

# Watershed Agricultural Council

Agriculture ♦ Forestry ♦ Conservation Easements ♦ Economic Viability

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## MINUTES OF THE WATERSHED AGRICULTURAL COUNCIL MEETING

August 27, 2024

### I. Meeting called to order at 10:07 a.m.

#### Directors Present:

Dwight Bruno  
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  
Jeff Wilson  
Marilyn Wyman  
Shilo Williams, *NYC DEP*

#### Directors Absent:

James Darling

#### Others Present:

Ryan Naatz, *Executive Director*  
Amy Faulkner, *Director of Operations*  
Connor Young, *WOH Agricultural Program Manager*  
Tom Pavlesich, *Forestry Program Manager*  
Serena Orleski, *Easement Program Manager*  
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*  
Anastasia Plakas, *NYC DOI*  
Patrick Palmer, *NYS DOH*  
Paul Kaczmarczyk, *NYS DOH*  
Morgan Tarbell, *NYS DOH*  
Pauline Wanjugi, *NYS DOH*  
Alyssa Bement, *NYS DOH*  
Bruce Dolph, *DC SWCD Board*  
Elizabeth DeFalco, *The Reporter*  
Mary Crisafulli, *The Mountain Eagle*

### II. Approval of Minutes

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

Motion: Fred Huneke

Second: John Verhoeven

**Approved**

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

#### A. Operational and Programmatic Updates

##### 1. EOH Office Status

Ryan presented a quick update on the East of Hudson office space, as Amy had already sent an email notification to Council members ahead of the meeting. He explained that the current lease agreement with Westchester County wasn't set to expire until 2027. However, County officials recently notified the WAC Executive Team of the Department of Parks' intention to reclaim the building space ahead of the lease expiration as part of a capital projects program to improve numerous parks and facilities. That lease is now set to terminate on October 31, 2024.

WAC has now entered into a new lease agreement, effective September 1, 2024 for building space in Patterson, NY – it is a clean, professional office space with access to IT Services and centrally located to a majority of program participants.

#### B. Spotlight: *Economic Viability Program – Pure Catskills 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary* presented by Kristan Morley

Kristan's presentation highlighted the Pure Catskills initiative of the Economic Viability Program. Starting in 2004 as a brochure to promote local farm products, the campaign now provides support for sales, marketing, education and branding of its farm and forest business members across Delaware, Greene, Otsego, Schoharie, Sullivan and Ulster counties. WAC will be celebrating its 20-year anniversary this year and, with the help of the NYC DEP, hopes to continue supporting these local economies for years to come.

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

Bud reported that the Building Committee met on August 12<sup>th</sup>, following a hiatus, to move forward with plans to construct an office building that would house all West of Hudson WAC employees. It is estimated that the project will be completed within 5-6 years.

### V. Economic Viability – Wayland 'Bud' Gladstone

#### A. Position Creation: Head of Administration – Motion

***Motion to approve the "Head of Administration" Position Creation Request as presented.***

Motion: Fred Huneke

Second: Tom Hutson

***Approved***

## **VI. Finance Committee – Karl Gockel & Carol Bishop**

### **A. June Financials – Motion**

Karl presented the highlights from the Finance Committee meeting before calling for a motion to approve the June Financial Statements, included in the meeting materials.

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

Motion: Steve Reed

Second: John Verhoeven

***Approved***

### **B. Endowment Fee Allocation Modification – Motion**

***Motion to approve the three (3) corrections to the Endowment Fee Allocation as presented.***

Motion: Marilyn Wyman

Second: Dwight Bruno

***Approved***

## **VII. Economic Viability Committee – Jennifer Grossman & Kristan Morley**

Jennifer turned the floor over to Kristan to present some programmatic updates – the first being that staff are currently working to create a program handbook (like the WAC Forestry Program) that will go into effect with the start of new contracts in April 2025. Second, she reported that program staff conducted a survey for the first round of applicants for the Fruit and Vegetable Grant. The findings were presented at the EV Committee meeting earlier in the morning, and she will likely have a spotlight presentation to share with the Council soon. At some point, she would also like to share the findings with the NYC Mayor’s Office of Food Policy.

## **VIII. Easement Committee – Tom Hutson & Serena Orleski**

Tom drew Council members attention to the minutes from the previous Committee meeting. He reported that there were several Forest Harvest Plans and Acquisition projects that were discussed.

## **IX. Agricultural Committee – Steve Reed & Connor Young**

Steve presented some highlights from the previous Committee meeting, including project status updates, an update on WIT, and extensive discussions for a WFP Revision to be presented at the September Council meeting.

Steve then asked for any questions or comments, before announcing that the next Agricultural Committee meeting was rescheduled to Thursday, September 12<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 a.m.

**X. Forestry Committee – Marilyn Wyman & Tom Pavlesich**

Marilyn reported the Committee didn't meet in August, so she had nothing to report at this time.

**XI. East of Hudson Committee – Fred Huneke & Amy Faulkner**

Fred reported that the Committee didn't meet in August. He turned to the floor over to Amy to give the Council a quick update on current changes within the Program. First, she indicated that she is still *Interim Program Manager*, as advertising and interviews for the vacant position are still ongoing. The vacant Conservation Planner position has been advertised internally but will open to the public soon. She explained that the delays in filling these positions sooner stem, in part, from ongoing safety issues at the East of Hudson Office, and the need to procure a new facility before bringing on new staff members.

**XII. NYC DEP Report – Shilo Williams**

Shilo noted that the subject of solar arrays has come up in several Committee meetings she has attended and informed the Council that DEP is currently in a research phase for the use of solar farm projects within the watershed.

In addition, she reported that she has met with several partners and participants in the watershed, attended the Delaware County Fair, and plans to attend the Cauliflower Festival in September.

**XIII. NYS DOH, US EPA Reports**

**XIV. Other**

On the discussion of solar arrays, Barb Hanselman asked Shilo if DEP is considering the use of solar arrays on farmland within the watershed – expressing the importance of preserving the agricultural use of these lands. Subsequent discussions ensued about this concern and Shilo indicated that she didn't have the answer to that question, but she would seek out more information and provide an update to Council members in the future.

**XV. Executive Session**

***Motion to enter Executive Session at 11:10 a.m.***

Motion: Tom Hutson

Second: Fred Huneke

***Approved***

***Motion to come out of Executive Session at 11:37 a.m.***

Motion: Steve Reed

Second: Karl Gockel

***Approved***

**XVI. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:37 a.m. by common consent.

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, September 23, 2024 at 10:00 a.m.