BARRON COUNTY RESOLUTION NO. 2023 – 14

MODERNIZE AND IMPROVE THE WISCONSIN FARMLAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM

TO THE BARRON COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

WHEREAS, the Wisconsin Farmland Preservation Program (FPP) was established in 1978 to protect the state's most valuable agricultural lands from development, and two avenues were created via legislation: local land use zoning or a special agreement with the Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP). Landowners who participated in the program were then eligible for a Wisconsin state income tax credit, if they met the financial criteria and the state's soil conservation standards; and

WHEREAS, in 2009, Wisconsin made significant changes to the FPP administrative codes and statutes as part of the Working Lands Initiative, a suite of programs to protect farmland from development. Among the many changes to the FPP were setting new flat rates per acre for the income tax credits and adding a process for local areas to establish Agricultural Enterprise Areas (AEA); and

WHEREAS, since the FPP rules were amended in 2009, the costs of implementing the required conservation standards have increased to a point where in some cases the cost of participating in the program has exceeded the available tax credits, which in turn has impacted the statewide program participation; and

WHEREAS, the premise of the FPP tax credit was to ensure landowners were compensated for their conservation stewardship and to help offset the costs of implementing and maintaining the required conservation practices. To date this program has been the best available tool to ensure conservation best management practices are being maintained statewide; and

WHEREAS, the long term net result of aforesaid changes was a decrease in the value of the tax credits to maintain the conservation standards which in turn has decreased the overall enrollment statewide. This decrease in enrollment is alarming and needs to be addressed as soon as possible; and

WHEREAS, Local units of government, towns and counties spend considerable staff resources supporting landowners enrolling in the program, offering guidance for improving farmland, and conducting compliance checks needed to qualify for the tax credit; and

WHEREAS, this resolution of support to modernize and improve the Wisconsin Farmland Preservation Program is being brought forward by Louie Okey, County Board Chair and County Supervisor, District 16.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Barron County Board of Supervisors hereby supports and urges the Wisconsin Legislature to pass legislation to modernize and improve the Farmland Preservation Program to increase the allowable tax credits; amend the program eligibility to allow landowners who have Agricultural

Conservation Easements the ability to participate in the FPP, if they meet the financial and conservation criteria; establish a new tax credit level for Agricultural Conservation Easements; increase the frequency of review of the Farmland Preservation Program allowable tax credits to assure they are meeting the basic costs associated with program participation; and expand eligibility of the FPP planning grant funds to support program implementation to be utilized by counties, local municipalities, planning commissions, and tribal governments for their FPP implementation efforts.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution shall be forwarded by the County Clerk to the Governor of the State of Wisconsin and state senators and state representatives representing Barron County.

OFFERED THIS 20th day of March, 2023.

Number of readings required: One (X) Two ( )

Vote required for passage: Majority (X)
2/3 Entire Board (20) ( )

Source of funding: Budgeted ( ) General Fund ( )
Grant ( ) Contingency ( )
Other (X) Details: N/A

Fiscal impact:
- Current year total amount: $ - 0 -
- Future years total amount: $ - 0 -
- Effect on tax levy – current year - $ - 0 -
- Effect on tax levy – future years - $ - 0 -

Fiscal impact reviewed by County Finance Director

Jodi Busch, Finance Director

Approved as to form by Administrator:

Jeffrey French, Administrator

Approved as to form by Corporation Counsel:

John Muench, Corporation Counsel

Louie Okey, County Board Chair,
County Board Supervisor, District 16

(The Committee Chair signature verifies the action taken by the Committee.)

Board Action: Adopted (X) Failed ( ) Tabled ( )

Motion: (Gores/P. Anderson) to approve. Carried with 29 voting Yes.