

# Watershed Agricultural Council

Agriculture ♦ Forestry ♦ Conservation Easements ♦ Economic Viability

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## MINUTES OF THE WATERSHED AGRICULTURAL COUNCIL MEETING

March 28, 2023

### I. Meeting called to order at 10:04 a.m.

#### Directors Present:

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

#### Directors Absent:

John Vickers, *NYC DEP Representative*  
Jeff Wilson

#### Others Present:

Ryan Naatz, *Executive Director*  
Amy Faulkner, *Director of Operations*  
Connor Young, *WOH Agricultural Program Manager*  
Gibson Durnford, *EOH Agricultural Program Manager*  
Tom Pavlesich, *Forestry Program Manager*  
Serena Orleski, *Easement Program Manager*  
Kayla Atanasoff, *Easement Program Executive Assistant*  
Kristan Morley, *Economic Viability Program Manager*  
Heather Magnan, *Communications Manager*  
Michael Vander Werff, *NYC DEP*  
Lee Harris, *NYC DOI*  
Alla Saint-Fleur, *NYC DOI*  
Patrick Palmer, *NYS DOH*  
Paul Kaczmarczyk, *NYS DOH*  
Pauline Wanjugi, *NYS DOH*  
Bruce Dolph, *DC SWCD Board*  
Katie Lynch, *US EPA*  
Elizabeth DeFalco, *The Reporter*  
Mary Crisafulli, *The Mountain Eagle*

### II. Approval of Minutes

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

Motion: Steve Reed

Second: Dwight Bruno

***Approved***

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

Ryan had a few updates to report:

As previously discussed, a few outstanding Nutrient Management Credits Awards had been designated as line H items, requiring additional documentation for the release of funds. Since the previous Council meeting, monies for four of those awards had been remitted for payment. Once that money is received, WAC will pay those outstanding invoices. The funding for this year's payments were included in the funding request so he does not anticipate any further delays.

The Finance team have submitted all documentation for the FY22 audit. The audit is being performed through the same company that was contracted to perform the FY21 audit. A final report will be presented once the audit is complete.

As a reminder, he explained that WAC is currently operating under a new extension to the CAT 403 contract that splits funding between capital and expense monies. He reported that expense monies were paid last week and the capital monies were not requested during the last payment request. The capital monies for CAT 487 are still pending, but Michael had not received any questions about the request from the Office of Engineering Audits (OEA) so he anticipates that the funds will be processed this week.

He stated that the draft budget is due to DEP on April 1<sup>st</sup>. WAC administration has been working with subcontractors, specifically CCE and SWCD, to get their proposed budgets finalized, as well as WAC program managers to account for anticipated monies needed for FY24. There is a draft ready to submit to Michael by the end of the week.

He concluded by reporting that on March 15<sup>th</sup>, WAC received a letter from the Town of Hamden's Code Enforcement Officer. The letter was a notice to remedy the unsafe conditions of the buildings located on the former Ploutz property, now owned by WAC. The notice ordered a remedy of the code violations with thirty (30) days. WAC's Executive Committee and DEP have been in discussions about finding monies that could be used for the demolition of the structures, but indicated that it would not be possible by the April 15<sup>th</sup> deadline. However, he stated that WAC is committed to re-engaging with the Town of Hamden to show that there are plans in place to ensure compliance as quickly as possible – more realistically by mid-summer. He indicated that Bud had already reached out to get a better sense of the recourse if that deadline is not met. There was a brief discussion about the measures that WAC has already taken to secure the buildings and any potential short-term options.

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

Bud stated that Ryan's report covered the talking points of his report.

### **V. Finance Committee – Karl Gockel**

Karl explained that the March Committee meeting was cancelled due to inclement weather. Therefore, there will be two Financial Summary Reviews presented at next month's Council meeting. Since Ryan and Michael previously touched on the biggest financial updates, he asked for any additional questions or comments.

**VI. Agricultural Committee – Steve Reed & Connor Young**

Steve explained that the Agricultural Committee did not meet for their monthly meeting either. With nothing to report, he asked for any questions or comments.

**VII. Easement Committee – Tom Hutson & Serena Orleski**

Tom reported that Dennis Heinz recently accepted the position of *Senior Stewardship Specialist*, and that the Program will be seeking to fill his vacant *Stewardship Specialist* position in the coming months.

He touched on the continued efforts to get interested easement applicants in the door.

