

Minutes of the February 24, 2020
Somerset County Agriculture Development Board
Somerset County Administration Building
20 Grove Street, Somerville, NJ
3rd. Fl. Freeholder's Meeting Room

Following the Pledge of Allegiance, the February 24, 2020 Somerset County Agriculture Development Board (CADB) Meeting began at 8:00 AM at the Somerset County Administration Building, 20 Grove Street, Somerville, NJ in the 3rd Floor Freeholder's Conference Room.

Members in Attendance

Mark W. Kirby, Chairman
W. Peter Staats, Vice Chairman
Edward Seidel, Secretary/Treasurer
Richard Norz
Laura DePrado
Ben Auletta
Sandra D. Rhue
Freeholder Liaison, Melonie Marano

Somerset County Staff

Walter Lane, Dir., SC Planning Division
Anthony McCracken, Assistant Dir., SC Planning
Division
Kate Katzer, Principal Planner, SC
Planning Division
Cathy Bunting, Administrative Assistant, SC Planning Division
Thomas Boccino, Somerset County Park Commission
Dulce Almonte, Somerset County Planning Div., Intern.

Public

J. Johnson, Former CADB Member
Vince Dominach, Economic Development Director, Franklin Township
Peter Madden, Madden Green House & Nursery, Franklin Township
Michael Mueller, Mueller Property Owner, Hillsborough Township
Jill Ott, NRCS
Ryck Suydam, Suydam Associates, LLC

I-2) J. Johnson Resolution

Chairman, Mark Kirby called J. Johnson to the front and presented him with a resolution that recognized him for his many years of service on the CADB.

Public Comments & Presentations

Peter Madden: Madden Green House & Nursery, Franklin Township:

Kate Katzer explained that Peter Madden has attended the meeting seeking a commercial farm determination.

Vince Dominach, Franklin Township's Economic Development Director attended the meeting on Mr. Madden's behalf. He presented to the Board explaining that he and the township fully supports Mr. Madden and his operation. He explained that he has been witness to many "harassing complaints" and that a determination that he is a commercial farm would help him obtain farmland protection against such complaints.

Mr. Madden also addressed the Board to explain the history of his property and the struggles he's had regarding complaints towards his operation. He explained that the "harassing" started approximately six months after him and his wife started a satellite farm stand on Route. He explained that he had exhausted most of his funds on legal fees defending his operation over 2 ½ years. He explained that the Appellate courts heard his case and ruled that under the Right to Farm act there was no case against him.

Mr. Madden explained that he eventually bought the property next to him for farm purposes and the complaints started again. He also stated that he was doing nothing illegal and was simply cleaning up the property.

Chairman, Mark Kirby allowed an opportunity for the Board to ask questions.

The Board agreed that they would discuss the issue further and make a determination in Closed Session.

Michael Mueller: Mueller Property (formerly Osterman), Hillsborough Township.

Michael Mueller attended the meeting seeking permission to place a pole barn on his preserved piece of property in Hillsborough Township. He explained that it would be a two-level barn to store his farm equipment and hay in.

Through a question and answer period with the Board he explained that the hay is grown on his property with the help of another farmer and that there will be electric to the barn but no water. The Board also had plans of the proposed barn that they reviewed.

The Board agreed to discuss the proposed plan in Closed Session.

I-3) Somerset County Preservation Plan- Update

Kate Katzer explained that Planning staff is currently compiling a calendar of events to be shared with the Steering Committee sometime in late March.

I-4) SADC Meeting-Update

Richard Norz informed the Board that the next SADC meeting was Thursday. He explained that they would be discussing Soil Protection Standards and hearing comments for the final draft. He stated that many members cannot participate in the discussions due to conflicts of interest and encourages those interested try and attend to provide recommendations.

1-5) County/State Boards of Agriculture

County: Ed Seidel informed the Board that the County Board of Agriculture meeting was held the previous Thursday and that the Farm Bureau Newsletter, a deer control poll and hemp in NJ Agriculture were discussed.

State: Richard Norz explained that the State Board of Agriculture meeting is scheduled for the next Wednesday.

Laura DePrado informed the Board that on March 14, 2020 there will be a "Taste of NJ" event and that on March 12 the Adult Day Center is holding an event in celebration of Horticulture Therapy Week.

I-6) Monitoring Update

Ms. Katzer explained that there have been issues obtaining PIN numbers from the SADC. She explained that the PINS were necessary in order to input the information for the SADC on the monitored properties. She explained that Dave Kimmel from the SADC was working to help resolve the issue. She also informed the Board that staff is working on a new process for getting information to the SADC.

I-7) Ag Day 2020:

Ms. Katzer shared plans for National Agriculture Day with the Board. She also shared the Annual Report with the Board and stated that she aims to have it ready for Ag day.

Intern Dulce Almonte was also introduced to the Board.

I-8) Staff Comments

Ms. Katzer requested that an item on the Patel Property in Hillsborough Township be added to the Closed Session agenda. A motion approving this request was made by Laura DePrado and was seconded by Peter Staats. The motion was passed and carried.

D-1) Potential Projects

Delbasco: Ms. Katzer informed the Board that SADC staff member Amy Mandelbaum forwarded her an application for preservation for the Delbasco Property. She explained that this property connects to the English farm and a 44-acre lot in Basking Ridge with an Equine operation. She explained that staff will contact the owners of the property for more information.

Dorne: Ms. Katzer explained that a meeting was scheduled next Wednesday with the Township, State and the CADB to discuss the Dorne property.

D-3) Annual Report

Richard Norz made a motion to approve the Annual Report as presented including changes to one map needing editing, the spelling of his name, and edits to the bioagrpahies of the newest Board members. The motion was seconded by Laura DePrado and the motion was passed and carried.

D-4) Montgomery Right-of-Way LOI

Ms. Katzer explained that she hasn't received any finalized copy yet but that she will be presenting it to the Right to Farm Committee once the draft is complete.

D-5) Closed Session:

A motion to enter Closed Session was made by Laura DePrado and was seconded by Richard Norz. The motion was passed and carried, and the Board entered Closed Session.

A motion to exit Closed Session was made by Peter Staats and was seconded by Richard Norz. The motion was passed and carried, and the regular portion of the CADB Meeting resumed.

D-6) Results and Actions from Closed Session

Mueller: Sandra Rhue made a motion that authorizes staff to send a letter to Michael Mueller explaining that they will take no action on approving the poll barn on his property until the violations on his property were resolved. The motion included that the letter also state that the CADB only heard his request as a courtesy to the Township of Hillsborough. The motion was seconded by Peter Staats and it was passed and carried.

Madden: Peter Staats made a motion that Mr. Madden had met all the qualifications as a Commercial Farm. The motion was seconded by Laura DePrado and Richard Norz did not participate in the vote. The motion was passed and carried.

D-7) Adjournment

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Laura DePrado and was seconded by Peter Staats. The motion was passed and carried and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted by,

Edward Seidel
Secretary/Treasurer