

Minutes of the February 25, 2019
Somerset County Agriculture Development Board
Somerset County Administration Building
20 Grove Street, Somerville, NJ
3rd. Fl. Freeholder's Meeting Room

Following the Pledge of Allegiance, the February 25, 2019 Somerset County Agriculture Development Board (CADB) Meeting began at 8:00 AM at the Somerset County Administration Building, 20 Grove Street, Somerville, NJ in the 3rd Floor Freeholder's Conference Room.

Members in Attendance

Mark Kirby, Chairman
W. Peter Staats, Vice Chairman
J. Johnson, Secretary/Treasurer
Ed Seidel
Laura DePrado
Frank Calo, Ex-Efficio Member
Sara Sooy, Freeholder Liaison

Members Absent

Richard Norz

Somerset County Staff

Walter Lane, Director
Tony McCracken, Assistant Director
Kate Katzer, Principal Planner
Cathy Bunting, Administrative Assistant
Angela Jupin, Deputy County Counsel
Tom Boccino, Engineering

Public

Greg Romano
Frank Pinto, Greener by Design
Amy Mandelbaum, SADC
Beth Davisson, NJCF

Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the January CADB meeting minutes was made by Peter Staats and was seconded Laura DePrado. The motion was passed and carried.

I-2 Somerset County Preservation Plan – Update

Kate Katzer explained that the Steering Committee had previously met to discuss and provide updates on the Somerset County Preservation Plan. She explained that maps that are currently being developed were shared and that they are currently working on creating “farming belts” that would help connect some of Somerset County's preserved areas, creating a more contiguous farm area. She also informed the Board that approximately 15 new Agriculture maps have been created already.

Chairman, Mark Kirby also attended the meeting and informed the Board that he pointed out that two parts of the master plan, (Open Space and Historic) should have a Wildlife Management Plan for all past and present ground inside the County. He explained that if the issue is only in place for the Agriculture portion it will be ineffective.

Public Comment / Chubb Easement – Beth Davisson

Beth Davisson and Greg Ramono from the NJ Conservation Foundation attended to present the Chubb/Ace Property for a possible cost share from the CADB. She explained that the property is in Bedminster and that it was the last property on the interchange on Route 78 by Rattlesnake Bridge near the preserved farm, “Buffalo Country”. She showed the map and reviewed the surrounding area.

Ms. Davisson explained that she has already secured over 50% of the purchase price through a non-profit grant and bargain sale. She then reminded the Board that this property was seen in an application before however they have since removed the Jones portion from the application. The Board was reminded that they denied the application due to an access issue from the Jones property.

She then explained that the Lamington Conservancy had recently secured \$400,000 from the Highlands Open Space program leaving a shortfall of \$340,000 that they are asking the CADB for, plus an additional \$5,000 for possible acreage adjustments upon survey. She explained that the CADB would hold the easement.

The Board agreed to discuss the details of the application in Closed Session.

I-2) SADC Meeting-Update

Amy Mandelbaum attended the meeting to provide an update from the SADC. She handed out their newsletter and current project updates from the SADC and explained that they currently have 3 projects from Somerset County, 5 Municipal, and 2 non-profit.

Ms. Mandelbaum explained that Green Light approval has been received for the Chubb/Ace property and that the Doyle application is moving along well and that they are in contact with both the County and the landowners consistently.

Ms. Mandelbaum explained that the SADC continues to conduct outreach with the Municipalities.

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

County: Ed Seidel informed the Board that the passing of the minimum wage was discussed at the most recent County Board of Agriculture meeting. He also explained that they discussed an eagle that was found in Somerset County with lead in its system and it’s feared that the led came from a lead bullet.

State: Mark Kirby informed the Board that Deborah Norz was elected to the State Board of Agriculture.

I-4) Staff Comments

Kate Katzer explained that for National Agriculture Day there are plans to do a rededication of the planter boxes that were created for past National Agriculture events. She explained staff will invite freeholders to attend and that there will be several viewings a documentary on the history of farming, past and present, throughout the millstone valley that was created by Cultural & Heritage Commission and the Millstone Valley Preservation Coalition.

D-1) Potential Projects

The Board agreed to discuss the Dorn and Grande Applications in a Subcommittee meeting.

D-2) Other Business

Mark Kirby informed the Board that he spoke with Senator Kip Bateman to discuss legislative concerns.

Ed Seidel then explained that members of the Board of Agriculture are currently inviting legislators to a meeting on March 5, 2019.

Laura DePrado informed the Board that the NJ Agricultural Society will be holding their annual gala on March 23 at 5PM at the Boathouse at Mercer County Park.

D-3) CADB Subcommittee List

The Board reviewed, discussed and made changes to drafted subcommittee member lists that were provided in their packets. A motion to approve the lists with the changes was made by Peter Staats and was seconded by Ed Seidel. The motion was passed and carried.

D-4) CADB Bylaw Updates

Ms. Katzer had previously presented a draft copy of the bylaws, with two existing sections being placed in their proper order, this being simply an administrative reordering of sections. Ed Seidel pointed out that the requirement for advertising a scheduled meeting was listed as ten days but a five day period should be included as the requirement by law is only 48 hours. A motion to make the changes was made by Laura DePrado and was seconded by Ed Seidel. The motion was passed and carried.

A motion to approve the bylaws was made by Ed Seidel and was seconded by Peter Staats. The motion was passed and carried.

D-5) Gund Farm (Franklin)

Ms. Katzer explained that the Gund application was discussed at the Freeholder's regular meeting and that the next day they would consider it for final approval. She explained that if approved surveys would begin and the information would be forwarded to County Counsel for closing documents to be prepared. She also reminded them that the property owner has agreed to a 6 acre severable exception at the back of the property leaving an opportunity for Somerset County Open Space to add connecting trail in the future.

D-6) Closed Session

A motion to enter closed session was made by Peter Staats and was seconded by Laura DePrado. The motion was passed and carried and the Board entered closed session.

A motion to exit closed session was made by Laura DePrado and was seconded by J. Johnson. The motion was passed and carried and the regular portion of the CADB meeting resumed.

Walter Lane recused himself from all discussions regarding the Patel property and J. Johnson recused himself from any discussions regarding Hunter Farms.

D-7) Results and Actions from Closed Session

Harms: A motion to issue a violation letter on the Harms' property giving the owners 10 days to respond was made by Laura DePrado and was seconded by Peter Staats. The motion was passed and carried.

Marki: Peter Staats made a motion to send a letter to the Marki property giving the owner(s) 10 days to provide more information on the status of the occupancy of the Agriculture Labor House. The motion was seconded by Laura DePrado. The motion was passed and carried.

Patel: Ed Seidel made a motion to send Mr. Patel a letter informing him that the CADB would be performing another site inspection. The motion was seconded by Laura DePrado. The motion was passed and carried.

Doyle Farm: Laura DePrado made a motion to move forward with appraisals on the Doyle property. The motion was seconded by J. Johnson. Ed Seidel voted no and the motion was passed and carried.

Chubb/Ace: A motion to approve the requested cost share for the Chubb/Ace Property was made by Peter Staats and was seconded by Laura DePrado. The motion was passed and carried.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Laura DePrado and was seconded by Peter Staats. The motion was passed and carried and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted by,

J. Johnson
Secretary/Treasurer