

Windham County *FSA* Committee Regular Session Minutes

Time: 10:00 a.m.

Date: Thursday, December 5, 2013

Place: Danielson USDA Service Center

Present: Betsy Molodich, Chairman
Charles "Tim" Tyler, Vice Chairman
John Wolchesky, LAA-2 Alternate
Dawn Pindell, County Executive Director
Bryan Hurlburt, State Executive Director
Devon Marsden, Program Specialist
Sherwood "Dick" Raymond, CT DEEP State Forester
Sally Timmons, NRCS Resource Conservationist

1. Call to Order

Chairman Molodich called the meeting to order at 10:00 am.

2. Previous Minutes

Tim Tyler moved to approve the minutes of July 10th. John Wolchesky seconded the motion. The minutes were approved and signed by Chairman Molodich.

3. Administrative Report

A. Administrative

The Temporary Program Position was ended November 15th due to budget restrictions.

B. Budget

FSA is operating under a continuing resolution; no funds have been allocated for the 2014 budget year.

C. COC Elections

Due to a printing error, ballots for 2013 elections have been determined to be void. The printer is sending new ballots out with a change in elections:

- Ballots are due January 17, 2014
- Meeting to count ballots will be held January 23rd at 10:00 am.
- New COC member takes office February 18th.

D. Time & Attendance & Leave

Chairman Molodich approved Time & Attendance Data and travel for the COC members and CED.

4. **Cooperating Agency Reports**

Sally Timmons, NRCS, reported that they are taking applications for the Farm & Ranchland Protection Program. The first batching date for a variety of NRCS program signups is December 20th. In recognition of “World Soil Day” she provided a brochure titled “Unlock the Secrets of Soils”. District Conservationist Ray Covino is traveling through the Northeast providing healthy soils training.

She answered questions about the three year practice incentive to encourage farms to try no-till planting.

Sherwood “Dick” Raymond, CT DEEP State Forester, reported they are completing the survey for Emerald Ash Borer which has been found in western Connecticut. The Asian Long Horn Beetle has stayed in the Worcester, MA, area for now. Mr. Raymond is working with FSA on the Emergency Forest Restoration Program due to Superstorm Sandy in October 2012.

Bryan Hurlburt, State Executive Director, highlighted touring Windham County farms and businesses with Congressman Courtney. He participated with Mr. Courtney in the Woodstock Agriculture meeting on November 6th to address the Food Safety Modernization Act. All New England SEDs will conference call on December 9th regarding opposition to FSMA concerning new extensive protocols to meet new regulations to sell fresh fruits, vegetables and farm products.

Mr. Hurlburt also participated in a meeting with Congressman Courtney at the Cushman Farm in Franklin regarding Immigration Reform.

He noted that WDC has allowed Connecticut to begin hiring. His priorities are to obtain a Program Technician for Windham County; a Farm Loan Trainee; and a District Director/Administrative Specialist combination position.

The **Connecticut FSA 2013 Farm Loan and Farm Program** totals were reported:

| County | Farm Loan | Farm Program |
|---------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Fairfield | \$ 4,500.00 | \$ 30,540.00 |
| Hartford | \$ 466,920.00 | \$ 901,167.68 |
| Litchfield | \$ 12,000.00 | \$ 317,717.91 |
| Middlesex | \$ 0.00 | \$ 50,737.33 |
| New Haven | \$ 917,000.00 | \$ 340,090.72 |
| New London | \$ 1,431,400.00 | \$ 403,426.22 |
| Tolland | \$ 450,000.00 | \$ 522,783.27 |
| Windham | \$ 1,116,700.00 | \$ 607,923.51 |
| TOTALS | \$ 4,398,520.00 | \$ 3,174,386.40 |

Betsy Molodich, Chairman, noted the Sterling Agriculture Commission tour of Buttercup Farm, Ekonk Hill Turkey Farm, and her farm. They have provided books for the school. Her farm is now closed for the season. She plans to participate in the December Fruit & Vegetable Conference in Manchester, NH.

Charles “Tim” Tyler, Vice Chairman, reported they are still picking corn with about 300 acres not at the required 20% or less moisture level. Milk prices are about \$20/cwt. He is updating the milking parlor and adding a heat detection aid. He attended the annual Connecticut Farm Bureau meeting and shared highlights including Governor Malloy’s participation.

John Wolchesky, LAA-2 Alternate, shared his plans for putting in a commercial kitchen. His wife Patti will attend the Food Safety Certification Training in Windsor. John noted the Agriculture Commission is good for Pomfret sharing some of the activities and actions the group has been involved with.

Dawn Pindell, County Executive Director, reported on a variety of farm program and outreach activities she participated in since the July meeting using the Monthly Outreach Reports.

CED Pindell noted that with the help of generous contributions of produce from Lapsley Orchards and Woodstock Orchards, the Feds Feed Family’s food drive netted 1,099.25 lbs for The Friends of Assisi Food Pantry in Danielson.

Betsy Molodich shared that the Putnam Farmers Market contributes to Daily Bread in Putnam. She would be willing to help arrange a Brooklyn market contribution that FSA or NRCS could pick up to bring to the food pantry.

