

Minutes of the December 28, 2020
Somerset County Agriculture Development Board
Virtual Meeting

Following the Pledge of Allegiance, the December 28, 2020 Somerset County Agriculture Development Board (CADB) Meeting began at 8:00 AM. This meeting was held virtually due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Members in Attendance:

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

Somerset County Staff:

Walter Lane, Dir., Planning Div.
Anthony McCracken, Asst. Dir., Planning Div.
Kate Katzer, Principal Planner, Planning Div.
Thomas Boccino, Engineering
Greg Pasquale, Deputy County Counsel
Kevin Boris, County Counsel Staf

Members not in Attendance:

Laura DePrado

Public:

Amy Mandelbaum, SADC
Sandy Urgo, The Land Conservancy of New Jersey

Swearing in of a New Member:

Christopher Carnevale was sworn in as a member of the SCADB, with a term ending on December 31, 2024.

Approval of Minutes:

A motion to approve the November 23, 2020 CADB meeting minutes was made by Peter Staats and was seconded by Sandra Rhue. Chris Carnevale abstained. The motion was passed and carried.

Public Comment:

Deerfield Farm (Bedminster): Sandy Urgo, with The Land Conservancy of New Jersey (TLCNJ), shared with the Board information about a 35-acre farm in Bedminster. Currently, TLCNJ is working with the SADC to preserve Deerfield Farm, and nearby is the County preserved farm known as Piancone. The farm is primarily in hay, with an orchard in the front of the property. TLCNJ is requesting financial participation from the Board to meet the projected amount need to purchase the easement. The County would then become the DOE holder. A memo, written up by Ms. Urgo, was shared with the Board- which contained additional information about the farm and surrounding properties.

Rich Norz recused himself from the discussion, as he had participated on the State level through SADC.

The Board agreed to discuss further in Closed Session.

I-2) SADC Meeting – Update

Amy Mandelbaum shared updates from the State and gave a brief update about projects occurring in the County. Ms. Mandelbaum shared a copy of the update via email with County staff, as well.

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

County: There was no update.

State: The Board was informed that the State Convention will be held on February 17 and would be virtual.

I-4) Staff Comments

Ms. Katzer explained that staff had reviewed the Farmland Preservation Plan in the final layout. Adjustments were being made, and staff is hopeful that a Steering Committee Meeting to discuss the plan would occur mid-January.

D-1) Mueller (Hillsborough):

Ms. Katzer explained that improvements have been made on the property. The Board agreed to discuss the matter in closed session.

D-2) Norz Hill (Hillsborough):

Ms. Katzer explained that staff had reviewed the request for the SSAMP, and had visit the site where the proposed change would occur. Staff requested that the Board move forward by allowing the RTF Committee to meet, review, and discuss the next steps and paperwork associated with the SSAMP process. The Board agreed to discuss the next steps for the SSAMP during closed session.

D-3) Dorn (Branchburg):

Ms. Katzer gave an update about the Dorn property. The resolutions for appraisal contracts were approved by the Freeholders. Once staff receives the signed contracts from the appraisers, staff would begin setting up the pre-appraisal meeting that was requested by the owner.

D-4) Doyle (Hillsborough):

Ms. Katzer explained that staff had done everything possible to ensure the project would close by the end of the year, but unforeseen circumstances arose. The Board agreed to discuss the project further during closed session.

D-5) Monitoring Fall 2020-Update

Ms. Katzer shared with the Board that there were no issues unearthed during monitoring. She was pleased to share with the Board that properties that were contacted to clean up areas last year had done so and continued the upkeep of the farm. She suggested a letter and follow up be sent to Joe Cichowski, as he was

in the middle of a large clean-up project and requested staff to return to see progress. The Board will discuss further during closed session.

D-6) Meeting Dates:

Ms. Katzer explained that the meeting dates had been sent out in the packet for the Board to review. Staff requested that the Board review and move to accept the dates so that Staff would be able to public notice the full year at once. Staff also explained that as for now, the meetings would need to be held virtually. The Board discussed public noticing the meetings as virtual for the full year, with the understanding that a public notice could be sent out if that were to change in the future.

D-7) Committee Sign-up

Ms. Katzer explained that the committee list was shared with the Board prior to the meeting. Mark Kirby expressed to the Board that if anyone wanted to change the committees or sign up for something else, to contact himself, Pete, or Kate Katzer. A final committee list would be shared during the January Regular Meeting.

Motion to enter Closed Session:

A motion to enter Closed Session was made by Pete Staats and was seconded by Ben Auletta. The motion was passed, and the Board entered Closed Session.

Please note, Richard Norz exited the meeting during any discussions regarding his SSAMP request.

D-8) Results and Actions from Closed Session

Cichowski: Pete Staats made a motion to send a letter to Joe Cichowski about the progress being made on the property, and to establish a return date for staff to monitor the upkeep. The motion was seconded by Rich Norz and was passed and carried.

Norz Hill Farm: A motion to have the Right to Farm Committee review the documentation and resolution material for Mr. Norz's requested SSAMP was made by Sandra Rhue and was seconded by Ben Auletta. Richard Norz recused himself from the vote and Peter Staats abstained from the vote. The motion was passed and carried.

Deerfield Farm: A motion was made by Ben Auletta to move the Deerfield Farm project to the PIG Committee for discussion and was seconded by Sandra Rhue. Richard Norz recused himself from the vote. The motion was passed and carried.

D-9) Adjournment

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Sandra Rhue and was seconded by Rich Norz.

Respectfully Submitted by,

Sandra Rhue
Secretary/Treasurer