

**Minutes of November 24, 2025**  
**Somerset County Agriculture Development Board Meeting**

Following the Pledge of Allegiance, the November 24, 2025, of the Somerset County Agriculture Development Board (SCADB) Meeting began at 8:19 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**

Vice Chairperson, Debbie Norz, reported the meeting had been duly advertised in accordance with the 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  
Debbie Norz, Vice Chair  
Jimmy Abma  
Joanne Powell  
Laura DePrado, Secretary  
Robert Schultz  
Paul Drake, Commissioner Liaison

**Members Not in Attendance:**

Matt D'Alessandro, Soil Conservation District  
Kate Brown, Rutgers Extension Agent  
John Lima

**Somerset County Staff:**

Kate Katzer, Somerset County Agriculture Development Board Manager  
Sarah Fitzpatrick, Esq., Deputy County Counsel  
Sheli Daniels, Somerset County Planning Division Office Manager

**Public Members Present:**

Rich Dodds, NJ Conservation Foundation  
David Zaback, SADC

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

The minutes of the September 22, 2025 meeting were approved. The motion was made by Joanne Powell and seconded by Laura DePrado. A roll call vote was made, and the motion was passed.

## **INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:**

### **1. SADC Meeting –Update**

David Zaback reported that the State Agriculture Development Committee had finalized its Soil and Water Rules following the public comment period. No substantive changes were made, and the rules will take effect upon publication. He reported that farm closings had resumed statewide after being paused during the implementation of the new formula, with closings now occurring in batches of eight to ten. Deerfield Creek's closing is progressing after updated resolutions were received. He noted a significant statewide increase in interest in farmland preservation, with over 220 applications now pending. Additionally, Henry Farm is no longer under eminent domain and was recently granted preliminary approval for preservation.

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

Joanne Powell provided updates regarding upcoming agricultural events. The Annual Dinner of the County Board of Agriculture will be held at Suydam Farms on November 13 at 6:30 p.m., with RSVPs due by November 5. She also noted that the New Jersey Farm Bureau Convention will take place from November 18 through 19. No further State Board updates were provided.

### **3. Staff Comments**

Manager Katzer announced that Administrative Assistant Imani Carrillo would be returning to work at the end of the month and that both she and her baby were doing well. She also shared that Chair Kirby had returned home from rehabilitation and continued to make progress. Committee sign-ups for 2026 will take place during the November meeting, and planning will begin for the December holiday breakfast. She reminded the Board that the December meeting will occur one week earlier, on December 15, due to the holiday schedule.

## **DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS:**

*The following items were presented to the Board by Somerset County Agriculture Development Board Manager, Kate Katzer:*

### **1. Axcel Farm- Hillsborough**

Staff completed a site visit to the farm with the Soil Conservation District. This matter will be discussed further during closed session.

### **2. Naturally Nurturing- Hillsborough**

Kate Katzer shared that she spoke with State and has an update. This matter will be discussed further during closed session.

### **3. RTF Howard Farm- Montgomery**

Staff shared that there was a complaint filed by a neighbor of the Howard Farm stating that non-agricultural activities were occurring onsite, which had been discussed at the last meeting. The site visit was recently conducted to view the activities occurring. This matter will be discussed further during closed session.

### **4. Hidden Spring Lavender & Alpaca Farm- Montgomery**

Staff shared that there was a complaint filed by a neighbor of the Howard Farm stating that non-agricultural activities were occurring onsite, which had been discussed at the last meeting. The site visit was recently conducted to view the activities occurring. This matter will be discussed further during closed session.

## **5. Monitoring 2025**

Kate Katzer shared the GIS Team had developed an app for monitoring which would allow staff to utilize electronic devices to capture information about the site and the locations of areas of concern. The hope is to utilize these electronic submissions to submit to the State for yearly monitoring. This app will also allow staff to bring up site visit information remotely during Board meetings for review and discussion.

## **6. 2026 Meeting Dates**

## **7. 2026 Committee Assignments**

## **8. Closed Session**

At 8:45 a.m. a motion to go into closed session was made by Laura DePrado and seconded by John Lima. A roll call vote was made, and the motion was passed. John Lima recused himself from any conversation regarding 840 Amwell Road.

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

At 9:28am a.m. a motion to come out of closed session was made by Joanne Powell and seconded by Laura DePrado. A roll call vote was made, and the motion was passed.

A motion was made to send a violation letter to Axcel Farm landowners if they do not submit which material they will be utilizing to stabilize the roadway and the associated plan by October 31<sup>st</sup>. The motion was made by Joanne Powell and seconded by Laura DePrado.

A motion was made to send a letter of violation to Mueller for the millings that have been brought onto the property, as well as the pipe that is under the site pad and the newly installed septic. The landowner will need to submit revised plans for the site pad to be reviewed by the Board to come back into compliance. The motion was made by Joanne Powell and seconded by Laura DePrado.

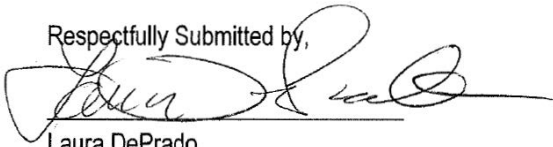
A motion was made to send a letter of violation to the landowner of Howard Farm for the commercial vehicles that were found on the preserved ground. The motion was made by Laura DePrado and seconded by Jimmy Abma.

A motion was made to send a letter to Hillsborough Township and the landowner of 840 Amwell Road, finding that the commercial farm is within compliance with local zoning and no agricultural violations have been found at this time. The motion was made by Laura DePrado and seconded by Joanne Powell. John Lima recused himself from the vote and any discussion on this matter.

## **10. Adjournment**

At 9:31 a.m., a motion was made to adjourn by Laura DePrado and seconded by John Lima. A voice vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted by,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Laura DePrado', written over a horizontal line. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Laura DePrado  
SCADB Secretary

*The Next SCADB meeting will be held on Monday, December 15, 2025, at 8:15 am.*