Copies of the registration for the January CT Vegetable & Small Fruit Growers Conference were handed out.

5. Conservation Programs

A. Conservation Reserve Program

Two CRP contracts were paid a total of \$366.00. One contract expired in 2013.

B. Grassland Reserve Program

2013 annual GRP payments were made for 28 contracts with 977.9 acres for a total of \$13,583.00.

6. Loan Programs

A. Farm Loan Program

A total of \$1,116,700.00 was loaned to Windham County farmers in 2013.

Karen Tomlinson, Farm Loan Officer, provided a December 2nd memo noting all Windham County borrowers are current on their farm loans.

A December 4th alert from Trina Brake, WDC, was shared regarding marketing attempt letters that were sent with loan refinancing offers to FSA borrowers.

B. Farm Storage Facility Loan

FSFL farms will be sent annual payment reminder letters. The committee concurred that a letter should be sent to farms that are paid ahead to remind them of the annual date; and ability to prepay the loan installment if they choose.

Of the total 10 FSFL loans for \$173,256.00; five were disbursed in 2013 for \$91,400.00. In 2013, annual loan payments of \$17,422.06 were received from FSFL borrowers.

Types of facilities eligible for FSFL were discussed.

John Wolchesky shared “smart fresh” technology which allows fresh picked apples to be processed for three days instead of the 60 to 120 day seal required for controlled atmosphere apples.

Tim Tyler noted the grain bin loan and efforts by the borrower to dry corn. The issue of lack of drying and storage was discussed. He noted that KofKoff buys 1200 tons of corn per week from area farmers. The price of corn was \$250/ton last week and dropped to \$148/ton this week.

Devon Marsden, Program Specialist, shared the use of a non-recourse loan which allows you to sell the grain back to USDA. Ms. Marsden noted that storing in bags was okay and she would research how this program would work for farmers.

7. Commodity & Various Programs

A. Crop Conditions

Betsy Molodich reported that the year started out too wet but turned out to be a good crop year. Her top seller sweet corn did well. She shared that the use of a cooperative Credit/EBT helped increase sales with about \$10,000.00 processed through the Northeast Farmers Markets.

Tim Tyler noted that corn production was down a bit due to the wet spell and difficulty doing weed control requiring the corn to compete with weeds. He felt production was about 10 to 15% less than normal. The hay and haylage was good with above average production from four cuttings.

John Wolchesky shared that it was a challenging year with some good production and some not so good. He lost a lot of sweet corn due to weeds.

It helped overall that his farm is very diversified with a variety of crops. The production of pumpkins, winter squash, sweet corn, cucurbits was down. The apple production was 4,500 bushels down from his usual 6,000 bushels. They had a spring freeze when the apples were in full bloom. He noted that he and other growers had to buy pumpkins to keep customers supplied.

B. Farm Records Management

A total of 92 farms reported 15,416.8 acres of cropland in 2013.

Apple producers are required to report 2014 crop acreage by January 15, 2014.

In October CED Pindell provided NRCS with AD-1026 HEL/WEL Certification and aerial photos for farms that had UHEL (undetermined HEL) on fields they operate. NRCS will make these determinations.

C. Special Assistance Programs

1. Non-Insured Assistance Program (NAP)

A field visit was made on November 12th to a berry producer who had 2012 loss of strawberries. The committee will review this in Executive Session.

One orchard has a \$164.00 payment for plums that was previously approved and then flagged as a receivable due to the price of plums. It is now in appeal status. Devon Marsden, Program Specialist, noted that she has submitted plum prices to WDC showing that the 90 cents is applicable to CT not the 20 cents per lb. that WDC has for NAP.

A total of 17 farms have 2013 NAP coverage and paid \$6,000.00 in NAP enrollment fees with one farm covered as a Limited Resource Producer.

PS Marsden added crops to the Connecticut Crop Table as requested to process new varieties of grapes for the county for 2014 NAP coverage.

2. Supplemental Revenue Assistance Program (SURE)

Three 2011 SURE applications were approved and paid a total of \$60,939.00.

3. Emergency Forest Restoration Program

Sherwood Raymond, CT DEEP State Forester, highlighted his work in Connecticut with determining eligibility of EFRPP applications.

Windham County received seven applications with 235 total acres; to be reviewed in Executive Session.

D. Production Programs –**1. Direct and Counter Cyclical Program (DCP)**

A total of 178 DCP contracts were paid \$123,035.00 for 2013. CED Pindell thanked Devon Marsden, PS, and Diane Holowaty, AS/GIS, for their help with MIDAS and other program needs to get the payments made.

2. Milk Income Loss Contract (MILC) Program

Total \$287,088.06 paid in FY 2013 for MILC.

8. Other Business

A variety of farm meetings, events and activities were reviewed.

The next meeting will be on Thursday, January 23, 2014 at 10:00 am to count ballots for the corrected election process due to the ballot error by the printer.

Betsy Molodich, Chairman, adjourned the meeting to go into Executive Session.

Respectfully submitted,

Approved,

Dawn S. Pindell
County Executive Director

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Betsy Molodich
County Committee Chairman

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