

Watershed Agricultural Council

Agriculture ♦ Forestry ♦ Conservation Easements ♦ Economic Viability

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MINUTES OF THE WATERSHED AGRICULTURAL COUNCIL MEETING

September 22, 2026

(via MS 'Teams')

Directors Present:

Wayland 'Bud' Gladstone, *Chair*

Jennifer Grossman, *Secretary*

Karl Gockel, *Treasurer*

Fred Huneke

Steve Reed

Marilyn Wyman

Michael Vander Werff, *NYC DEP*

Jason Helmbold

John Verhoeven

Tom Hutson, *Vice Chair*

Paul Gallay

Kyle Clark

James Darling

Others Present:

Ryan Naatz, *Executive Director*

Carol Bishop, *Director of Finance*

Amy Faulkner, *Director of Operations*

Kayla Henderson, *Head of Administration*

Serena Orleski, *Easement Program Manager*

Kristan Morley, *Economic Viability Program Manager*

Connor Young, *WOH Agricultural Program Manager*

Heather Magnan, *Communications Manager*

Justin Seelaus, *EOH Ag Program Manager*

Sara Storrer, *NYC DEP*

Patrick Palmer, *NYS DOH*

Morgan Zyzik-Tarbell, *NYS DOH*

Bruce Dolph, *DC SWCD Board*

Linda Garrett, *American Farm Trust*

Directors Absent:

Nancy Wyncoop

Barbara Hanselman

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

II. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the minutes of the August 25, 2026, meeting as presented.

Motion: Fred Huneke

Second: Tom Hutson

Approved

III. American Farmland Trust Presentation: Agrivoltaics – Linda Garrett, NY/NJ Regional Director

Linda Garrett of the American Farmland Trust (AFT) provided background on the development of the non-profit organization which assists in protecting farmland from development, promoting sound farming practices, and keeping farmers on the land. Highlights included information on the push for developing renewable energy, progress overview on climate act metrics, solar buildout data to-date, Smart Solar principles, the defining of Agrivoltaics (agPV), land use efficiency, common concerns, the potential benefits and challenges of Agrivoltaics, review of local solar laws, advancement of Agrivoltaics in New York, Agrivoltaics demonstration project award winners, AFT solar work in New York, and available New York resources for reference. Questions/comments from the board were discussed.

Marilyn Wyman mentioned the successful partnership between SUNY Cobleskill's Ag & Tech Program and the New York Power Authority (NYPA) on development of a solar array demonstration project, designed to support and validate future agrivoltaics projects, which simultaneously utilize land for agricultural practices and power generation using solar panels. The project will be supported by way of an awarded NYS Energy Research & Development Authority (NYSERDA) pilot grant (\$750k). Marilyn will ensure an open invite to WAC board members once a tour is scheduled.

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

Bud highlighted on the closing of the crop season which has been an especially challenging year due to early frost along with rising expenses and fuel costs. As a result, a shortage in roughage is expected in our local and surrounding areas.

V. Building Committee – Karl Gockel

Funding approval for the new WAC building project is ongoing. More information will be provided upon receipt of anticipated updates.

VI. Finance Committee – Karl Gockel

No concerns to report currently; to provide a report at next month's meeting.

VII. Governance Committee – Jason Helmbold

The committee is currently working on the slate of directors and upcoming term expirations coming due at year end. Board self-evaluations for these members have been sent for completion by October 1. As chair of the committee, Jason participated in this month's Executive Committee meeting to discuss pertinent items of business of the Governance Committee. The Governance and Executive Committees agree to meet more routinely to better discuss, assess, and plan on specific areas of business as needed, to ensure the goals of the Governance Committee are upheld.

VIII. Agricultural Committee – Jim Darling

Chaired on behalf of Steve Reed at the last meeting, Jim notified the board of a change to the Nutrient Management funding dispersal for the year. To better simplify processes for the finance department, single payments will now be produced. No changes will be made to credit calculations. Additionally, the board is reminded of an upcoming Ag tour scheduled for October 15.

IX. Economic Viability Committee – Jennifer Grossman

The New York State Agriculture and Food Systems Workforce Development Grant Program (*up to \$500k available funding per project*) offers funding for nonprofits and organizations implementing programs that prepare individuals for jobs in the state's agriculture and food systems. The grant goal is to support training, formal education, experimental learning, and credentialing programs that help attract, retain, and upskill agricultural workers. Interested parties can join the Karst Management Plan (KMP) capacity study committee which offers great work at events that support agriculture, easement, and forestry conservation.

X. Easements Committee – Tom Hutson

In reference to the AFT presentation provided, Tom expressed feeling positively about the idea of future affiliation. Rebecca Morgan, Easement Program Acquisitions Coordinator, is continuing to do a great job in recruitment. Jennifer Grossman added feedback on her participation at this year's Easement LTA Rally conference, finding it to be a great resource for board members and encourages more participation from other board members at future conferences as it greatly centers around WAC's goals and mission. Jennifer expressed how proud she is of our organization's skillset and abilities and what the future may bring.

XI. Forestry Committee – Marilyn Wyman

Review of deliverable statuses and of the Map Evaluation Handbook modifications was conducted at this month's meeting. Marilyn suggests utilizing the National Woodland Owners Association for educational resources and advocacy tools designed for family and small forest landowners.

XII. East of Hudson Committee – Fred Huneke

The committee reviewed reports on WFPs and ASRs; all are confirmed on track as scheduled. The NY CORE will be holding a virtual online training session that would be applicable to EoH participants on October 15.

XIII. NYC DEP Report – Michael Vander Werff

There are no updates to report at this time.

XV. NYS DOH, DEC, US EPA Reports

Discussions with New York City regarding the long-term management plan continue to be ongoing. The plan is slated to become available in December.

XVI. Executive Session

Motion to enter Executive Session at 11:08 a.m.

Motion: Jennifer Grossman

Second: John Verhoeven

Approved

Motion to come out of Executive Session at 12:45 p.m.

Motion: Fred Huneke

Second: Tom Hutson

Approved

XVII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:46 p.m. by common consent.

The next meeting of the Council is scheduled for **October 27, 2026**, at 10:00 a.m., via Teams.

Jennifer Grossman

Jennifer Grossman, WAC Board Secretary

10 / 27 / 2026

Date

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