

**Minutes of the April 27, 2020**  
**Somerset County Agriculture Development Board**  
**Virtual Meeting**

Following the Pledge of Allegiance, the April 27, 2020 Somerset County Agriculture Development Board (CADB) Meeting began at 8:00 AM. This meeting was held virtually due to the Covid-19 crisis.

**Members in Attendance**

Mark Kirby, Chairman  
W. Peter Staats, Vice Chairman  
Ed Seidel, Secretary/Treasurer  
Richard Norz  
Ben Auletta  
Sandra Rhue  
Melanie Morano, Freeholder Liaison

**Members Absent**

Laura DePrado

**Somerset County Staff**

Walter Lane, Director, Somerset County Planning Division  
Anthony McCracken, Assistant Director, Somerset County Planning Division  
Kate Katzer, Principle Planner, Somerset County Planning Division  
Catherine Bunting, Admin. Assistant, Somerset County Planning Division  
Sara Sooy, Somerset County Freeholder  
Joseph DeMarco, Somerset County Deputy County Counsel

**Public**

Amy Mandelbaum, State Agriculture Development Committee

**Approval of Minutes**

Sandra Rhue and Ed Seidel each brought a spelling/editing error in the February CADB meeting minutes. A motion to approve the minutes with the changes was made by Richard Norz and was seconded by Peter Staats. The motion was passed and carried.

**No Public Comment**

**I-1) Somerset County Preservation Plan – Update**

Kate Katzer informed the Board that staff has reviewed the layout for plans and that they are currently being reviewed. She explained that once comments are complete, they would be shared with the preservation team.

### **I-2) SADC Meeting – Update**

Amy Mandelbaum attended the meeting and gave the Board an update from the SADC. She explained that the SADC is still working remotely but are continuing with closings via electronically or through regular mail. She explained that there are 10 projects that are close to closing but monitoring is still temporarily suspended.

She informed the Board that the last SADC meeting was virtual, and they focused on delegating authority during the Covid-19 crisis.

Richard Norz also comments about the most recent SADC meeting.

### **I-3) County/State Boards of Agriculture – Update**

**County:** Richard Norz explained that he met with Amy Sutton, Mass Care Coordinator for Office of Emergency Management for Somerset County. They discussed Agriculture issues that would affect their office.

**State:** Mr. Norz explained that the last State meeting issues relating to the COVID-19 crisis were discussed. He also explained that there is more funding available from New Jersey Fresh this year and that the State Board will be looking into more advertising for this.

### **I-4) Monitoring Update**

The Board was informed that due to the COVID-19 crisis monitoring is temporarily suspended.

### **I-5) Ag Day 2020**

The Board was informed that due to the COVID-19 crisis Ag Day 2020 was cancelled.

### **I-6) Gund (Franklin)**

Ms. Katzer explained that there was a change in the paperwork for the Gund application and that County Counsel is currently working to get it updated so the property can close within the next week or two.

### **I-7) Doyle (Hillsborough)**

Ms. Katzer explained that staff was working to obtain a report of damage that was done by the surveyors to the cornerstone on the Doyle property. She explained that the issue was later dropped, and staff are now able to move forward with the application. She explained that the title and surveys are now being reviewed and that staff will need to come up with a plan to complete a baseline inspection during this COVID-19 crisis.

### **I-8) Madden (Franklin)**

Ms. Katzer informed the Board that due to the COVID-19 crisis, staff is unable to complete a site inspection of the Madden farm therefore are unable to release a letter to Mr. Madden stating that he meets the criteria of a commercial farmer, which was determined during the February CADB Meeting.

### **I-9) Dorn (Branchburg)**

Ms. Katzer informed the Board that the owner of the Dorn property contacted staff and explained that they are ready to move forward with preservation. She explained that staff is working on how to obtain RFP's for the appraisals during this COVID-19 crisis and that they will hold a pre-appraisal meeting virtually.

### **I-10) Staff Comments**

Ms. Katzer informed the Board that the letter that was sent to Mr. Mueller recently explaining that they could not approve request until his violations were cleared up was received yet they have not received a response from him. She also informed them that Hillsborough Township has received complaint of violation behavior but have been unable to make a site inspection due to the COVID-19 crisis.

### **D-1) Potential Projects**

**Hidden Brook Farm:** The Board discussed the the Hidden Brook Farm (Ashro). They were informed that it is a 53 acre property in Bedminster, with 30 acres of pasture and the remaining for stables and out buildings. Ms. Katzer explained that the owners will be filling out and submitting an application.

Peter Staats mentioned that the property contained a lot of flood plain or wetlands. Ms. Katzer stated she will obtain a better map of the property to look at it closer.

**Lane Farm:** Ms. Katzer stated that the owner of the Lane Farm informed her that they are interested in pursuing preservation after the COVID-19 crisis is resolved.

**Shannon Hill Polo:** Ms. Katzer informed the Board that the SADC referred the Shannon Hill Polo property owners to the CADB for preservation and that she is currently working with the manager of the property. She explained that they are currently working on filling out an application.

**Barbara Varga:** Ms. Katzer informed the Board that Walter forwarded her a message from Barbara Varga who was inquiring about preservation. She explained she called her back and left her a message.

**D-2) Somerset County Ag Roundtable**

Ms. Katzer informed the Board that a Somerset County Ag Roundtable that was recently held was a success. She explained that the main focus was how the Agriculture community can be helped throughout the COVID-19 crisis. Ways to minimize food shortage issues, compiling and distributing a list of what farmers are producing were ideas that were brainstormed.

Richard Norz inputted his experience of farming through the pandemic.

**Other:**

Chairman Mark Kirby reminded the Board that their financial disclosure forms were due soon.

Richard Norz inquired about how the Board would hold the closed session portion of the meeting. Somerset County Director Walter Lane explained that staff will be troubleshooting some options with the virtual meeting program Zoom and will report back to the Board at the next meeting.

**D-3) Adjourn**

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Peter Staats and was seconded by Ed Seidel. The motion was passed and carried, and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted by,

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Ed Seidel  
Secretary/Treasurer