



State of New Jersey

## **BOARD OF AGRICULTURE**

### **MINUTES OF MEETING**

**September 24, 2025**

**(Wednesday)**

Public meeting notice was certified by communication on September 18, 2025.

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 Trenton Times and filed with the Office of the Secretary of State.

President Bob Blew called the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture to order at 1:10 pm. Board members in attendance included President Bob Blew; Vice President Stephen V. Lee, IV, David DeFrango, John Hart, Joel Viereck (TEAMS), Rick Gardner, Hillary Barile and Holly Sytsema. The meeting was held at 200 Riverview Plaza, Trenton, NJ.

Also in attendance were Frank Minch, Director, Division of Agricultural & Natural Resources; Dr. Amar Patil, Director, Division of Animal Health; Rose Chamberlain, Director, Division of Food & Nutrition; Joe Zoltowski, Director, Division of Plant Industry; Nancy Wood, Division of Marketing & Development; Sandra Howland, Division of Agricultural & Natural Resources; Chuck Roohr, Executive Director, SADC; Mark Dinglasan, Executive Director, Office of the Food Security Advocate; Tameko Webster, Chris LaRegina, Tim Idland, Tony Tarr, Robert Vivian, Andrea Egizi, Kaitlynn Dixon, and Alyssa Pitt, Office of the Secretary. Also in attendance were Ashley Kerr, Al Murray, NJ Farm Bureau; Bruce Eklund, NASS; Dr. Brian Schilling, Rutgers University; Shannon Barton, Farm Loan Chief, Farm Service Agency; Julie Hawkins, State Conservationist, NRCS; Jasmine Moreano, Organic and Regenerative Farming Board; and Linda Walker, NJ Department of Agriculture.

President Blew reported that Secretary Wengryn was not in attendance as he was enroute to a meeting with USDA Secretary Brooke Rollins to talk about the impacts that New Jersey Agriculture can have on the greater agriculture community. Agricultural & Natural Resources Director Frank Minch is standing in for the Secretary today.

### **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

ON the MOTION of Hillary Barile, seconded by Holly Sytsema, the Board voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the August 27, 2025 regular meeting.

## **REPORT OF RUTGERS UNIVERSITY**

Dr. Brian Schilling represented the College and reported on the following topics:

- Effective September 1, Carey Williams, extension specialist and professor in the Department of Animal Sciences, was appointed Interim Director of the Rutgers Equine Science Center, following the retirement of Dr. Karyn Malinowski founding director of the Rutgers Equine Science Center after close to 50 years of service to Rutgers. He noted that William's area of research is equine nutrition, with specific focus on how nutrition affects the performance of the equine athlete. He noted that there have been a few more retirements and a few others coming. He noted that longtime faculty member Madeline Flahive Dinardo of Union County retired August 1.
- New staff member Seowoo Lee (Sophie) started as an Extension Specialist in Farm Viability (Economics Department) with a focus on land use decision, farm management, conservation practices and precision agriculture.
- Michael Acquafredda, a prominent Aquaculture Specialist focusing on integrated multi-trophic aquaculture and extension services, working with the New Jersey Sea Grant Consortium (NJS GC) and the HSRL. The program also supports the Apprenticeship in Shellfish Aquaculture Program (ASAP). In addition, there have been a number of agent hires including Annalise VanVranken as the new Family and Community Health Sciences (FCHS) Educator in Atlantic County, effective August 1. A lifelong advocate for an equitable and sustainable food system, Annalise will be part of the Community Food Systems working group within FCHS. Rodrigo Sanchez Hernandez, Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Hudson County in the 4-H Youth Development Department. A STEM focus on programming and curriculum development, STEM can act as a pathway to broader learning and community engagement. He noted that the IPM Program now has one faculty lead and two staff members. Dr. Katrina DeWitt who completed her MS in Biology at Rutgers-Camden, went on to earn her PhD from Duke University and now serves as a Program Associate in Fruit IPM with Rutgers Cooperative Extension. In addition, he noted that as of January 1 they will have specialists starting in fruit pathology and one in agronomy. He reported that searches are currently underway in Atlantic County (verbal offer pending) and a search will soon be underway for an Ag & Natural Resource Agent in Vegetable Integrated Pest Management which means that they will have someone leading the fruit side and the vegetable side both within the Department of Ag & Natural Resources. Finally, he reported that a search will be underway for a county agent in Bergen County.
- Farm safety continues to be an issue, there was a tractor accident last week, where the farmer was run off the road and nobody even stopped. It has become a dangerous situation for farmers when moving equipment from field to field and what else can we do to inform the public. The College would be happy to broadcast any information that can help get the message out.

Vice President Stephen Lee introduced Tim Idland, Legal Support Team Member who recently joined the Department and noted that he is a former New Jersey State Police Officer and hopes that his wealth of knowledge can be helpful to us, especially with the Farm Safety issue.

