

Watershed Agricultural Council

Agriculture ♦ Forestry ♦ Conservation Easements ♦ Economic Viability

nycwatershed.org



MINUTES OF THE WATERSHED AGRICULTURAL COUNCIL MEETING

October 24, 2023

I. Meeting called to order at 10:05 a.m.

Directors Present:

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

Directors Absent:

John Verhoeven
Jeff Wilson

Others Present:

Ryan Naatz, *Executive Director*
Amy Faulkner, *Director of Operations*
Carol Bishop, *Finance Director*
Connor Young, *WOH 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*
Brian LaTourette, *Program Operations Coordinator*
Gibson Durnford, *EOH Agricultural Program Manager*
Tom Pavlesich, *Forestry 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*
Heather Magnan, *Communications Manager*
Michael Vander Werff, *NYC DEP*
Sara Storrer, *NYC DEP*
Tom Ganz, *NYC DEP*
Lee Harris, *NYC DOI*
Vicki Morris, *NYC DOI*
Paul Kaczmarczyk, *NYS DOH*
Morgan Tarbell, *NYS DOH*
Katie Lynch, *US EPA*
Malgosia Madajewicz, *Columbia University*
Jeffrey Potent, *Columbia University*
Elizabeth DeFalco, *The Reporter*
Mary Crisafulli, *The Mountain Eagle*

TDD 1-800-662-1220

Watershed protection through partnership.

II. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the September 26, 2023 minutes, as presented.

Motion: John Vickers

Second: Dwight Bruno

Marilyn Wyman recused herself from the vote as she did not attend the meeting.

Approved

III. Introductions – Malgosia Madajewicz and Jeffrey Potent, Columbia University

IV. Executive Director’s Report – Ryan Naatz

Ryan had a couple updates to report. First, he announced that the discussions of Columbia University’s *Addressing Climate Challenges to Agriculture and Water Quality in the New York City Watershed* project would be held in the public meeting session. Second, he announced that visible progress has been made for the demolition of the condemned buildings on the former Ploutz property (now owned by WAC). He reported that one of the structures has been demolished.

Ahead of operational and program updates, Ryan asked that Directors and Managers give a brief overview of their support or program area so that Malgosia and Jeffrey had a better understanding of how WAC operates.

A. Operational Updates

1. Communications – Heather Magnan

Heather introduced the Communications Department and presented the quarterly *Communications Dashboard*; specifically, this year’s event season.

2. Information Technology – John Jackson

John was not present at the meeting. Amy presented the quarterly *Information Technology Dashboard* that was included in the packet materials and highlighted some of the successes and challenges indicated.

3. Operational – Amy Faulkner

Amy introduced her role as Director of Operations and presented the quarterly *Human Resources/Administration Dashboard*, giving a quick update on filling the remaining position vacancies.

4. Finance Department – Carol Bishop

Carol outlined the general responsibilities of the Finance Department and presented the quarterly *Finance Dashboard*.

B. Programmatic Updates

1. Economic Viability Program – Kristan Morley

Kristan introduced the Economic Viability Program, as well as the Pure Catskills initiative. She presented the quarterly *Economic Viability Dashboard* and highlighted the newest grant opportunity - the Fruit & Vegetable Expansion Pilot Grant. There were brief discussions about specifics of the dashboard.

2. Agricultural Program – Connor Young

Connor introduced the history and intent of the Agricultural Program from the inception of the organization; to identify and address water quality concerns through best management practices (BMPs). Participation in the program is voluntary, fully funded, and collaborative. He presented some highlights from the *Watershed Agricultural Program Dashboard*, including some success and challenges over the past quarter.

3. Forestry Program – Tom Pavlesich

Tom gave a brief history of the Forestry Program, outlining the key program areas and target audiences. He presented some highlights from the quarterly *Forestry Program Accomplishments*, touching on current achievements and projections for program deliverables. There were brief discussions about specifics of the dashboard.

