

# Watershed Agricultural Council

Agriculture ♦ Forestry ♦ Conservation Easements ♦ Economic Viability

nycwatershed.org



## MINUTES OF THE WATERSHED AGRICULTURAL COUNCIL MEETING

April 25, 2023

### I. Meeting called to order at 10:07 a.m.

#### Directors Present:

Dwight Bruno  
Dave Cammer  
James Darling  
Paul Gallay, via Zoom  
Wayland 'Bud' Gladstone, *Chair*  
Karl Gockel, *Treasurer*  
Jennifer Grossman, *Secretary*, via Zoom  
Barb Hanselman  
Jason Helmbold  
Fred Huneke  
Tom Hutson, *Vice Chair*  
Steve Reed  
John Verhoeven, via Zoom  
John Vickers, *NYC DEP Representative*  
Jeff Wilson, via Zoom  
Marilyn Wyman

#### Directors Absent:

None

#### Others Present:

Amy Faulkner, *Director of Operations*  
Carol Bishop, *Finance Director*  
Connor Young, *WOH Agricultural Program Manager*  
Elaine Poulin, *Program Procurement and Contract Coordinator*  
Brian LaTourette, *Program Operations Coordinator*  
Gibson Durnford, *EOH Agricultural Program Manager*  
Tom Pavlesich, *Forestry Program Manager*  
Serena Orleski, *Easement Program Manager*  
Mike Morales, *Easement Program Stewardship Coordinator*  
Bill Martin, *Easement Program Acquisition Coordinator*  
Kayla Atanasoff, *Easement Program Executive Assistant*  
Kristan Morley, *Economic Viability Program Manager*  
John Jackson, *Database Administrator*, via Zoom  
Sara Storrer, *NYC DEP*  
Tom Ganz, *NYC DEP*, via Zoom  
Lee Harris, *NYC DOI*, via Zoom  
Patrick Palmer, *NYS DOH*  
Paul Kaczmarczyk, *NYS DOH*, via Zoom  
Morgan Tarbell, *NYS DOH*, via Zoom  
Pauline Wanjugi, *NYS DOH*  
Bruce Dolph, *DC SWCD Board*, via Zoom  
Elizabeth DeFalco, *The Reporter*, via Zoom  
Mary Crisafulli, *The Mountain Eagle*, via Zoom

### II. Approval of Minutes

#### ***Motion to approve the March 28, 2023 minutes, as presented.***

Motion: Barb Hanselman

Second: Fred Huneke

***Approved***

### III. Executive Director's Report – Ryan Naatz

Ryan was not able to attend the meeting, so Amy presented his updates. First, she explained that they both attended a meeting with *BoardStrong* representatives the previous week to get discuss logistics of the Board assessment and recommendations. NYC DOI and NYC DEP arranged the improvement project, so representatives from both agencies were in attendance as well. As a first step, Board members will complete self-assessments and plan to meet with *BoardStrong* representatives for the 'Directors Only' meeting.

Second, she gave an update on the *Order to Remedy* from the Town of Hamden. She explained that Ryan sent a response letter to the Town, asking that the timeframe for compliance be pushed to September 1, 2023. A week or so later, the CEO for the Town, Josh Morgan, stopped by the Hamden office to confirm that he was comfortable with the extension and to offer his assistance throughout the process as needed.

#### A. Operational Updates

##### 1. Communications Update – Heather Magnan

Heather wasn't able to attend the meeting as well. Amy explained that Heather is currently in the process of reviewing and approving events and working with a new videographer for new content.

##### 2. Information Technology Update – John Jackson

John presented the Program Dashboard, which indicated the bulk of work in IT has been devoted to WIT, a new database for the Agricultural Program. As part of that new database, he explained, the Annual Status Reviews (ASRs) will move from a manual process to a streamlined PDF form that will be competed in the field. There will be a mechanism in place for the *Whole Farm Planning Coordinator* to review and approve forms. The next step in the transition to WIT will be setting up small group trainings ahead of the full launch.

##### 3. Operational Update – Amy Faulkner

Amy had a few operational updates to present. First, that the organization is currently in the process of preparing for and procuring accounting services for a FY22 financial audit.

Second, she explained that she is currently working with *Logically* to administer a server hardware upgrade, security updates, and transition to Microsoft Office 365. The implementation of these changes will be ongoing in the coming months.

