Watershed Agricultural Council
Agriculture ◆ Forestry ◆ Conservation Easements ◆ Economic Viability
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Executive Committee Meeting
September 15, 2026

I. Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 10:02 a.m. by Fred Huneke.

Members Present:	Michael Vander Werff, NYC DEP (via 'Teams')	Fred Huneke
	Jennifer Grossman (via 'Teams')	Karl Gockel (via 'Teams)
	Marilyn Wyman (via 'Teams'/***Left at 10:30 a.m.***)	Tom Hutson (via 'Teams)
Others Present:	Ryan Naatz	Kayla Henderson
	Amy Faulkner	Jason Helmbold (via 'Teams)
	Sara Storrer, NYC DEP (via 'Teams)	Steve Reed (via 'Teams')
Members Absent:	Wayland "Bud" Gladstone, *Chair*	

II. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the minutes of August 4 and August 18, 2026, meetings respectively as presented.
Motion: Michael Vander Werff
Second: Tom Hutson
Approved

IV. Discussion

A. Governance SWOT Discussion

Jason Helmbold, Governance Committee Chair, feels the Governance Committee and Executive Committee should meet more routinely to better discuss, assess, and plan on pertinent items of business, ensuring goals of the Governance Committee are upheld as a gap and lack of dialog/discussion have been identified. Jason confirmed the Governance Committee's greatest challenge is finding suitable candidates to fill open board positions and needs as members plan for retirement. The board is currently operating at the minimum requirement based upon the bylaws. Discussion ensued at length on key points such as contingency planning in preparation for when unexpected circumstances arise, mindfulness of communication channels, the need for a succession plan, and identifying awareness opportunities for consideration. It is felt that there is a lack of board engagement on select committees which can hinder the organization's ability to serve the public accordingly. Additionally, the expectations of the Governance Committee is quite robust; there is need for consideration of its sustainability as it currently stands. Discussion ensued on how to support resourcing and engagement with program committees. Consensus agreed on the importance of defining responsibilities of the board in relation to financial oversight and policy/procedure development to better determine restructuring needs. The board needs to be true to the organization's mission, maintain financial stability while being legally compliant. It was identified that having four (4) key committees (*Executive, governance, finance, and audit*) is crucial in having a strong, viable board.

Ryan Naatz noted that framework on the white paper execution will be presented at this month's Council meeting. Discussion ensued on needs to continue holding Audit Committee meetings, as it is NYS law that non-profit organizations have one established and consisting of independent directors for voting purposes. Members suggested there may be opportunities to merge the Audit Committee

with the Governance Committee or assign it as a subcommittee to Governance Committee in the future, as streamlining operations could potentially be beneficial.

B. Employee Exit Interview Summary Review

Exit interviews are conducted on employees leaving the organization to better understand reasoning behind resignations as it's important to gain perspective and identify any gaps. Amy Faulkner compiled the last two years' feedback for committee review. There is much improvement seen and/or mentioned in collaboration of the independent office sites and DEP. Board members are pleased with the level of unanimous positive feedback on how the majority would return to the organization if situations were warranted and would encourage others to apply if an opportunity presents itself. Michael VanderWerff would like to receive more feedback from easements to identify any areas for opportunity to improve relations between the program and DEP.

V. Executive Session

There isn't a need to hold executive session at this month's meeting.

VII. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned by common consent at 11:03 a.m. The next meeting of the committee is scheduled to be held Tuesday, **November 17, 2026**.