

# Watershed Agricultural Council

Agriculture ♦ Forestry ♦ Conservation Easements ♦ Economic Viability

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## MINUTES OF THE WATERSHED AGRICULTURAL COUNCIL MEETING

February 25, 2025

### I. Meeting called to order at 10:06 a.m.

#### Directors Present, via Teams:

Dwight Bruno  
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  
John Verhoeven  
Marilyn Wyman  
Shilo Williams, *NYC DEP*

#### Others Present, via Teams:

Ryan Naatz, *Executive Director*  
Amy Faulkner, *Director of Operations*  
Carol Bishop, *Finance Director*  
Tom Pavlesich, *Forestry Program Manager*  
Tyler Van Fleet, *EOH Forestry Program Coordinator*  
Serena Orleski, *Easement Program Manager*  
Kayla Atanasoff, *Easement Program Executive Assistant*  
Kristan Morley, *Economic Viability Program Manager*  
Heather Magnan, *Communications Manager*  
Sara Storrer, *NYC DEP*  
Lee Harris, *NYC DOI*  
Patrick Palmer, *NYS DOH*  
Elizabeth DeFalco, *The Reporter*  
Mary Crisafulli, *The Mountain Eagle*

#### Directors Absent:

*None*

### II. Approval of Minutes

***Motion to approve the January 28, 2025 minutes, as presented.***

Motion: Karl Gockel

Second: Fred Huneke

***Approved***

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

TDD 1-800-662-1220  
Watershed protection through partnership.

A. Operational and Programmatic Updates

Ryan indicated that his updates would take place during the Executive Session.

B. Spotlight: *Forestry – Urban/Rural Education Initiative (UREI) presented by Tyler VanFleet*

Tyler presented the various programs that make up the WAC Forestry Program's Urban/Rural Education Initiative, the educational opportunities they provide, and last year's participation turnouts (which had record highs!).

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

A. WAC and DEP Press Release

Bud reported that WAC and DEP held a Press Release at Lucky Dog Farms on January 31<sup>st</sup> to announce the three (3) new 10-year contracts that will replace the current operating and program contracts. He expressed his gratitude for the partnership and renewed commitment to WAC programming, and farm and forest landowners in the NYC watersheds.

**V. Executive Committee – Wayland 'Bud' Gladstone**

A. Conflict of Interest Policy Modification – Motion

Ryan explained that the motion presented is for the ratification of the Executive Committee's recommendations for changes to the Conflict of Interest Policy. The most notable change confers regulatory authority from the Audit Committee to the Governance Committee, in conformity with the Council's By-laws.

***Upon the recommendation of the Executive Committee, motion to approve the Conflict of Interest Policy modifications as presented.***

Motion: Fred Huneke

Second: Steve Reed

***Approved***

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

A. December Financials – Motion

Karl reported that NBT Bank presented on the current status of the Stewardship Endowment at the February Finance Committee; the endowment funding is on track to reach its long-term goal. In addition to the presentation, the Committee reviewed the current standing for the new contracts. SWP 106 and 117 are registered, and payment requests have been submitted. SWP 118, the Easement contract, is waiting to be registered but anticipated to be soon.

***Motion to approve the December Financials as presented.***

Motion: Dwight Bruno  
Second: Marilyn Wyman  
***Approved***

**B. Director Reimbursement Process**

Carol presented updates to the reimbursement process for Council Directors. She reminded everyone that changes to the reimbursement process were approved at the January Council meeting. Moving forward, Finance will complete a summary sheet based on Committee assignments that will be signed annually and paid out quarterly. There is a new mileage log that will be filled out monthly or quarterly and does not require attached maps. It is the hope that this new method will make it easier for both the Directors and Finance staff to process reimbursement requests.

**VII. Agricultural Committee – Steve Reed & Connor Young**

Steve reported that, considering recent avian flu outbreaks, the Committee reviewed biosecurity protocols ahead of spring farm visits. Additionally, they reviewed revisions to nutrient management and manure transport credits.

**VIII. Economic Viability Committee – Jennifer Grossman & Kristan Morley**

Jennifer reported that the Committee discussed upcoming changes to the Micro-Grant Program Guidelines. Also discussed was a Capacity Study in collaboration with Cornell University. She explained that a literature review will be completed within the next month, followed by a scope of study and then an opportunity for Directors to review. She concluded by reporting that Pure Catskill membership renewals are currently underway.

**IX. Easement Committee – Tom Hutson & Serena Orleski**

Tom reported that, as part of recent Committee reassignments, Karl and John are no longer serving on the Easement Committee and Jennifer has rejoined. He explained that the bulk of the February meeting was devoted to discussions of an amendment request that is currently underway.

Serena added that she will be presenting on Farmlands in Succession with Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE). If anyone is interested in a conservation easement, the program is always accepting new applications.

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

Marilyn reported that the Committee reviewed staff work progress and recommendations for the 2026 program budget. In addition, Tyler presented on the Urban/Rural Education Initiative and 2025

Forestry Handbook modifications were presented ahead of a full review in March (cost adjustments, new programming, etc.).

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

Fred explained that the Committee did not meet in January, but there were a few updates to report:

1. Annual Status Reviews (ASRs) are on target for completion. There is currently a Request for Proposal for Best Management Practices (BMP) design services. When a vendor is eventually selected, WAC Project Engineer, Andy Cheung, will implement the designs.
2. The search for the EOH Program Manager is still ongoing.
3. Staff are officially settled and adjusting well to the new office in Patterson.

The next Committee meeting is scheduled for March. The following meeting in May will be held in-person and open to any Council members who wish to attend.

**XII. Building Committee – Karl Gockel**

The Committee had not recently met, but Ryan had an update to report. As previously mentioned, the contract for building design and site-scoping was awarded to Keystone Associates Architects, Engineers and Surveyors, LLC. The contract for these services is currently under negotiation. Once finalized and signed, it will be submitted to DEP for final approval. The initial proposal called for services to be completed by the end of summer. However, this timeframe has been extended due to current weather conditions. There will be more updates to come.

**XIII. Governance Committee – Jason Helmbold**

Jason reported that Directors met for the Directors Only meeting on Thursday, February 13<sup>th</sup>. Presentation topics included the aforementioned Capacity Study, collaborative developments in New York State's beef industry, and the avian influenza virus (H5N1) in cattle.

The Governance Committee will be meeting on Monday, March 3<sup>rd</sup> to discuss the Directors Only meeting, review potential new Board Directors, and finalize revisions to the Committee's work plan.

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

Shilo had nothing to report at this time.

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

Patrick presented a quick update on the Community Vitality Study that is currently underway.

**XVI. Other**

None

**XVII. Executive Session**

***Motion to enter Executive Session at 11:25 a.m.***

Motion: Steve Reed

Second: Fred Huneke

***Approved***

***Motion to come out of Executive Session at 11:45 a.m.***

Motion: Fred Huneke

Second: James Darling

***Approved***

**XVIII. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:45 a.m. by common consent.

The next meeting will be held on **Tuesday, March 25, 2025 at 10:00 a.m.**, via Teams.