

# Watershed Agricultural Council

Agriculture ♦ Forestry ♦ Conservation Easements ♦ Economic Viability

nycwatershed.org



## MINUTES OF THE WATERSHED AGRICULTURAL COUNCIL MEETING

September 26, 2023

### I. Meeting called to order at 10:03 a.m.

#### Directors Present, via Zoom:

Dwight Bruno  
Dave Cammer  
Jim 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  
John Vickers, *DEP Representative*  
Jeff Wilson

#### Others Present, via Zoom:

Ryan Naatz, *Executive Director*  
Carol Bishop, *Finance Director*  
Connor Young, *WOH Agricultural Program Manager*  
Kayla Atanasoff, *Easement Program Executive Assistant*  
Kristan Morley, *Economic Viability Program Manager*  
Heather Magnan, *Communications Manager*  
Lee Harris, *NYC DOI*  
Vicki Morris, *NYC DOI*  
Patrick Palmer, *NYS DOH*  
Paul Kaczmarczyk, *NYS DOH*  
Morgan Tarbell, *NYS DOH*  
Bruce Dolph, *DC SWCD Board*  
Katie Lynch, *US EPA*  
Elizabeth DeFalco, *The Reporter*  
Mary Crisafulli, *The Mountain Eagle*

#### Directors Absent:

Marilyn Wyman

### II. Approval of Minutes

#### ***Motion to approve the August 22, 2023 minutes, as presented.***

Motion: Steve Reed

Second: Fred Huneke

***Approved***

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

#### A. Operational/Programmatic Updates

Ryan started by explaining that there would be an Executive Session to further discuss the research collaboration with the Columbia University AgMIP Program. In the meantime, he had several other updates to report to Council:

First, he built on previous discussions regarding the recent report and recommendations from Barbara Paxton from *BoardStrong*. Since sharing that report with Board members, WAC senior leadership have been working on an assessment that will be presented to the Executive Committee, and then the full Council, in the coming months.

Second, he gave an update on successor contract negotiations for CAT450, CAT487, and CAT403. These contracts will take effect April 1, 2025 and the biggest changes to the proposed contracts seek to reduce cost-share burdens by allocating administrative and personnel costs under one contract. The budget proposals and apportionments for these contracts will be submitted to DEP for review by the first week of October.

John Vickers added that, in turn, DEP is looking to ensure that there are safeguards in place that prevent potential delays or gaps in funding for the future. The operational and programmatic contracts are based on current knowledge of funding needs but should also provide some flexibility for new circumstances and endeavors. Ryan added to this point by saying that part of the problem with payment requests under current contracts is that both WAC and DEP are limited by the contract language, even where both parties are in agreement. The goal for the successor contracts will be to develop language that isn't too vague that it is no longer substantive, but also not too specific that is restrictive to changes over time. The WAC/Columbia partnership, for example, has the potential to change how the Agricultural Program operates in the future.

Third, he reported that there was a demolition/preconstruction meeting on Thursday, September 21<sup>st</sup> regarding the condemned buildings on the former Ploutz property, currently owned by WAC. Representatives from the awarded vendors, Tweedie Construction Services and Paradigm Environmental Services, met with WAC project lead, Rob Orleski, and the Town of Hamden Code Enforcement Officer, Josh Morgan. Demolition is set to be completed by November, with updates to the town and DEP being ongoing.

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

#### A. NYC DEP Commissioner Visit

Bud touched on the success of a recent visit from the DEP Commissioner. Also in attendance was Deputy Commissioner, Paul Rush, as well as Kate MacKenzie of the NYC Mayor’s Office of Food Policy.

**V. Finance Committee – Karl Gockel**

A. July Financials – Motion

Karl presented some highlights from the September Finance Committee Meeting:

- The payment request process has been running smoothly and on time.
- All Line H items have been removed.
- The “Due to/Due from” reconciliation is currently under review with the DEP Office of Engineering Audits (OEA).
- The FY23 audit is currently underway with RBT CPAs, LLP.
- The Committee discussed alternative options for banking but with no concerns with the current banking institution, it was decided that proposals would not be sought at this time.

He asked for any questions or comments on the July financial statements ahead of the motion.

