

MINUTES OF PLUMSTEAD TOWNSHIP
LAND PRESERVATION EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
July 9, 2026



The July 9, 2026 meeting of Plumstead Township Land Preservation Education Advisory Committee occurred at Plumstead Township Municipal Building, 5186 Stump Road, Pipersville, PA. Michael May called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. The Pledge of Allegiance followed a moment of silence.

APPOINTED MEMBERS PRESENT:

Michael May, Gary Talbot, Liz Patrick, Kimberly Troup and Jim Stark were in attendance. Ken Lichtenstein, Township Supervisor, and Kelly McGowen, video recorder for "Plumstead Unfiltered" (Facebook Live stream) were also in attendance.

Guest Speakers: Dr. Brock Sandelin (Delaware Valley University, Dean of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences)

Chris Becker (Delaware Valley University, Director of Agricultural Operations)

The following citizens were in attendance: Michael Jonn and Lloyd Bush

All Business was deferred to the next meeting.

Jim Stark ("JS") introduced the guest speakers, topic and opened the discussion asking how best can Plumstead Twp. propagate the farming of preserved farms. We are looking for guidance, what might farming look like in the future?

Gary ("GT") asked about how can the twp support sustainability of the land, farming in Plumstead?

Chris Becker ("CB") there is a concern re: aging farmers, as well as for "broken farms", (smaller parcels that are not adjacent to other farms. Farming disconnected parcels is difficult).

An important question to ask is, how does the twp currently support the legacy of farming?

How do we support our farmers?

Re: "Young farmers grants"-the grants are too little to appropriately support them.

Niche farming, typically on an acre or so, is working (i.e. flowers, roadside farm stands, etc.), but if too many niche farms are in the same area, they may not all make enough profit to sustain themselves.

Another question to ask, do the township ordinances meet the needs/support of farmers? I.e. Are farmers supported, protected from neighbors who might complain about noises, smells?

Dr. Brock Sandelin ("DrS") Does the twp have an audit of who in the twp is currently farming?

LPEAC - Although many farms were known, the members all felt this was an important next step.

GT - We acknowledge that farmers need farmers

Ken Lichtenstein ("KL") Our LPEAC is currently working on getting together with our local farming community.

JS - What trends do you see at DelVal Univ. regarding what students are currently pursuing in their agricultural and farming studies?

Submitted 2026-June 14, by James Stark, Secretary

MINUTES OF PLUMSTEAD TOWNSHIP
LAND PRESERVATION EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
July 9, 2026



CB - About $\frac{3}{4}$ of our students do not come from a farming background. Animal Science is most popular, and we currently have approx. 30 students studying Sustainable Ag. In general, there is no easy way into farming.

DrS - The establishment of an "Equipment Loaner Program", (twp buys, leases equipment for farmer use), as rental model, would be beneficial towards the aim of seeing unfarmed preserved land farmed once again.

MM - Asked if DelVal was familiar with the Carversville Foundation? Do you know of any partnerships with them? Is this a viable option?

CB - Yes. Also, you could look into FarmLink, they place farmers with open space.

Also, consider looking into "Succession Planning" (when farmers and/or their descendants are unable to solve how the family will keep the farm in operation), succession planning provides for non-family members to take the farm on.

Liz Patrick ("LP") - Is leasing a trend? What are the economics of farming? Is leasing viable? We have received comments from members of the public who say they can afford to lease land up to \$200/acre.

CB - It is dependent on how much per acre the land owner requires from the lessor. For example, the best ground is in lower Bucks Co., they can lease for \$250-\$300 per acre. Keep in mind that it is not uncommon for it to take a year or two in order to sort out what can be successfully grown. So, a "no-cost", or "zero cost" lease for 1 or 2 years is not uncommon.

CB - Does the twp have available land to farm, farmland that the twp owns and is currently spending money in order to maintain that they can initially lease at no-cost to a farmer?

JS - What about cases where the land owner has equipment a lessor can use?

DrS - Yes, this model is feasible, it is a better approach. In general, to make things work, it is really about making connections. The twp can be very helpful here by facilitating these types of conversations.

KL - Given the twp's history of land preservation, it is likely that the twp would be supportive of investigating this type of coordination and there is value in the LPEAC reaching out to other twps in order to combine resources.

CB - Bringing opportunities into the school from the local communities, would be highly useful to the students at DelVal.

GT - Could the twp & DelVal host a seminar, invite area municipalities? Could this be the next step?

MINUTES OF PLUMSTEAD TOWNSHIP
LAND PRESERVATION EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
July 9, 2026



CB - Yes, we are already working with communities in Montgomery Co., the DelVal auditorium holds roughly 400 people.

JS - What about dairy farming? And, growing corn for feed. Are those types of farming sustainable?

GT - How is dairy different?

