

**Minutes of the March 25, 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 8:15 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 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  
Debbie Norz  
Robert Shultz  
Sandra D. Rhue, Secretary/Treasurer  
Matt D'Alessandro, Soil Conservation District  
Kate Brown, Agriculture Extension Agent

**Members Not in Attendance:**

Kenneth Osterman  
County Commissioner Paul Drake, Liaison

**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

Richard Dodds, New Jersey Conservation Foundation Staff

### **Approval of Minutes:**

A motion to approve the SCADB minutes (with correction) of the February 26, 2024, meeting was made by Laura DePrado and seconded by Debbie Norz. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT & PRESENTATIONS:**

#### **1. Catherine Sorge Resolution of Appreciation**

Chairman Mark Kirby presented the family of Somerset County Agriculture Development Board past member, Catherine Sorge, with a Resolution of Appreciation for her many years of dedication to the agricultural community in the County.

### **INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:**

#### **1. SADC Meeting –Update**

Dave Zaback of the State Agricultural Development Committee (SADC) reported that the special SADC meeting was held on Friday, March 15, 2024, to discuss the Soil Protection Standards. The public comment hearing period had closed after the New Jersey Ag Convention back in February. All public comments were discussed, and the recommendations are to make significant changes to the proposed rules which will mean they will have to be republished. These changes will include all existing disturbance will be “grandfathered” in, and all farms will be given an additional 12% or four acres of disturbance (whichever is greater). Other provisions to accommodate landowners who were close to the limit have been made. The production waiver will be removed; but the Innovation waiver is still in place. Transfer of disturbance will stay the same. The next SADC meeting will be Thursday, March 28, 2024 at 9am virtually and in person.

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

Debbie Norz updated the Board that the State Board of Agriculture have submitted names to the Governor and Ed Wengryn was chosen as the new Secretary of Agriculture. Mr. Wengryn is from Somerset County. The State Board of Agriculture also met to discuss the Soil Protection Standards; and the newly suggested changes from the SADC – no word yet on their thoughts.

Laura DePrado shared that students from VoTech were competing in the NJ FFA Horticulture Exposition (Hort Expo) at Mercer County College.

Debbie Norz informed the Board that the Tom Everett Scholarship application deadline has been extended to June 1<sup>st</sup>. Ms. Norz also applauded the Stop the Bleed Program which was a success.

Somerset County Agricultural Development Board Manager, Kate Katzer introduced the new County Agricultural Extension Agent, Kate Brown. Ms. Brown introduced herself and shared her background with the Board. The Board introduced themselves to Ms. Brown.

### **3. Staff Comments**

Kate Katzer asked that the Dealaman property neighbor complaint be added to closed session for the Board to discuss. Ms. Katzer also asked that The Sauces of Somerset be added as well for discussion and approval.

### **DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS:**

#### **1. Ag Day 2024 Recap**

Kate Katzer shared Ag Day coverage: Kate Katzer gave each Board member a goodie bag from the event and gave a detailed account of the various activities and attractions that the event offered. The event was a success in terms of outreach of information involving Somerset County communities. A thank you note will be sent to agriculture operation participants.

#### **2. Franklin Township High School Green Fair – Franklin Township**

Kate Katzer extended an invitation to the Board to participate in Franklin Township's Green Fair event Saturday, May 18, 2024, from 1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. This will be the 2<sup>nd</sup> year for this event.

#### **3. Soil Protection Standards Update**

This item was covered by Dave Zaback earlier in the meeting.

#### **4. Misty Hollow Farm SOE letter- Hillsborough**

Ms. Katzer presented the Board with the letter drawn up by County Counsel Allysa Puccio. The letter covered the Farm's SOE application. A motion for the approval of the application with a reminder that there may be additional permits and or approvals was made by Debbie Norz and seconded by Peter Staats.

#### **5. Hidden Spring Lavender & Alpaca Farm SOE Application- Montgomery**

Kate Katzer presented the Board with an SOE application submitted 1 lifetime milestone event, 4 weddings, and 8 other social events. This will be discussed during the closed session.

#### **6. Sauces of Somerset – Added to Agenda**

Debbie Norz gave an informative report on food insecurity programs that she, Kate Katzer and Kate Brown have been working on as part of the collaborative efforts between the SCADB and the Somerset County Board of Agriculture.

#### **7. Closed Session**

At 9:18 a.m. a motion was made by Debbie Norz and seconded by Laura DePrado 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 Laura DePrado and seconded by Robert Schultz to come out of closed session. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion was passed.

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

### **Hidden Spring Lavendar and Alpaca Farm SOE Application:**

A motion to approve the Hidden Spring Lavender and Alpaca Farm SOE application was made by Debbie Norz and seconded by Laura DePrado. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion was passed.

### **Closed Session Minutes for February 26, 2024:**

The closed session minutes of the February 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.

### **Sauces of Somerset:**

Debbie Norz proposed a program, Sauces of Somerset, a collaborative effort between the SCADB and the Somerset County Board of Agriculture that would allow farmers from all over the County to participate in the creation of Somerset exclusive salsa, pasta sauces, and fruit sauces. Laura DePrado made a motion to support the application for program funding. The motion was seconded by Sandra Rhue. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed.

At 9:44 a.m., a motion was made to adjourn by Laura DePrado and seconded by Debbie Norz. A voice vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

***The next meeting will be held in person on April 22, 2024, at 8:15 a.m. in the same location.***

Respectfully Submitted by,

*Sandra Rhue* \_\_\_\_\_

Sandra Rhue  
Secretary/Treasurer