

Minutes of the September 25, 2023
Somerset County Agriculture Development Board

Following the Pledge of Allegiance, the September 25, 2023, Somerset County Agriculture Development Board (SCADB) Meeting began at 8:15 A.M. This meeting was held in person in the Commissioner's Meeting Room at the Somerset County Administration Building in Somerville, N.J.

Open Public Meetings Act Compliance Statement

Chairman Mark Kirby reported the meeting had been duly advertised in accordance with Open Public Meetings Act as follows:

In accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 *et seq.*, adequate notice of this meeting has been provided. The date and time information for this meeting were published in The Star Ledger and the Courier News. The agenda for this meeting was also posted on the Somerset County Agriculture Development Board's website.

Roll Call

Roll call was taken. There was a Quorum.

Members in Attendance:

Mark W. Kirby, Chair
W. Peter Staats, Vice Chair
Laura De Prado
Kenneth Osterman
Sandra D. Rhue, Secretary/Treasurer
Debbie Norz
Matt D'Alessandro, Soil Conservation District
Paul Drake, Commissioner Liaison

Members Not in Attendance:

Robert Schultz

Somerset County Staff:

Kate Katzer, Principal Planner- Office of Planning, Policy and Economic Development
Walter Lane, Director – Office of Planning, Policy and Economic Development
Patrice Brown, Administrative Assistant, Office of Planning, Policy and Economic Development
Josephine Taranto, Preservation Planner, Office of Planning, Policy and Economic Development
Greg Pasquale, Deputy County Counsel

Public Members Present:

Dave Zaback, State Agricultural Development Committee
Richard Dodds, New Jersey Conservation Foundation

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: SCADB Regular Meeting – August 28, 2023

A motion was made by Laura DePrado and seconded by Kenneth Osterman to approve the Somerset County Agriculture Development Board minutes of the August 28, 2023, meeting. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed.

PUBLIC COMMENT & PRESENTATIONS:

Clint Dealaman of Dealaman Enterprises was in attendance to request a Site-Specific Agricultural Management Plan for his property. Mr. Dealaman asked for clearance for composting on the farm with leaves. Mr. Dealaman described the animals and practices occurring onsite. The farm is home to chickens, goats, pigs and hay and flowers are grown onsite. Mr. Dealaman would like to have a self-serve cart onsite for the sale of eggs and flowers. The Board and County Council conducted a brief hearing on the request.

INFORMATION ITEMS1. SADC Meeting -Update

Dave Zaback of the State Agricultural Development Committee reported that there was no meeting in August. A public meeting on Soil Protection Standards will be held online on Wednesday, September 27, 2023. The comment period for the Soil Protection Standards will end on October 6, 2023.

2. County/State Boards of Agriculture – Update

Debbie Norz reported that the deadline to return a completed application package for the Secretary of Agriculture position has been extended to September 29, 2023. The Application is also available online. The County Board of Agriculture met immediately after the Influencing Ag event. "The Sauce of Somerset" County was discussed during the meeting which would be a partnership opportunity between the Somerset County Board of Agriculture, the Somerset County Agriculture Development Board, and Rutgers Food Innovation Center. The Board suggested including salsa as an additional consideration.

3. Staff Comments

Planning, Policy and Economic Development Planner, Kate Katzer, reported that there are currently owners of 36 properties that are interested in the Farmland Preservation Program. Ms. Katzer noted that staff is preparing to close on three farms in the next few months: Drenchko property in Hillsborough Township, Segal & Moral property in Bedminster Township and Deerfield Creek property in Branchburg Township. These properties will preserve approximately 200 acres to the program.

Director of Planning, Policy and Economic Development, Walter Lane, notified the Board that the Preservation Plan is receiving a Smart Growth Award from New Jersey Future on October 4, 2023.

DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS1. Influencing Agriculture

The Board applauded the Influencing Ag event "Field and Beyond" which was held on September 14, 2023, from 9:00am to 1:30 pm at Duke Farms. Kate Katzer reported highlights of the event to the Board. Staff is currently working on "Farmer Fridays" which will be a segment on Instagram and Facebook to highlight local farmers and their operations. The first farmer to be featured is Debbie Norz of Norz Hill Farm & Market. Staff is

also working with the Somerset County Office of Geographical Information System (GIS) to assist farmers who do not currently have an online presence to develop websites for their operations.

2. Dealaman Enterprises (Warren)

To be discussed during closed session.

3. House Farm (Montgomery)

A hearing for the Right to Farm complaint will be held at the October Somerset County Agriculture Development Board meeting.

4. Balogh Associates (Franklin)

Ms. Katzer referred to the Balogh Associates' Right to Farm documentation. Balogh Associates have begun to remove trees from the rear portion of their property to increase the tillable acreage. This action was halted by Franklin Township and referred to the CADB to ensure that the work was carried out properly. A site visit will be scheduled. This issue will be discussed further during Closed Session.

5. Nakhla Property (Hillsborough)

Kate Katzer informed the Board that a site visit was conducted and Mr. Nakhla has satisfied the required actions of driveway removal, site restoration and general site cleanup to staff's satisfaction.. Ms. Katzer requested that the Board close out the violation and move forward with the Site-Specific Agricultural Management Plan request. This issue will be discussed further during Closed Session.

6. Christy Farm (Hillsborough)

Ms. Katzer informed the Board that the application was received from the owner of this property which is located between existing preserved farms. Ms. Katzer is seeking Board approval to present the application to the Commissioners for submission to the SADC. This issue will be discussed further during Closed Session.

7. Shannon Hill Farm (Bernards)

Kate Katzer reminded the Board that the owners had submitted an application for preservation prior to the Covid 19 pandemic but pulled the application when the pandemic lasted longer than anticipated. The owners are now ready to move forward with the application. Ms. Katzer is now requesting the Board's approval to present the application to the Commissioners for submission to the State Agriculture Development Committee. This issue will be discussed further during Closed Session.

At 8:59 a.m., a motion was made by Laura DePrado and seconded by Sandra Rhue to go into Closed Session. A roll call was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

8. Closed Session

At 9:21 a motion was made by Kenneth Osterman and seconded by Laure DePrado for the meeting to come out of Closed Session. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously. Chairman Mark Kirby recused himself from any conversation concerning the Christy Property.

9. Results and Actions from Closed Session:

Shannon Hill Farm (Bernards)

A motion was made by Laura DePrado and seconded by Peter Staats to proceed with the submission of the Farmland Preservation application completion and presentation to the Commissioners for approval. Debbie Norz voted "No" until she can review a map of the property and the motion passed.

Nahla Property (Hillsborough)

A motion was made by Debbie Norz and seconded by Laura DePrado to close out the violation and to assist the farmer with completion and submission of his Site-Specific Agricultural Management Plan. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion was passed unanimously.

Dealaman Enterprises (Warren)

A motion was made by Peter Staats and seconded by Laura DePrado to authorize staff to draft an SSAMP resolution that would reflect the use description in application as well as the requests made at this meeting by the property owner. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

Balogh Associates (Franklin)

A motion was made by Laura DePrado and seconded by Debbie Norz to approve of a site visit to the property. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

Christy Farm (Hillsborough)


**Chairman Mark Kirby has recused himself from discussion regarding this property. Kirby has delegated Vice Chair Peter Staats to continue in his stead for this motion's subject matter.*

A motion was made by Debbie Norz and seconded by Laura DePrado to approve completion of the preservation application for this farm and presentation to the Commissioners for approval. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed.

At 10:31 a.m. a motion was made by Laura DePrado and seconded by Ken Osterman to adjourn the meeting. A voice vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

The next meeting will be held in person on October 23, 2023, at 8:15 a.m. in the same location.

Respectfully Submitted by,


Secretary/Treasurer