

**Minutes of the February 26, 2024**  
**Somerset County Agriculture Development Board Meeting**

Following the Pledge of Allegiance, the February 26, 2024, Somerset County Agriculture Development Board (SCADB) Meeting began at 8:18 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 Statement**

Chair 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 was 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 DePrado

Robert Shultz

Sandra D. Rhue, Secretary/Treasurer

**Members Not in Attendance:**

Kenneth Osterman

County Commissioner Paul Drake, Liaison

Matt D'Alessandro, Soil Conservation District

**Somerset County Staff:**

Mathew D. Loper – Director- Department of Engineering and Planning

Kate Katzer, Principal Planner – Somerset County Agriculture Development Board Manager

Patrice Brown, Administrative Assistant, Department of Engineering and Planning

Alyssa Puccio, Deputy County Counsel

**Public Members Present:**

David Zaback, SADC (State Agriculture Development Committee) Staff

**Approval of Minutes:**

A motion to approve the SCADB minutes (with corrections) of the January 26, 2024, meeting was made by Peter Staats and seconded by Laura DePrado. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed.

**PUBLIC COMMENT & PRESENTATIONS:**

No public comment

**INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:**

**1. SADC Meeting –Update**

Dave Zaback of the State Agricultural Development Committee (SADC) reported that the interim policy for the state-wide formula was adopted and will be distributed to all the municipalities of the State. The equation process was adopted, and the formula will increase participation which may benefit Somerset County as well as other counties across the State of New Jersey. The SADC estimates the formula will be ready for use in a year; and current applications for preservation can be paused if the owner would like to utilize the formula.

**2. County /State Boards of Agriculture – Update**

Debbie Norz updated the Board that interviews are still ongoing for Secretary of Agriculture. Principal Planner Kate Katzer reported that the Stop the Bleed event which is being hosted by the County Board of Ag and Robert Wood Johnson on March 5<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. at Suydam’s Farm in Franklin Township.

Ms. Katzer also announced that a celebration for the departure of Nick Polanin, outgoing County Ag Extension Agent, and a welcome for Kate Brown, the new County Ag Extension Agent, will be held at the next County Board of Agriculture meeting on March 14, 2024. Sheriff Officer Sean Kumf, who is an instructor for the Stop the Bleed program, informed the Board of the training offered and the specifics on what topics are covered.

**3. Staff Comments**

Kate Katzer asked that Mueller Farm be added to closed session for the Board to receive an update from Joe DeMarco, County Counsel.

Ms. Katzer reported that there are two new Farms that are interested in submitting applications to be Preserved Farms: Symanski in Bridgewater (12 acres) and Martenette’s in Hillsborough (under 10 acres).

Kate Katzer introduced Matt Loper, Director of the new Department of Engineering and Planning, to the Board. The Board introduced themselves to Mr. Loper.

**DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS:**

**1. Kerzner Property Resolution- Hillsborough Township**

Kate Katzer reminded the Board of the last meeting where there was a hearing, and the resolution was constructed for the Boards review. Ms. Katzer read the resolution in its entirety. A motion to approve the resolution

with corrections was made by Peter Staats and seconded by Laura DePrado. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion was passed.

## 2. Misty Hollow Farm SOE Application – Hillsborough Township

Kate Katzer referred to the Special Occasion Events application that she brought before the board to review, and she recommended that the application be submitted to the SOE subcommittee for approval. The Board opted to approve the application at this meeting. A motion was made by Laura DePrado to approve the application and for Deputy County Counsel to put together a letter capturing the approval, the motion was seconded by Peter Staats. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion was passed.

## 3. Dalness Property- Borough of Peapack & Gladstone

Kate Katzer informed the Board that the Dalness Property owner has officially submitted his application for preservation to the New Jersey Conservation Foundation and the SCADB. The New Jersey Conservation Foundation has requested the SCADB take lead on the preservation of this 43-acre property. A motion to bring the application to the Somerset County Commissioners for approval was made by Laura DePrado and seconded by Debbie Norz. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion was passed.

## 4. Monitoring 2023 wrap -up

Ms. Katzer reported to the board the 2023 wrap up of all 127 farms. Two of the farms will be discussed during the closed session.

## 5. Closed Session

At 8:47 a.m. a motion was made by Laura DePrado and seconded by Sandra Rhue to go into closed session. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion was passed.

At 9:36 a.m. a motion was made by Peter Staats and seconded by Bob Schultz to come out of closed session. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion was passed.

## **3. Results and Actions from Closed Session**

### **Monitoring 2023**

A motion to send a letter to Joe Cichowski with a 3-month follow-up was made by Debbie Norz and seconded by Sandra Rhue. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion was passed.

**Mueller Farm Hillsborough Township – No action**

### **Right to Farm Kerzner Resolution – Hillsborough Township**

Resolution has been approved with corrections and will be signed by Chairman Mark Kirby.

### **Misty Hollow SOE Application -Hillsborough Township**

A motion to send a letter recognizing the acceptance and approval of the application which has been deemed complete and that there are no violations on the property was made by Sandra Rhue and seconded by Debbie Norz. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion was passed.

**Closed Session Minutes for December 18, 2023 and January 22, 2024**

The closed session minutes of the December 18, 2023 meeting and the minutes from the January 22, 2024 meeting were approved with a motion made by Laura DePrado and seconded by Robert Schultz. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed.

At 9:40 a.m., a motion was made to adjourn by Sandra Rhue and seconded by Peter Staats. A voice vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

***The next meeting will be held in person on March 25, 2024, at 8:15 a.m. in the same location.***

Respectfully Submitted by,

*Sandra Rhue*

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Sandra Rhue  
Secretary/Treasurer