

# Watershed Agricultural Council

Agriculture ♦ Forestry ♦ Conservation Easements ♦ Economic Viability

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## MINUTES OF THE WATERSHED AGRICULTURAL COUNCIL MEETING

May 28, 2024

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

#### Directors Present, via Teams:

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  
Marilyn Wyman  
John Vickers, *DEP Representative*

#### Directors Absent:

Dwight Bruno  
John Verhoeven  
Jeff Wilson

#### Others Present, via Teams:

Amy Faulkner, *Director of Operations*  
Carol Bishop, *Finance Director*  
Connor Young, *WOH Agricultural Program Manager*  
Tom Pavlesich, *Forestry Program Manager*  
Serena Orleski, *Easement Program Manager*  
Kristan Morley, *Economic Viability Program Manager*  
Heather Magnan, *Communications Manager*  
Michael Vander Werff, *NYC DEP*  
Lee Harris, *NYC DOI*  
Anastasia Plakas, *NYC DOI*  
Patrick Palmer, *NYS DOH*  
Paul Kaczmarczyk, *NYS DOH*  
Morgan Tarbell, *NYS DOH*  
Pauline Wanjugi, *NYS DOH*  
Bruce Dolph, *DC SWCD Board*  
Alyshia Korba, *The Reporter*  
Eliana Rodriguez  
Mary Crisafulli, *The Mountain Eagle*

### II. Approval of Minutes

#### ***Motion to approve the April 23, 2024 minutes, as presented.***

Motion: Tom Hutson

Second: Steve Reed

***Approved***

### III. Additions/Deletions

- A. *'Operational and Programmatic Updates'* was moved to Executive Session.
- B. *'Data Sharing Policy - Motion'* was modified to reflect no action will be requested of the Council at this time.

#### IV. Executive Director's Report

A. *Operational and Programmatic Updates:*

These updates will be given in Executive Session

B. *Spotlight: What You Need to Know About WAC Finances:*

Carol gave a presentation on WAC Finances as part of the new Spotlight aspect of each WAC meeting. Amy reported that there will not be a Spotlight presentation in June as the Committee Work Plans, updated Committee Charges and the FY25 budget will all be presented at that time. July spotlight will feature a presentation by the Easement Program. Council members expressed appreciation of the presentation and also the new financial statement formats.

C. *Successor Contract Update:*

Amy updated the group on the current status; WAC staff are currently reviewing SWP 106 and SWP 118, which are the program contracts, to provide Michael with comments by the end of today. All language in SWP 117 has been agreed to at this time so that contract is with DEP for procurement.

D. *TIAA Retirement Plan Document Modernization*

Amy briefly outlined the audit and exercise that was conducted to modernize the TIAA 403(b) plan. Jason provided much more context to the exercise and the improvements that will result in employees saving significant amounts of money in fees. Employees pay the costs of the plan and those costs were high. This new plan has many more investment options, previous plans only included TIAA accounts. The outcome is a big win for WAC employees, and the cost is net neutral to WAC. Fred expressed the importance of providing the appropriate resources to employees so that they can make educated, informed decisions on their retirement.

***Motion to approve and adopt the form of amended 403(b) Plan effective July 1, 2024, presented at this meeting and authorize Ryan Naatz, Executive Director to execute the document.***

Motion: Fred Huneke

Second: Karl Gockel

***Approved***

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

A. *Committee Restructuring Update*

Amy reported that all committees have been working to update their charges, those proposed charges as well as the proposed Director and Non-Director Reimbursement policies will be

presented to the Council in June. Once those have been approved we will move on to a complete review and update of the by-laws.

B. *Data Sharing Policy*

Amy stated that the Draft Data Sharing Policy was included in the packets. This policy was requested about two years ago, WAC's legal counsel Hinman, Howard & Kattell, LLP drafted the policy as presented. The draft was presented to the Executive Committee in May, the Committee requested a few modifications and that the draft policy be updated and presented again in June. Therefore, no action is requested of the Council at this time. Amy asked anyone with comments or questions, please forward them to her or Ryan.

