

Watershed Agricultural Council

Agriculture ♦ Forestry ♦ Conservation Easements ♦ Economic Viability

nycwatershed.org



MINUTES OF THE WATERSHED AGRICULTURAL COUNCIL MEETING

July 25th, 2023

I. Meeting called to order at 10:06 a.m.

Directors Present:

Dwight Bruno
Dave Cammer
James Darling, *via zoom*
Paul Gallay
Wayland “Bud” Gladstone, *Chair*
Karl Gockel, *Treasurer, via zoom*
Jennifer Grossman, *Secretary, via zoom*
Barb Hanselman, *via zoom*
Fred Huneke
Tom Hutson, *Vice Chair*
Steve Reed
Marilyn Wyman, *via zoom*
John Vickers

Directors Absent:

Jason Helmbold
John Verhoeven
Jeff Wilson

Others Present:

Ryan Naatz, *Executive Director*
Carol Bishop, *Finance Director*
Connor Young, *Agricultural Program Manager*
Nate Townsend, *Whole Farm Planning Coordinator*
Pete Steenland, *Technician & Engineering Coordinator*
Elaine Poulin, *Program Procurement & Contract Coordinator*
Cindy McCarthy, *NM/PFM Coordinator*
Gibson Durnford, *EoH Agricultural Program Manager, via zoom*
Tom Pavlesich, *Forestry Program Manager*
Tyler Van Fleet, *EoH Forestry Program Coordinator, via zoom*
Serena Orleski, *Easement Program Manager*
Mike Morales, *Easement Program Stewardship Coordinator*
Bill Martin, *Easement Program Acquisition Coordinator*
Kristan Morley, *Economic Viability Program Manager*
Heather Magnan, *Communications Manager*
John Jackson, *Information Technology Manager*
Brittany Schenck, *Forestry Program Exec. Assistant & WOH Edu.*
Michael Vander Werff, *NYC DEP*
Sara Storrer, *NYC DEP*
Lee Harris, *NYC DOI, via Zoom*
Patrick Palmer, *NYS DOH, via Zoom*
Paul Kaczmarczyk, *NYS DOH, via Zoom*
Morgan Zyzik-Tarbell, *NYS DOH*
Pauline Wanjugi, *NYS DOH*

II. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the June 27th, 2023 minutes, as presented.

Motion: John Vickers

Second: Fred Huneke

Approved

III. Executive Director's Report – Ryan Naatz

Ryan gave a brief update and shout-out to Wendy Hanselman, Rob Orleski, and the DEP team for coming together to make progress on the building of the new office. The demolition of the current structures and monitoring for reconstruction is set for the end of the summer, pending contracts. Ryan predicts more information is to come in the following months.

A. Programmatic Updates

1. Communications and Outreach – Heather Magnan

Heather is working with a new videographer to capture new videos for the WAC website and further outreach. They are in the final stages of editing and she will be releasing those videos very soon. The Pure Catskills/WAC team has started their summer tabling events with the Meredith Dairy Fest in June. As August approaches they will also be attending the Delaware County Fair alongside DEP staff. They have requested a larger tabling space than usual and Heather anticipates a great and engaging set up for the week-long event. Heather also mentioned that Clean Sweep is set for an earlier date this year, September 22nd-23rd. She has made efforts in outreach toward farms and press releases to hopefully gain more sign-ups. For tours, Bard College, which is located East of Hudson will be doing a tour in October, and the Forestry Program will be doing a tour with South Korean participants at the end of August. Lastly, WAC's 30th anniversary is this year, so Heather will be working on graphics that will be highlighted in the annual report.

2. Information Technology – John Jackson

John has recently changed the format of his dashboard to show programmatic successes and challenges. Highlighting some of those areas, John explained that they have successfully redesigned and rerouted the ASR section of WIT to accommodate a fillable pdf that planners can take via their mobile devices and submit information directly into the database. This relieves a lot of work for administrative staff. John and his team have run into some challenges along the way, including a bug that staff have helped rectify quickly. They are currently going through some challenges with the participant contact section while implementing and testing the system, but he anticipates the issue to be resolved soon. They will be using WIT parallel to FAME, with the goal of eventually decommissioning FAME. John and finance staff have been able to consistently reconcile BMP payments between both systems for several quarters, which took an entire subsection out of the procurement process.

3. Finance Department – Carol Bishop

The anticipated Quarterly Payment Request was submitted in May, and Finance will anticipate receiving one final payment from DEP. Although late, Finance has finished the June 2022 audit which is a relief that they are now up to date on that. The Finance team has been diligently working on the next round of Quarterly Payments that will be due August 15th. Carol included a graph of cash balances on hand by the DEP contract and quickly reiterated each section.

4. Economic Viability Program – Kristan Morley

The EV team has recently completed the Pure Catskills Guide, which is a large deliverable that has been met for the program. January to May was the largest Pure Catskills membership to date, and for the first time ever, memberships and ad revenue essentially covered the cost of printing. The total of memberships continues to grow as tabling events like the Dairy Fest and word of mouth continue. The distribution of guides will continue through the end of the year with the help of the intern and Sara. Kristan announced that they have received their first Farm Forest transition reimbursement package and they are currently in the financial process of that. EV is also working on a new grant category with the support of the city through the mayor's climate change plan that will incentivize vegetable and fruit expansion within the watershed. This grant will also be open to East of Hudson participants. The guidelines for this grant category were presented to the Economic Viability Committee and Kristan hopes to get the grant up and running by the end of the fiscal year.

