

Land for Maine's Future Board

Minutes of the Meeting
February 18, 2003
Augusta Armory

Board Members Present:

Commissioner George Lapointe	Carol Dyer	Roger Milliken
Commissioner Patrick McGowan	Roger Berle	Warren Balgooyen
Commissioner Lee Perry		

Board Members Absent:

Linda Pagels	Marcia McKeague	Commissioner Bob Spear
David Keeley, Act. Director, SPO		

Staff Members Present:

Tim Glidden	Steve Brooke	R. Collin Therrien
Aline Lachance	Jim Connors	Surran Pyne [legal]

Others Present:

Stefan Jackson, William Brune, and Keith Fletcher, The Nature Conservancy
Jean Demetracopoulos, Great Works Regional Land Trust
Woodrow Thompson, Maine Geological Survey
Ralph Knoll and Herb Hartman, Dept of Conservation
Stephanie Gilbert, Dept of Agriculture
Mort Mather, Farms for the Future Program
Doreen MacGillis, York Land Trust
Patrick Watson, MCHT
Bob Williams, IF&W

Welcome

Commissioner Lapointe introduced new board member Patrick McGowan, Commissioner, Department of Conservation to the audience. Commissioner McGowan replaces Commissioner Ron Lovaglio. It is a pleasure to have Commissioner McGowan on board.

Minutes of the Meeting

A motion was made by Roger Milliken and seconded by Roger Berle to accept the December 17, 2002 minutes of the meeting. Vote was unanimous.

Brae Maple Farm, Union

- Public Notice

Published in the Kennebec Journal on 2/8/03 and Bangor Daily News on 2/8/03.

- Appraisal Committee Recommendation

It is the committee recommendation that the accepted appraisal value of development rights be **\$125,000.00**.

The Board had originally allocated \$52,122.50 to this project to be matched by an equal amount from the federal Farmland Protection Program. The allocation was based on an assumption of other matching funds which it turns out are not technically eligible as match. In addition, the appraisal provided a slightly higher figure than the estimate provided in the application. The Department of Agriculture F&RR is prepared to increase the commitment of federal FPP funds to \$62,500 and they are requesting that the Board increase its contribution to the same level. After reviewing the project history, the committee recommends LMF funding at **\$62,500**.

- Public Comments

None.

Note: Tim Glidden stated that he received a phone call from a Union legislator [Rep. Gary Sukeforth] who is supportive of the project.

- Vote

A motion was made by Commissioner Perry and seconded by both Roger Milliken and Roger Berle to accept the appraisal value of \$125,000 and to increase LMF funding to match DOA's contribution of \$62,500

Conditions:

- signed purchase and Sales Agreement
- completed easement
- documentation of matching funds
- evidence of good title
- review and update the Boundary Survey
- property baseline documentation

5% Business Development Grants for Farmland Projects

The Maine Department of Agriculture is seeking LMP business planning grants for Hiatt and Lakeside Farms [outlined below] in order for them to receive business planning assistance. Both of these farms will be assisted through the **Farms for the Future Program**, a pilot project, which provides selected farms with assistance in developing a detailed business plan that involves changes in the farm’s operation to increase the vitality of the farm and investment money to help implement the plan. FFP is a two-phased process: Phase I provides technical assistance and Phase II provides capitol improvement [25% of the cost to implement their plan (up to \$25,000)].

Mort Mather, Program Coordinator, Farms for the Future Program, stated that farms applying under the FFP in addition to eligibility requirements (owning at least five acres in agricultural use), must demonstrate and be scored for: (a) the degree of opportunity for increasing the vitality of the farm and (b) the degree of threat to the continuation of agricultural use of the land.

Stephanie Gilbert distributed an outline of expenditures. While only an estimate she felt on “good footing” for making the request.

5 % grant of appraised value of easement		
Project Name	Easement Amount	5 % Amount
Hiatt Farm	\$160,000	\$ 8,000
Lakeside Orchards	\$379,410	\$18,970

Several Board members inquired as to the language of the law as it pertains to the administration of LMF fund for farmlands. The language reads as follows:

Title 5, § 6203. C. When interest in farmland is acquired, the Board may fund the development of a business plan and capital improvements to provide for the land’s continuing use as a working farm, as long as these improvements do not exceed 5% of the appraised value of the acquired property.

While board members felt comfortable in approving funds for technical assistance [Phase 1] several members did expressed concern over funding ‘capital’ improvements [Phase 2]. Roger Milliken suggested that this Board doesn’t have the expertise in this type of activity. Commissioner Lapointe suggested that a set of criterias for capital improvements be developed. Stephanie will work with LMF staff in developing these criterias and reported back to the Board in April.

Roger Berle asked if any farmers were opposed to these subsidies. Stephanie indicated that the Department had received no objections to the program.

Vote

A motion was made by Roger Berle and seconded by Warren Balgooyen to fund 'technical assistance' only. Board vote was unanimous. See below for amount awarded.

Hiatt Farm

Board voted to approve a \$8,000 grant for technical assistance.

Lakeside Farm

Board voted to approve a \$9,000 grant for technical assistance.

