



State of New Jersey

BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING

March 22, 2024

(Friday)

Public meeting notice was certified by communication on March 15, 2024.

Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 et seq. adequate notice of this meeting has been provided by giving written notice of the time, date, location and to the extent known the agenda of this meeting. At least 48 hours in advance this notice has been posted on the third floor, Riverview Plaza, Trenton, New Jersey; mailed to the Newark Star Ledger; the Camden Courier Post; the Philadelphia Inquirer and filed with the Office of the Secretary of State.

President Holly Sytsema called the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture to order at 9:15 am. Board members in attendance included President Holly Sytsema; Vice President Barney Hollinger (via Teams), Kurt Alstede, Lisa Specca, Bob Blew, David DeFrange, John Hart and Stephen V. Lee, IV. The meeting was held at Riverview Plaza, Trenton, NJ.

Also in attendance were Assistant Secretary Joe Atchison, Dr. Amar Patil, Director, Division of Animal Health; Rose Chamberlain, Director, Division of Food & Nutrition; Frank Minch, Director, Division of Agricultural & Natural Resources; Joe Zoltowski, Director, Division of Plant Industry; Nancy Wood, Division of Marketing & Development; Susan Payne, Executive Director, and Chuck Roohr, SADC; Christopher LaRegina, Jennifer Robbins, Robert Vivian, Jeff Wolfe and Jeff Beach, Office of the Secretary. Also in attendance were Douglas Fisher (via Teams), Allen Carter, President, Al Murray, Ashley Kerr and Ed Wengryn, NJ Farm Bureau; Dr. Brian Schilling, Rutgers University; and Linda Walker, NJ Department of Agriculture.

President Sytsema stated that anyone wishing to make public comment at the meeting today, needed to sign in, in order to be called on.

OLD BUSINESS

Soil Protection Standards (SPS) Discussion

Dr. Brian Schilling, SADC member, reviewed with the Board the recommendations of the SADC's Subcommittee (attached).

After the review the very tentative timeline was discussed. Susan Payne explained that the SADC will need to get a red-line version to the Committee. If accepted it would need to be repropose as a new rule and go back to the NJ Register for another 60-day comment period. If all goes well, it's possible that it could be approved at the April meeting and then be republished for a 60-day comment period, it would likely be Fall but the time this becomes final.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Nicole Voigt, Attorney, reported that she was attending today to get information for one of her clients that was scheduled to preserve their farmland and now they are considering backing out of the preservation deal in light of these new regulations. She asked if the Board would be making a resolution or giving guidance? What are the next steps that the Board is going to take?

President Sytsema stated that this is not a role of the State Board, this is the role of the SADC. The State Board was invited to the table to have conversations with the SADC in the hopes that we would represent the ag industry and the voices that we heard. We all met together and brought ideas that came from the community.

Douglas Fisher (VIA Teams) commented that he was so proud of the compromises that were made to get to this point.

Allen Carter thanked the members of the State Board SPS Committee and the SADC SPS Committee for their hard work on getting this to where we are now.

NEW BUSINESS

President Sytsema reported that the Personnel Committee, on behalf of the State Board of Agriculture, we solicited and completed extensive interviewing process in their search to find a candidate to fill the Secretary of Agriculture position. In accordance with statutory requirements that provide us with a collaborative opportunity to work together with the Governor's Office, we are pleased to be here today. She reported that the Committee interviewed several strong candidates that demonstrated integrity, professionalism, depth of knowledge and leadership. She stated that they were very grateful for all of the candidates that had a desire to work with the Department and for expressing a strong interest in being our next Secretary. To each and every one of you, on behalf of all of us, we thank you. Without further ado, we will hear the motion to appoint our next Secretary of Agriculture for this great state of New Jersey.

ON the MOTION of Stephen V. Lee, seconded by Kurt Alstede, Mr. Lee read the following:

WHEREAS, the NJ Department of Agriculture was created by law March 29, 1916, to form a single agency and promote, protect, and serve New Jersey agricultural interests; and

WHEREAS, the State Board of Agriculture is the head of the Department; and

WHEREAS, the Secretary of Agriculture is the principal Executive Officer of the Department; and

WHEREAS, the State Board of Agriculture is authorized to appoint the Secretary of Agriculture subject to the Governor, pursuant to New Jersey Constitution, Article 4, Section 4, paragraph 4, and NJSA 4:1-15; and

WHEREAS, the Secretary of Agriculture Douglas H. Fisher retired on June 30, 2023, after serving the Department and the agricultural community for 14 years; and

WHEREAS, the State Board of Agriculture has conducted an extensive search and interview process to find and appoint a new Secretary of Agriculture to carry out the Department's mission; and

WHEREAS, pending appointment of the next Secretary of Agriculture, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture Joseph Atchison III has faithfully exercised the powers and performed the duties of the Secretary of Agriculture, and the Board commends him for his service to the Department and the agricultural community.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the State Board hereby appoints Edward D. Wengryn to serve as the eighth Secretary of Agriculture, contingent upon the approval of the Governor.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the State Board shall forward this resolution to the Governor's Office for approval and effectuation of the appointment, this Resolution shall become effective immediately, pending voting from the Board.