5. Agricultural Program – Connor Young

Whole Farm Planning and Nutrient Management ASRs have continued consistently through the season with interns soil sampling and Nutrient Management planners out when needed. Connor is looking to formalize cover crop expansion starting with acreage. This is something he and Ag staff have been working with DEP on to identify what rate they will offer for reimbursement. Connor is working closely with Carol Bishop to change the deadline for the record and submission of Nutrient Management credits to firmly be October 15th. Those funds will be available to farmers after January 1st. The Design and Implementation backlog will be submitted in May, which is a milestone deliverable. The FY24 budget year has some carry-over funding, with approximately 100 projects requested, 30 completed, 18 awarded/contracted, and 14 currently under construction. Staff and partners will be meeting soon to bid out the next phase of larger projects to keep things moving. Sara Storrer, Michael VanderWerff, Tom Ganz, and Connor are working to get the Metrics Evaluation off the ground. Connor will have the majority of the data needed for this to summarize and understand where the Ag Program is by next week, and the next phase will be bringing it to the Agricultural Committee.

6. Forestry Program - Tom Pavlesich

Recently the Forestry Program Committee met to reflect on the program's efforts and work from the past year, and also discuss ideas for the coming year. The bulk of that conversation centered around the Urban Rural Education Initiative (UREI), namely the Field Trip program, Green Connections program, and the Watershed Forestry Institute for Teachers (WFIT). Staff discussed areas of improvement in outreach and communications with educators located upstate since most of the participation from educators are within the New York City school districts. Tom explained that there are local advantages for upstate teachers, like WAC STEM professionals, agencies, and organizational partnerships that we could potentially tap into. Tom explained that part of the FAD is to provide local input and resources to jobs at DEP, which we can use in our UREI programs. Another area of discussion was the possibility of partnering with SUNY Delhi to present a course that Kris Brown can teach for free. Lastly, Loggers have voiced that they would like stream-crossing bridges closer to Ulster County, so Forestry will be looking for more bridge storage locations.

7. Easements Program – Serena Orleski

In Acquisitions, Easements has completed an application ranking round for the first time in a few years. Serena has reported 10 new applicants, 7 Ag, and two forests that were approved at the Easement Committee level. Last quarter in Stewardship, Easements were at 30% of routine ground monitoring and at 19% for secondary monitoring. This percentage is in line with what Easements has historically reported in this quarter. Secondary monitoring will be finished in the last quarter of the calendar year. Bill Martin and Dennis Heinz are currently working on transitioning from Arc MAP to Arc GiS Pro. Serena was happy to announce that the Easement Program is now fully staffed with Matt Schaefer joining the team as Stewardship Specialist in June. Lastly, the whole program traveled to Albany in May for the NY Land Conservation Conference.

8. East of Hudson Program – Gibson Durnford

Gibson gave a brief overview of EOH updates for the quarter. East of Hudson didn't spend what was projected for the quarter, and they currently have 5 projects that are not certified and finished. These were supposed to be completed by June 30th, but staff were not able to meet the deadline, but anticipate them being completed in the next payment. Gibson also mentioned having to hold onto RCPP funding of approximately \$400,000. Staff are progressing nicely and are looking forward to new projects along the way.

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

Bud expressed his delight in listening to the progression of each program area.

V. Finance Committee – Karl Gockel & Carol Bishop

A. May Financials – Motion

Motion to accept the May Financials, as presented.

Motion: Bud Gladstone

Second: Steve Reed

Approved

VI. Agricultural Committee – Steve Reed & Connor Young

A. Program Approvals - Motions

Motion to approve the Subsequent Funding Request Farm DEC SF 125, as presented.

Motion: Paul Gallay

Second: Fred Huneke

Approved

Motion to approve the Subsequent Funding Request Farm SUR 001, as presented.

Motion: Paul Gallay

Second: Tom Hutson

Approved

VII. NYC DEP Report – John Vickers

DEP has recently run into issues surrounding the CAT 403 contract that was submitted in May. It was returned to DEP this past week from OEA because of an error on one of the forms that have since been corrected by Michael VanderWerff. There is one more approval to go into passport before the electronic funds are transferred. In the next set of contracts DEP would like to explore the idea of having a payment up front that will be secured in an interest-bearing account to bridge the gap should a payment be delayed. At the end of the contract, those funds would be returned to the city with interest. There will be a tour of the Cannonsville Dam soon with presenters and lunch included. John is looking forward to seeing people at this event and he would like to make it an annual occurrence.

VIII. NYS DOH, US EPA Reports

Patrick Palmer explained that there is a stakeholder meeting tomorrow to discuss the potential expansion of the Streamside Acquisition Program throughout the WOH Watershed. Communities will propose their take on it as a collaborative buffer program and Catskill Center and Greene County Soil and Water will be there. There will then be a separate conversation regarding the city’s long-term acquisition program plan that came out last month.

IX. Executive Session

Motion to enter Executive Session at 12:05pm to discuss Boardstrong Report and Mission Statement Review/Confirmation

Motion:

Second:

Approved

Motion to come out of Executive Session and adjourn the meeting at 12:39pm.

Motion: Dave Cammer

Second: John Vickers

Approved

The next meeting will be held on August 22, 2023 at 10:00 a.m.