***Motion to accept the July Financials, as presented.***

Motion: Dave Cammer

Second: Fred Huneke

***Approved***

**VI. Agricultural Committee – Steve Reed**

Steve presented some highlights from the September Agricultural Committee Meeting:

- There were no new Whole Farms Plans (WFPs) brought for Committee consideration.
- There was some continued discussion on cover crops.
- Guideline Revisions were approved.
- The Agricultural Program Tour will be held on Thursday, October 12<sup>th</sup>.

**VII. Easement Committee – Tom Hutson**

Tom touched on the various phases of current Easement Program acquisition projects.

**VIII. Economic Viability Committee – Jennifer Grossman**

Jennifer explained that the Committee met earlier in the day to discuss and finalize the application structure and overview for the Fruit and Vegetable Expansion Pilot Grant. She explained that this new opportunity grew out of objectives outlined in the NYC Mayor’s Office climate action plan called

PlaNYC. This grant seeks to incentivize expansion of fruit and vegetable production within the NYC Watershed under three reimbursement categories: (1) Greenhouse and/or Raised Bed Expansion, (2) Water Access, and (3) Farm Structure. The grant currently doesn't reimburse building and equipment expenses but could be a point of consideration in the future. This is the first WAC Micro-Grant opportunity that will be available to both West of Hudson and East of Hudson agricultural program participants. The Economic Viability Program is looking to have a full press release for the grant opportunity by October 1<sup>st</sup> with an application round deadline set for November 30<sup>th</sup>.

Kristan touched on a few local events that the program has participated in recently - the Delhi Harvest Festival and the Cauliflower Festival. The program will be participating in the upcoming Catskill Mountain Harvest Festival. She noted that this year's Cauliflower Festival saw the greatest number of Pure Catskill participants to date.

#### **IX. East of Hudson Committee – Fred Huneke**

Fred explained that the Committee recently reviewed the East of Hudson Program Report which detailed that the program is running at full capacity after having slowed down during the past two years. The Committee also reviewed 3 Whole Farm Plan revisions and discussed the effects of extreme weather on Best Management Practices (BMPs) and delays with the Regional Conservation Partner Program (RCPP) grant through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Fred announced that the East of Hudson Agricultural Program Tour is scheduled for Thursday, October 26<sup>th</sup> with more details to come later.

#### **X. Forestry Committee – Dave Cammer**

Dave explained that the Forestry Committee met in-person for the September meeting and discussed the 2023 deliverables and goals, as well as reimbursement for Forestry BMPs as a means to increase logger participation.

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

Marilyn wasn't present for the meeting.

#### **XII. Governance Committee – John Verhoeven**

John explained that the Governance Committee has not met recently but expects to meet soon. However, the Governance Committee recently sent out a survey to Council members. Ryan added that the survey was intended to better inform the previously mentioned assessment by understanding who has a continued interest in serving on the Council and for how long. With that information, WAC senior leadership will make any necessary recommendations for revisions to appointments and the organization's by-laws.

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

John touched on all the progress that has been made between WAC and DEP over the last couple years and expressed that he felt that the partnership is in a good place and moving in the right direction.

**XIV. NYS DOH, US EPA Reports – Patrick Palmer & Katie Lynch**

Patrick had a few updates to report:

- He plans on attending the West of Hudson Agricultural Program Tour, along with Morgan Tarbell and Paul Kaczmarczyk.
- The Riparian Buffer Working Group Meeting, a stakeholder meeting regarding streamside land acquisition programs, has been rescheduled for Tuesday, October 17<sup>th</sup>.
- There was another workgroup meeting later in the day by the Friends of the Upper Delaware River regarding a watershed plan for the Delaware River Basin.

Finally, he took a moment to congratulate Connor Young on his presentation at the NYC Watershed Science and Technical Conference

**XV. Other**

*None*

**XVI. Executive Session**

***Motion to enter Executive Session at 10:48 a.m. to discuss Columbia University research collaboration.***

Motion: Tom Hutson

Second: Steve Reed

***Approved***

***Motion to come out of Executive Session at 11:28 a.m.***

Motion: Dave Cammer

Second: John Vickers

***Approved***

**XVII. Adjournment**

***Motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:29 a.m.***

Motion: John Vickers

Second: Tom Hutson

***Approved***

The next meeting will be held on **Tuesday, October 24, 2023 at 10:00 a.m.**