**VIII. Forestry Committee – Dave Cammer & Tom Pavlesich**

Dave reported a couple updates from the Forestry Committee meeting:

- Tom submitted the FY24 program budget to Carol and Ryan.
- Committee approved the Forestry Handbook revisions, as written, to be presented to Council in April and DEP in May.
- Committee approved a new program workplan, to be presented to Council at a later date.
- \$20,000 has been allocated to this year's Forestry Program Bus Tours; this allocation is higher than in year's past because more tours will be scheduled in an effort to compensate for the missed deliverable (due to COVID-19) over the last two years.
- The Trees for Tribes program has concluded for the year.

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

Fred explained that Committee met on March 15<sup>th</sup> and started by introducing a few new faces; (1) Jeff Wilson, who was recently announced as a new WAC Board member, (2) Connor Young, WAC's new West of Hudson Agricultural Program Manager, and Sara Storrer, a new representative for the NYC DEP.

He explained that Committee reviewed next year's implementation and work plans; with the program fully staffed once again they are poised to achieve those goals.

Committee also discussed NRCS' Standards and Specs, and the possibility for the program to develop their own in the future.

**A. Program Approvals**

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

- 1. PUCF – Revision #5 – BMP Repair and Replace/End of Lifespan***
- 2. WENC-001 – Revision #7 – BMP Cost Change/Cost Share***
- 3. WETI-294 – Revision #4 – BMP Repair/BMP Cost Change/Cost Share***
- 4. PUMB-007 – Revision #4 – New BMP/Cost Share***

Motion: Paul Gallay

Second: Marilyn Wyman

***Approved***

**X. Economic Viability Committee – Jennifer Grossman & Kristan Morley**

Jennifer explained that Committee had not met since the previous Council meeting because staff are still in the process of reviewing applicants from the January/February grant round. Currently, there are three (3) applicants for *Marketing* reimbursement, four (4) applicants for *Staffing* reimbursements, and two (2) applicants for *Training* reimbursements. The next Committee meeting is schedule on April 11<sup>th</sup> to review and score the applicant list.

Kristan added that the program is also currently wrapping up it's Pure Catskills membership drive, and she was happy to report that a new milestone of 350 memberships has been reached.

**XI. Human Resources Committee – Marilyn Wyman**

Marilyn explained that Committee met on March 16<sup>th</sup> to approve the 2023 Employee Handbook, Employee Performance Appraisals (to be presented to Council in May), and FY24 Annual Salary Adjustments (to be presented to Council in April).

**A. 2023 Employee Handbook – Motion**

Amy took a moment to point out a revision to the Handbook that was presented to Council. Jason noticed that the Handbook doesn't make clear that WAC provides both short-term and long-term disability. She asked Council to present to motion to approve the Handbook with the clarification that long-term disability is included.

***Upon the recommendation of the Human Resources Committee, motion to approve the Employee Handbook 2023 as presented, with the inclusion of long-term disability.***

Motion: Karl Gockel

Second: Fred Huneke

***Approved***

**XII. Governance Committee – John Verhoeven**

John explained that Committee is currently working on organizing the Directors Only Retreat - a date, location, and topics are still tentative.

**XIII. NYC DEP Report – Michael Vander Werff**

Michael explained that John was on vacation, and he wanted to give a quick update on the payments reported earlier. The Deputy Chief Finance Officer also approved payments for BMPs tied to Council Members or their relatives; DEP received the sufficient documentation to show that there were no conflicts-of-interest and anticipated that a letter from OEA would arrive in about a week’s time, and once received, the monies will be released as deductions in the May payments. Following those payments, the bulk of the Line H items will have been reconciled and he will continue to work with Carol on the few remaining.

**XIV. NYS DOH, US EPA Reports**

Patrick didn’t have much to report, but he did point out that DEP’s Filtration Avoidance Report is due on March 31<sup>st</sup>, and will be posted to their website.

**XV. Other**

Jennifer mentioned that herself, Michael Vander Werff and a representative from Columbia University gave a presentation to the New York City Mayor’s Office of Food Policy Regional Food Working Group. They were asked to present on the collaboration between WAC, DEP, and Columbia University on a project that will assess the impacts of Agricultural Best Management Practices (BMPs). They will report their findings to the working group annually over the next three (3) years.

**XVI. Executive Session**

**XVII. Adjournment**

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

Motion: Dave Cammer

Second: Steve Reed

***Approved***

The meeting adjourned at 10:52 p.m.

**The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, April 25, 2023 at 10:00 a.m.**