Finally, she touched on available WAC career opportunities. The organization is currently accepting applications for interns in the Agricultural and Economic Viability Programs, as well as a full-time *Stewardship Specialist* for the Easement Program and a seasonal *Watershed Forestry Educator* for the Forestry Program.

#### B. Programmatic Updates

## 1. Economic Viability Program – Kristan Morley

Kristan reported that the program has been busy with the Pure Catskills Membership Drive; nine (9) membership applications have been approved, and six (6) are currently under review, bringing the number of total memberships up to 355.

The Pure Catskills Guide is moving from a 72- to 80-page spread and she is currently working with Ben Hendee, *GIS Coordinator*, to update the membership map to feature town highlights for each county within the watershed.

To conclude, she explained that NYC has released its climate action plan, and called out the WAC Economic Viability Grant Program as one of several program looking to be supported. There will be more information to share in the coming months, including changes to and expansion of the current grant opportunities available.

## 2. Agricultural Program – Connor Young

Connor explained that the program is currently in the process of evaluating how it conducts business; e.g. bids have been put out earlier than in the past to keep the program on track for construction season, which is currently underway. In addition, the Conservation Planners will be moving to a more streamlined process for ASRs that John alluded to earlier.

He reported that the program is currently up-to-date on all outstanding line H items previously reported to Council, and on track to complete the BMP design backlog metric by June 30<sup>th</sup>.

He concluded by explaining that he will be working NYC DEP in the coming months on a metrics evaluation for the program, i.e. a review of the metrics to date, an assessment of the impacts and areas of needed improvement.

## 3. Forestry Program – Tom Pavlesich

Tom started by explaining some specifics of the Forestry Handbook modifications for consideration and the grant narrative for the U.S. Forest Service.

He had a few additional updates to report:

- the program is currently revamping brochures and website information (available in approx. 3-4 months)
- the program is currently coordinating extra bus tours to catch up on the missed deliverable in the last couple of years from COVID
- the program is currently conducting a study for Forestry BMP implementation (more information to come later)
- the trees have been purchased and the sites have been selected for *Trees for Tribs*

## 4. Easement Program – Serena Orleski

Serena started with an update on staffing. She reported that the *Senior Stewardship Specialist* position was filled and explained that the key differences in job duties will be a focus on document retention and GIS mapping, which has become more of a necessity as the Easement portfolio continues to grow. There is a currently a vacant *Stewardship Specialist* position, which has been advertised.

She highlighted some metrics from the Q1 Dashboard. Stewardship has completed 5% of total ground monitoring and 19% of total aerial monitoring for the year. Acquisition has completed two appraisals and extended two offers, one of which has since been executed. Acquisition has also been busy engaging potential applicants; currently there are 8 applicants with more expected ahead of the first applicant selection round of this year.

She added that the Easement team is interested in engaging with anyone who is interested in conservation easements, and reminded everyone that the early stages of the acquisition process (land planning, appraisal, and offer) are completely voluntary for interested and eligible applicants.

She concluded by reporting that Communications is currently putting together a new promotional series for *Boots in the Barnyard*, and will highlight a WAC-eased property.

#### 5. East of Hudson Program – Gibson Durnford

Gibson presented the Q1 Dashboard and further explained some project and program updates. The program budget and workplan for FY24 has been completed; two notable and new components of the workplan that he touched on were (1) an inventory of expired or expiring BMPs and their current condition by the end of the year, and (2) enhanced treatments for some BMPs.

He announced that the 2023 Westchester County Envirothon will be held on Friday, May 12<sup>th</sup>; it is a WAC-sponsored event that brings together students from regional public and private high schools to test their environmental knowledge and provide opportunities to meet professionals in various environmental fields.

He concluded by giving updates on the research collaboration with the Columbia University AgMIP Program, and answered questions.

### IV. Chair's Report – Wayland 'Bud' Gladstone

Bud took a moment to thank the Program Managers for their updates and the work that they do. Since Amy already touched on the *Notice to Remedy*, Bud updated the Board on a recent request for a meeting with John Vickers and Paul Rush, *Deputy Commissioner*, to begin discussions for a new WAC office building.