DrS - The margins in dairy are low. Cooperatives are involved, farmers are beholden to the cooperative with frequent changes in dollar weights that drive individual profitability. Dairy farming requires twice daily milking, no days off, it is a lifestyle, requires much commitment. Therefore, “upselling”, (i.e. ice cream, cheese, etc.) can make dairy possible.

Also, PA has grants and good educational programs, but the grants can be very competitive.

JS - What about Organic? How is it different?

CB - It is actually quite expensive, must be certified, a stressful process. It is hard to capitalize the added expense at market. There is not always a reliable clientele to support it. In many cases, local farmers who earn trust with clientele is just as good as going for organic certification.

DrS - We like sustainable Ag vs. Organic. Going forward, technology will be a huge piece., a way forward for the future. (I.e. robots are picking apples)

JS - What would a minimum acreage need to be?

CB - depends on the crop. I.e. 4 acres behind a fence-could be highly productive when paired with a farmstand and the right clientele.

DrS. - Livestock grazing would thrive here. I.e. Goats, goat milk, soap, etc.

JS - What about Solar?

--- A member commented that many if not all of the twp easements prohibit solar as a use

CB - Grazing & Solar - at the present, we are taking a “wait-and-see” approach for the outcome. It became very popular and so utility companies began to lower pay-out rates (30yr “lease ’lock-outs”?)

What if Plumstead twp shifted towards writing more inclusive easements, allowing for more uses?

MM - Overtime as easements were settled, the agreements became more specific.

MINUTES OF PLUMSTEAD TOWNSHIP
LAND PRESERVATION EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
July 9, 2026



DrS - There is not too much activity at the PA State re: Ag legislation. However, the applicability of data centers on farmlands is being discussed. Note, data centers on farmlands depletes the water on neighboring farmlands.

MM - re: Zoning, soil quality has limited Plumstead twp's options. Beyond land preservation, how can the twp protect, prevent structures from being built directly onto the best soils when there are no easements in place?

KL - We just passed a data center ordinance and we are seeking further guidance and ways it can be improved.

CB - More flexible easements can help farmers, consider non-traditional options i.e. agritainment. You ask what can the twp do? Employ your farmers. They can maintain parcels, create revenue and food for local pantries, and provide reliable income for farmers (salary and benefits). A hybrid model works too. A public farm employee to farm the land, tax payer funded, and can be used as an educational model for residents, student farmers as well.

GT - What about a Community Farm? (residents rent plots).

CB - Typically, requires too much management

GT - What about some of our very large farms that are not protected, what if they go up for sale, but no-one wants to buy them?

CB, Drs. - Yes, this can happen, a large farm (with or without some needed maintenance) can be viable, and still not find a buyer.

KL - I am hearing, where does the twp get involved? And, can the twp preserve farms as a farm?

GT - What about large corporate conglomerates?

DrS - Large conglomerates typically seek many more acres, i.e. multiple "Sections" (Section= 1 mile x 1 mile).

DrS - Consider looking into FarmLand Trusts, multi-municipalities

LP - re: students, are they looking for internships, or to be hired, or something else?

CB - Some students are coming from farms, they come to DelVal to study business of Ag, aim to get into a different avenue of farming, go corporate vs staying on the family farm. Many do so and keep the family farm as a "hobby farm".

MINUTES OF PLUMSTEAD TOWNSHIP
LAND PRESERVATION EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
July 9, 2026



GT - Are there any publications, books you can recommend?

CB - State programs are trying to connect people to resources. I.e. the PA Extension Office

DrS - Check out their "[Tilva](#)", [AI Assistant](#), great tool out of the PA Extension Office, upload photo of plant, inform you of what it needs

JS - What do you suggest as our next steps?

CB - Meet with your farmers, then reach out/branch out to nearby municipalities. Also, local 4H Clubs, their members are in demand, skilled, knowledgeable, dedicated. The next generation is in good hands.

GT - What about grants to support Ag related efforts?

DrS - Check out the PA Bulletin, every Friday they publish a weekly list of grants. More focused on rural development, is the USDA.

CB - Consider private grants, they are more customizable towards a need, like all grants, they require investment of time, effort in grant writing, and be sure to include letters of support

Kim Troup ("KT") - Would various models be useful? What about the twp parcel hosting student interns?

CB, DrS - Yes, particularly a twp funded internship model would work well.

The members and guests thanked our guests and agreed to continue to pursue organizing a coordinated seminar at DelVal Univ. to host local municipalities, speakers, panelists, students in order to reach understanding and cohesion toward the formal establishment of a Preserved Land-to-Farm Preservation Program

Old Business

Will be discussed at the next meeting.

Thanks to Kimberly Troup for taking the notes for this meeting.

At 8:15 pm Gary Talboot made a motion to adjourn and seconded by Liz Patrick and was unanimously approved.

Next Meeting is scheduled for **Thursday August 13, 2026** at the township building.