Active Project Updates

- LMF Program overview

"Past the Midpoint" slide presentation was shown by Tim Glidden.

- General status of all pending LMF finalist projects
 - **Mapleton/Washburn Railtrail** [*formerly known as the Bangor & Aroostook project*]
Property still held by bankruptcy trustee. DOC inquiring as to interest.
 - **Bradbury/Pineland Corridor**
Several parcels closing imminently. Negotiations proceeding.
 - **Greater Mt. Agamenticus**
Most planned acquisitions remain to be finalized.
 - **Kennebec Highlands – Phase II**
One parcel remaining, negotiations underway. Some match lands remain to be transferred.
 - **Leavitt Plantation Forest**
Waiting for release of federal dollars. Negotiations complete. Anticipate Spring 2003 closing.
 - **Mt. Abraham**
Applicant meeting with new landowner of remaining lands.
 - **Page Farm**
Closing imminent.

- **Spednic Lake/Upper St. Croix Waterway**
Negotiations complete. Anticipate Spring 2003 closing.
- **West Branch Project – Phase I**
Appraisal underway. Board review expected this spring.
- **Boston Hills**
The Nature Conservancy and IF&W need to set desired priorities for proposed easement. No contact with landowner.
- **Devil's Head**
Has closed.
- **Flag Island**
Waiting for release of federal dollars. Negotiations complete. Anticipate Spring 2003 closing.
- **Hancock Lands Project**
Easement negotiations underway.
- **Johnson Point Acquisition**
Appraisal complete. Negotiations under way.
- **Lower Kennebec Estuary**
Parcel mix has changed. Some parcels acquired with federal dollars. No acquisitions with LMF funds as yet.
- **Machias River – Phase I**
Easement negotiations and appraisal underway. Anticipate Board review this spring/summer.
- **Mattawamkeag Lake Region**
Negotiations complete. Anticipate spring 2003 closing.
- **Moose Cove**
Appraisal and negotiations underway. Project modification possible.
- **Newry Mineral Park**
Applicant [DOC] doing fundraising and expanding partnerships. This information can be access on DOC's Web Page, said Woodrow Thompson (Maine Geogolical Survey). [www.state.me.us/doc/nrimc/mgs/mincolec/newry-faq.htm]
- **Sawyer Mountain Highlands**
The first appraisal on core parcel due end of January.

- **Sebago Headwaters Preserve**
First parcel expected to close in February.
- **Skolfield Farm**
Appraisal and negotiations underway.
- **Brae Maple Farm**
Appraisal approved. Easement outline complete.
- **Brayton Farm**
Negotiations complete. Anticipate Spring 2003 closing.
- **Clarry Hill – Phase I**
Several parcels ready for closing. Easement on key blueberry land parcels still under negotiations. Anticipate Spring 2003 closing.
- **Five Fields Farm**
Appraisal complete. Negotiations underway.
- **Hanson's Ridge South**
Easement outline complete. Appraisal to be commissioned Spring 2003.
- **Packard/Littlefield Farm**
Easement outline underway. Landowner reviewing options to sell some water and gravel rights separately.
- **Sunrise Farm**
Easement outline complete. Appraisal to be commissioned Spring 2003.
- **Presumpscot Falls**
Closing imminent.
- **Rivard Farm & Lake Farms**
Both projects have been withdrawn.

Round #3 Proposals

- Overview

A good mix of projects: 3 **farmland** projects, 5 **local** significant C&R projects, 10 **regional** significant C&R projects, and 6 **statewide** significant projects. While one applicant's budget is missing we have a total LMF funding request amounting to \$13,804,186 for Round 3.

- Scoring Committee

Met in early February. The review process was identical to last year making it easier for us to go thru the review process, said Commissioner Lapointe.

- Moving Forward

The proposals will now be sent to the Nominations Committee for their review. Binders containing project descriptions of all Round 3 proposals are being prepared for distribution in advance of the April meeting.

Staff Report

Tim reported that 4 LDs regarding the LMF Program are in the pipeline:

- LD 0176

This bill requires cooperating entities that receive funds for land acquisition under the Land for Maine's Future Board to transfer title to the land to the State.

- LD 0094

This bill requires a state agency to be responsible for management and monitoring of land and interest in land acquired under the Land for Maine's Future Program.

- LD 0092

This bill requires approval by the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over conservation matters for an acquisition by the Land for Maine's Future Board of land with an appraised value greater than \$250,000.

and Tim mentioned that this coming Friday [2/21/03] he would be attending a hearing on

- LD 0348

This bill limits publicly owned land in the State to no more than 20% of the total land area of the State or 33% of the land area in any county. The bill also allows the State to exceed the limit with the approval of 2/3 of the Legislature.

A public hearing scheduled for Millinocket has been postponed. The meeting will be rescheduled this summer.

EXECUTIVE SESSION [2:30 p.m. – 2:55 p.m.]

A motion was made by Commissioner Lapointe and seconded by Roger Milliken to go into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing ongoing negotiations regarding Moose Cove and Lower Kennebec Estuary.

Next Board Meeting

April 7 & 8, 2003 at Maple Hill Farm in Hallowell.