4. Easement Program – Mike Morales & Bill Martin

Mike started by giving a brief history of the Easement Program, explaining that the program was designed to ensure water quality by limiting the density of subdivisions and development while still promoting a working landscape for farm and forest landowners. He touched on the relationship between the acquisition and stewardship of easements, as well as common misconceptions. Mike and Bill then presented some highlights from the quarterly *Easement Program Dashboard* for Stewardship and Acquisition, respectively.

5. East of Hudson Program – Gibson Durnford

Gibson introduced the East of Hudson Program; like the West of Hudson Agricultural Program, the program was intended to address water quality concerns for the Croton Watershed (instead of the Catskill/Delaware Watershed). He presented some programmatic statistics, as well as some success and challenges, as outlined in the quarterly *East of Hudson Program Report*.

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

A. Farmland Licensing Meeting Update

Bud explained that he had recently attended a Farmland Licensing Meeting regarding the licensing of DEP farmland. He indicated that DEP is in support of keeping those lands in agriculture and suggested that perhaps WAC could assist in facilitating these licenses. Ryan added that he has had discussions with Connor regarding the feasibility of incorporating this into the program's current workload but it's something they are still trying to ascertain.

VI. Finance Committee – Karl Gockel & Carol Bishop

Karl touched on some highlights of the last Finance Committee Meeting and indicated that the department is currently working on changes to the dashboard to better communicate information.

A. August Financials – Motion

Motion to accept the August Financials, as presented.

Motion: Tom Hutson

Second: Paul Gallay

Approved

VII. Economic Viability Committee – Jennifer Grossman

Jennifer presented some highlights from the last Committee meeting earlier this month, including the micro-grant reimbursements that were approved at the Committee-level. They were determined to be valid requests with funding available.

A. Micro-Grant Approvals – Motion

Motion to approve the following Economic Viability Micro-Grant Reimbursement Program applications totaling \$16,062:

- 1. Dear Native Grapes - \$3,352***
- 2. Pepacton Farms Creamery - \$4,250***
- 3. Roxbury Mountain Maple - \$2,500***
- 4. Dirty Girl Farm - \$960***
- 5. Crespell - \$5,000***

Motion: John Vickers

Second: Fred Huneke

Approved

VIII. NYC DEP Report – John Vickers

John explained that DEP is currently involved in the shutdown of an aqueduct; so far, dewatering is going as planned without issue. He touched on current financial issues with the New York City Mayor's Office, including a hiring freeze, but indicated that payments for the current fiscal year would not be affected.

IX. NYS DOH, US EPA Reports

X. Other – Malgosia Madajewicz & Jeffrey Potent, Columbia University

Malgosia and Jeffrey introduced themselves, and the team of researchers, involved in *Addressing Climate Challenges to Agriculture and Water Quality in the New York City Watershed* research through Columbia University's Agricultural Model Intercomparison and Improvement Project (AgMIP). Malgosia and Jeffrey are leading the outreach for various stakeholder partners, and the intent of their presentation is to introduce details about the research, as well as to field any questions or concerns regarding the process and/or its output.

The main goals of the research are to (1) develop a farming system model approach, (2) assess current and future climate impact, (3) improve best management practices (BMPs), and (4) contribute to a climate action plan. The question that is ultimately being asked is, "*what is the best we can do under changing climate conditions?*"

The stakeholder engagement objectives are to (1) assist in the development of research questions, (2) provide feedback, (3) evaluate indicators and metrics, and (4) co-produce recommendations. To do this, a series of workshops will be hosted to facilitate focus group discussions and surveys. All data collected is voluntary, anonymous, and confidential.

There were various discussions that followed the presentation.

XI. Executive Session

XII. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 1:24 p.m.

Motion: John Vickers

Second: Karl Gockel

Approved

The next meeting will be held on **Tuesday, November 28, 2023 at 10:00 a.m.**