohibitive. Both farmers are positive about GMO, but Ken uses neither GMO crops nor Roundup. Stated the real bad pesticides and herbicides have been outlawed, but chemicals are a part of farming, fertilizers, etc. Tech improvements have made herbicide delivery more point specific, decreasing use and saving money. Cow manure as fertilizer also reduces need for chem fertilizers.

9. Soil tests done routinely but not tested for residual pesticides or herbicides. Ken uses oats as cover crop. Tom O does not use cover crops because geese destroy them. Geese also compact the soil, poop burns the soil and prevents growth.
10. Fertilizers biggest farm cost, fungicides and herbicides next. Costs are high and breaking even is a tight balance. Ken explained marketing problems for dairy farmers. Little guys get squeezed out. Big guys consolidating and dropping many dairy farmers who need to find new markets. Result is a glut of milk that reduces prices, making their bottom line tougher to reach, also for organic milk producers who need to have organic cows, feed, etc, resulting in higher premium.
11. Both farmers have multi-generation farms and intend to turn the operation over to sons in the future. Strong incentive to care for the land properly. However, they need the lease program to survive. Crop insurance is available but expensive.
12. Both farmers use a no-till method – saves time and labor. This method prevents erosion. Organic farming requires tilling of soil, promoting erosion and releasing CO₂.
13. Township leases land to residents first. Questions raised about farming on acquired Bryn Coed property. (note: Donna D suggests contacting Natural Land Trust to find out how they regulate their farmers – lots of experience and would know about Bryn Coed)
14. Tom K – committee should re-assess initiatives. Farmers are doing the best they can with what they've got.
15. Tom O – most Roundup contamination from industrial parks, golf courses, ornamental landscaping. Farmers must have license for pesticide application. Very strict guidelines. Requires continuing education and recordkeeping.
16. Bernie asked if farmers knew of anyone using bad substances. Ken says no, mostly for ethical reasons, but serious consequences for violations. Can't use pesticides within 1,000 feet of a person with sensitivities.
17. Sam asked if further reduction of pesticide use was possible. Farmers stated there are much worse chemicals around than Roundup and farmers need to rotate pesticides because of insect adaptation.
18. Ken – landowners call the shots, so they are at the mercy of the township. Tom O – Monsanto squeezing the little guys like them.
19. Jen – perhaps committee could organize labor for farm work. Apparently, workers must be 21 years old.
20. Tom K – perhaps search for grants to help with transition to organic.
21. Ken – labor costs a big problem. Tech saves time but changes process, so they must adapt to many changing conditions. Both farmers regularly help newcomers and neighbors in need, especially Lundale.
22. Dairy farming toughest market of all. Prices set by commodities market. Bottom line = costs vs profits
23. Jen thanked farmers for attending. Dave moved to adjourn at 9:05. Yvonne seconded.