### V. Governance Committee – John Verhoeven

#### A. Directors Only Meeting

John explained that the Directors Only meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 16<sup>th</sup> at the Andes Hotel. As Amy indicated, the Board will plan to devote time that day to meeting with *BoardStrong*.

## VI. Finance Committee – Karl Gockel & Carol Bishop

- A. January and February Financials – Motion

***Motion to accept the January and February Financials as presented.***

Motion: Tom Hutson

Second: Dwight Bruno

***Approved***

## VII. Agricultural Committee – Steve Reed & Connor Young

- A. Program Approvals – Motion

***Upon the recommendation of the Agricultural Committee, motion to approve the following:***

***Whole Farm Plan Revision – DEC-276 – Revision 2***

Motion: Bud Gladstone

Second: James Darling

***Approved***

Summary Review:

***DEC-139 – Revision 16 – 2022 Design Workload Adjustments***

***DEC-109 – Revision 3 – 2022 Design Workload Adjustments***

***DEC-SF300 – Revision 5 – 2020 Workload Adjustments***

Funding Request:

***DEC-100-BMP\_17ER1 and BMP\_11AER2***

Motion: Karl Gockel

Second: Fred Huneke

***Approved***

## VIII. Economic Viability Committee – Jennifer Grossman & Kristan Morley

- A. Program Approvals – Motion

***Upon the recommendation of the Economic Viability Committee, motion to approve the Economic Viability Micro Grant Application for:***

***Broken Spoke Stables in the amount of \$2,797.***

Motion: John Verhoeven

Second: John Vickers

***Approved***

***Byebrook Farm in the amount of \$315.***

Motion: Fred Huneke  
Second: Steve Reed  
**Approved**

***Dear Native Grapes in the amount of \$1,650.***

Motion: Paul Gallay  
Second: John Verhoeven  
**Approved**

***Catskills Agrarian Alliance in the amount of \$5,000.***

Motion: James Darling  
Second: Marilyn Wyman  
**Approved**

***Yankees Acres in the amount of \$3,600.***

Motion: Dave Cammer  
Second: Bud Gladstone  
**Approved**

***Blackberry Ridge Farm in the amount of \$1,900.***

Motion: John Verhoeven  
Second: Steve Reed  
**Approved**

#### **IX. East of Hudson Committee – Fred Huneke & Gibson Durnford**

##### **A. Program Approvals – Motion**

***Upon the recommendation of the East of Hudson Committee, motion to approve funding for the following revision:***

***PUEB – 338 Revision #2 – BMP Delete/BMP Unit Increase/Cost Increase***

Motion: John Vickers  
Second: Tom Hutson  
**Approved**

#### **X. Forestry Committee – Dave Cammer & Tom Pavlesich**

##### **A. Program Approvals – Motion**

***Upon the recommendation of the Forestry Committee, motion to approve the Forestry Program Handbook modifications in accordance with the CAT 487 contract prior to implementation.***

Motion: Marilyn Wyman  
Second: Dwight Bruno  
**Approved**

***Motion to approve the draft grant narrative for 2023 as presented and direct staff to submit this narrative to the Forest Service for consideration. The Council also directs staff to submit to DEP a request to use contract funds as a match for this grant. Upon approval of the Forest Service, and matching funds approval by DEP per the CAT 487 contract, the Council directs the WAC Executive Director to authorize the necessary paperwork to receive the 2023 Forest Service Grant.***

Motion: Bud Gladstone

Second: Jim Darling

***Approved***

#### **XI. NYC DEP Report – John Vickers**

John had a few updates to report:

- Michael Vander Werff is currently out on paternity leave
- He received approval of funds for the demolition of the buildings on the former Ploutz property
- He is currently in the process of reviewing the FY24 budget submission
- He received verbal approval to utilize DEP helicopters for the remainder of the WAC easement aerial monitoring

#### **XII. NYS DOH, US EPA Reports**

Pat had nothing to report on the FAD, but encouraged everyone to reach out with any questions. He reported that Morgan is back from maternity leave, so she will be attending meetings once again.

#### **XIII. Other**

#### **XIV. Executive Session**

#### **XV. Adjournment**

***Motion to adjourn the meeting.***

Motion: Dave Cammer

Second: John Vickers

***Approved***

The meeting was adjourned at 11:28 a.m.

The next meeting will be held on **Tuesday, May 23, 2023 at 10:00 a.m.**, via Zoom.