Board members Bob Blew and David DeFrance recused themselves from the vote.

A roll call vote was taken, and the remaining six members voted in favor.

President Sytsema stated that the motion carries and announced Edward D. Wengryn as the new Secretary of Agriculture.

She then stated that the Board enthusiastically endorses Edward Wengryn to be the next Secretary of Agriculture, we encourage the Governor to be equally enthusiastic in accepting Ed's nomination to this prestigious position. In our modern age, farmers are asked to help devise solutions to address challenges facing our nation and world. Whether it's climate change, food insecurity, animal health and welfare or the increase of invasive species from worldwide trade, agriculture as an industry must be a key player in adapting methods of production and distribution to fit our changing world. We are also seeing incredible growth and opportunities farmers can find to market their fresh agricultural products and services like agritourism to the residents of New Jersey and beyond. Both the obstacles' farmers face, the opportunities they can find are often rooted in legislation and regulation. With Ed's background of decades of agricultural policy on a state and federal level is a unique position to know the history of and the most current thinking on agricultural, legislative and administrative issues. The Board is confident that Ed will lead the Department and the agricultural industry in an age where the knowledge and skill set, he brings to the table will be invaluable.

Ed thanked the Board and the Personnel Committee for their vote of confidence and commented that he was extremely humbled and honored to represent the agricultural industry. He noted that with his family history of farming, being able to represent the agricultural industry is truly humbling.

He thanked Joe Atchison for his leadership and steady hand through this transition process and actually setting the stage for a good future for the Department and industry going forward. I think we are in for exciting times, and I am looking forward to working with you, the State Board, and the Division Directors of the Department. He stated that we have a lot to do in exciting times and the future looks bright.

Board member Bob Blew noted that he recused from the vote due to a personal relationship that he had with one of the candidates, but welcomed Ed to the Department, and he looks forward to working with him going forward.

Board member Kurt Alstede congratulated Ed and noted that they met as freshmen many years ago at Delaware Valley College and that he was proud of him and the accomplishments that he has made and that he has done an outstanding job representing the agricultural industry and is looking forward to working with him going forward.

David DeFrance stated that he is looking forward to continuing to work with Ed as he has for many years on many issues and noted that there is a lot of work to be done and he looks forward to it. He noted that a fresh set of eyes is always good.

John Hart commented that he is a big advocate for farmland preservation but also noted that without young farmers, there won't be a need for farmland preservation. He hopes that he can help encourage young farmers to get involved and stay involved in agriculture here in the Garden State.

Lisa Specca congratulated Ed, she noted that it was a very long process and that everyone here is enthusiastic and really looking forward to his leadership and getting started!

Stephen Lee commented that having served on the Personnel Committee, this has been a long road. He thanked those who went through the interview process and most especially Joe Atchison, who was here on his day off. He thanked Joe who has steered the ship since July and with a tremendous amount of gratitude for the job, his continuance to push the Department forward. He stated that he was very excited about the work that is in front of us.

Joe Atchison stated that he wanted to thank the Team assembled here in Trenton, the Division Directors, and staff for their dedication to the Department. He stated that when he assumed fulfilling the duties of Secretary on July 1, that he was not going to be a placeholder, but that he would be continuing the roll of the responsibility of Secretary and we have moved forward, we will continue to move forward and that he looks forward to working with Ed and we will continue to do what we have done, which is serve the agricultural industry that we all care about so much.

President Sytsema thanked Joe personally and stated that there was nobody that she would have rather sat next to through this term that I have been serving as President. Joe has been invaluable and a great mentor. She further stated that with the retirement of Secretary Fisher, having Joe already in the

position of Assistant Secretary meant that he was prepared to take on the duties of the Secretary such as preparing with the Division Directors for items like the Department's budget and preparing for the budgetary hearings put him on solid ground dealing with the legislator's and Governor's Office staff. Joe also, as he has done in previous years, helped Nancy Wood and the entire staff put together an awesome Convention for us. In February, he managed this role extremely well and emceed the Convention and delivering the key message. All of this was done with minimal internal upheaval because Joe was prepared to step into that role while also seeing to it that the work of his division continued. We know that Joe will continue to be a linchpin in this organization, not only as ongoing Assistant Secretary, but also leading the very important work of his division promoting and regulating New Jersey's incredible agricultural products. This is really a love that Joe has. He is ingrained in the agricultural community. We thank you for everything!

President Sytsema congratulated Ed Wengryn again, thanked everyone for coming today and noted that the State Board would be holding their regular monthly meeting next Wednesday, March 27 beginning at 1:00 pm. here at Riverview Plaza.

ADJOURNMENT

ON the MOTION of Stephen Lee, seconded by Bob Blew, the Board voted unanimously to close the meeting at 12:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Edward D. Wengryn". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Edward D. Wengryn