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

- A. Jennifer reported that the EV committee recently awarded 12 economic viability grants in the amount near \$35,000. The Pure Catskills Guide has been released, she asked everyone to keep their eyes out and share. Kristan added that staff will be tabling at the Meredith Dairy Fest June 8-9 and she invited all to attend.

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

- A. Marilyn reported that the Committee met this month, the committee approved the FY25 annual salary increases. The HR Committee will be merging with the Executive Committee beginning in July.

**VIII. Easement Committee – Tom Hutson**

- A. Tom provided a brief update on the activities of the Easement Program over the past month, Serena added that the program is currently scheduling the first two conservation easement closings (since 2021) this June.

**IX. Agricultural Committee – Steve Reed**

- A. Steve provided a brief update on the activities of the program over the past month.
- B. Program Approval motions:

**Upon recommendation of the Agricultural Committee, motion to approve the subsequent funding request for DEC-289, BMPs 1,2,3,4 and 5 as presented.**

Motion: Barb Hanselman

Second: Jim Darling

**Approved**

**Motion to approve the subsequent funding request for DEC-036, BMPs 14b, 15, 17, 18, and 19 as presented.**

Motion: Jim Darling

Second: Tom Hutson

**Approved**

**Fred Huneke recused himself and left the meeting during this discussion.**

**X. Forestry Committee Meeting – Marilyn Wyman**

- A. Marilyn reported that the Forestry Committee met in May, the updated charge was reviewed and approved. She added a few highlights to include that Trained Logger Certification has been expanded this year to include local BOCES students; Tom is working with DEP to consider a Forest Service Landscape Scale Restoration Grant that focuses on private and city owned forest lands in the watershed; The SUNY ESF grad student gave an initial presentation on the census-based project she has been completing; and Andy gave a presentation on a project he had recently completed studying parcelization.

**XI. East of Hudson Committee – Fred Huenke**

- A. Fred reported that program goals are on track and construction is well underway. Clear Vision Farm was accepted into the program, he gave a brief update on Clear Vision Farm. Currently EOH staff have very limited access to the office due to safety concerns that are being addressed.

**XII. Finance Committee**

- A. Karl was not able to attend the May Finance Committee meeting, he reported that the minutes are in the packet. He added that it is likely that WAC will need to utilize the line of credit to cover June expenses, this will be discussed further in Executive Session. Carol added that we have received line h release letters for the majority of the “prior unsubmitted expenses” – combined total line h’s for CAT487 and CAT403 ~\$100K, all but ~\$12K are approved for release.

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

Motion: Steve Reed

Second: Marlyn Wyman

**Approved**

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

John had nothing additional to report, the majority of his updates were covered by others earlier in the meeting.

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

Patrick reported that the most recent stakeholder meeting was held on May 22<sup>nd</sup> and primarily focused on the language in the conservation easement that NYC conveys to the state, the City's core land acquisition. Also discussed were shorter term leases that might be utilized for City stream management or flood mitigation, modeled similarly to the CREP style 10-year lease where property owners could receive payments for maintaining.

**XV. Executive Session**

***Motion to enter Executive Session at 11:34 a.m.***

Motion: John Vickers

Second: Fred Huneke

***Approved***

***Motion to come out of Executive Session at 12:26 a.m.***

Motion: Paul Gallay

Second: Jennifer Grossman

***Approved***

**XVI. Use of Line of Credit**

**Motion to approve weekly Line of Credit advances as needed to cover operational costs applicable to CAT-403 EXPENSE Contract until DEP Advance payment is received.**

Motion: Karl Gockel

Second: Marilyn Wyman

***Approved***

**XVII. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned by common consent at 12:40 p.m.

The next meeting will be held on **Tuesday, June 25, 2024 at 10:00 a.m., via Teams.**