

(3) In making its recommendation, the county agricultural preservation advisory board shall:

(I) [take] TAKE into consideration criteria and standards established by the Foundation under this subtitle[;], current local regulations, local patterns of land development, THE KINDS OF PRESSURES TO DEVELOP THE SUBJECT LAND, STATE SMART GROWTH GOALS, and any locally established priorities for the preservation of agricultural land[.] ; AND

(II) RECOMMEND FOR RANKING ANY APPLICATION THAT QUALIFIES AND MEETS THE PRIORITIES ESTABLISHED BY THE COUNTY GOVERNING BODY FOR THE PRESERVATION OF AGRICULTURAL LAND.

(4) The county agricultural preservation advisory board shall provide a public hearing concerning any application to sell if such a hearing is requested by a majority of the county agricultural preservation advisory board, or by a majority of the county governing body, or by the applicant.

(5) The board of trustees of the Foundation shall not approve any application to sell which has not been approved by the governing body of the county containing the subject land.

(f) (1) In determining which applications it shall approve for the purchase of the easements offered for sale in each fiscal year under this section, the Foundation:

(i) May approve only those applications in which the subject land meets the criteria and standards established under §§ 2-509 and 2-513 of this subtitle; [and]

(ii) EXCEPT AS PROVIDED IN SUBPARAGRAPH (III) OF THIS PARAGRAPH, RANK THE APPLICATIONS AND SUBMIT OFFERS TO BUY AT THE BEGINNING OF EACH OFFER CYCLE BASED ON THE APPROVED PRIORITIES ESTABLISHED BY EACH ELIGIBLE COUNTY FOR THE PRESERVATION OF AGRICULTURAL LAND; AND

(III) FOR APPLICATIONS COMPETING ON A STATEWIDE BASIS FOLLOWING THE INITIAL ROUND OF OFFERS, [Shall] SHALL rank the applications and submit offers to buy in order of priority, as provided in PARAGRAPH (2) OF this subsection.

(2) The Foundation shall adopt by regulation a standard priority ranking system FOR ADDITIONAL OFFERS TO BUY by which it shall rank each application. The system shall be based on the following criteria as to the easements offered in any one county:

(i) The applications shall be assigned a rank in ascending order with respect to the proportion obtained by dividing the asking price by the State easement value. The resulting rank shall be the sole criterion for establishing the priority for discounted applications that include proportions of 1.0 or lower.