## **REPORT OF FARM SERVICE AGENCY (FSA)**

Shannon Barton reported on behalf of the Farm Service Agency:

Emergency Livestock Relief Program (ELRP)

Emergency Livestock Relief Program for 2023 and 2024 will help offset increased supplemental feed costs due to a qualifying flood or wildfire in calendar years 2023 and 2024. ELRP 2023 and 2024 Flood and Wildfire is expected to provide approximately \$1 billion in recovery benefits. Sign-up runs September 15 through October 31.

FSA has determined eligible counties with qualifying floods and qualifying wildfires in 2023 and 2024. For losses in these counties, livestock producers are not required to submit supporting documentation for floods or wildfires. No New Jersey counties are on the list. [fsa.usda.gov/elrp](https://fsa.usda.gov/elrp).

For flood and wildfire losses in counties not listed as eligible, livestock producers can apply for ELRP 2023 and 2024 FW but must provide supporting documentation to demonstrate that a qualifying flood or qualifying wildfire occurred in the county where the livestock were physically located or would have been physically located if not for the disaster event. FSA county committees will determine if the disaster event meets program requirements.

For ELRP 2023 and 2024 FW, FSA is using covered livestock criteria similar to the Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) which includes weaned beef cattle, dairy cattle, beefalo, buffalo, bison, alpacas, deer, elk, emus, equine, goats, llamas, ostriches, reindeer, and sheep. Livestock must satisfy more than 50% of their net energy needs through the consumption of forage either through grazing or mechanically harvested forage.

Wildfire assistance is available on non-federally managed land to participants who did not receive assistance through LFP or the ELRP 2023 and 2024 for drought and wildfire program delivered to producers in July of this year.

#### Supplemental Disaster Relief Program

New Jersey FSA has approved 377 SDRP Stage 1 applications and paid \$5,496,572 million to New Jersey farmers. Nationally, FSA paid almost \$5.4 billion. There is a public facing dashboard if producers are interested in following SDRP signup.

SDRP provides disaster relief payments to eligible producers who suffered revenue, quality, or production losses to crops, trees, bushes, or vines due to qualifying disaster events in calendar years 2023 and 2024. SDRP assistance to eligible producers will be delivered in two stages. Producers can receive payments in both stages, if applicable, and for one or both years, depending on losses. The signup period for Stage 1 opened on July 7, 2025. Stage 1 will leverage existing Federal Crop Insurance or Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) data as the basis for calculating payments. Details regarding Stage 2 will be provided at a later date. A deadline for either program has not been announced.

Losses due to drought must have occurred in a county rated by the U.S. Drought Monitor as having a D2 (severe drought) for eight consecutive weeks, D3 (extreme drought) or greater intensity level during the applicable calendar year. Counties that have met eligibility criteria for drought in calendar year 2023 and/or 2024 are outlined in the fact sheet SDRP Drought Eligible Counties. For 2023, there are no drought eligible counties in NJ. For 2024, the following are drought eligible counties: Atlantic, Bergen,

Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester, Hunterdon, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, Ocean, Salem, Somerset, and Warren County.

#### Acreage Reporting

FSA annually collects data relating to crops through crop acreage reports. If you want to participate in many USDA programs, including crop insurance, safety net, conservation, and disaster assistance programs, you must file timely acreage reports to remain eligible for program benefits. Filing an accurate and timely acreage report for all crops, location, and land uses, including failed acreage and prevented planted acreage, may prevent the loss of benefits. If crops have not been planted by the crop's acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported to FSA on an FSA-578, report of acreage, within 15-days after planting is complete.

#### Loss Adjusters

New Jersey FSA is seeking Loss Adjusters (LAs) for the Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) and the Tree Assistance Program (TAP). Loss Adjusters are required to have knowledge of field crops and specialty crops, as well as a thorough understanding and execution of crop adjusting guidelines and program provisions, as applicable to FSA programs. If interested, please contact Aly Dyson, NJ FSA Disaster Specialist, [Aly.Dyson@usda.gov](mailto:Aly.Dyson@usda.gov), with any questions.

#### Emergency Commodity Assistance Program (ECAP)

New Jersey FSA has approved 534 ECAP applications and paid \$5,585,467 to New Jersey farmers. Nationally, FSA paid over \$8.0 billion. There is a public facing dashboard if producers are interested in following ECAP signup.

The Farm Service Agency is issuing up to \$10 billion directly to agricultural producers through the Emergency Commodity Assistance Program (ECAP) for the 2024 crop year. Authorized by the American Relief Act 2025, these economic relief payments are based on planted and prevented planted crop acres for eligible commodities for the 2024 crop year. Signup ended August 15.

#### Marketing Assistance Loan (MAL)

MALs offer loans to producers of eligible commodities to help manage their cash flow needs and provide marketing flexibility. By using their harvested commodities as collateral, producers can obtain interim financing and delay the sale of their crops until market prices improve. MALs help stabilize agricultural income and ensure that farmers have the financial resources to continue their operations.

### **REPORT OF NJ FARM BUREAU**

Ashley Kerr represented the Farm Bureau and reported on the following topics:

- Lame duck priorities include farmland assessment, urban agriculture, invasive species and tax credits for produce donations.
- RTF bill awarding reasonable costs and attorney fees to farmers (A4603) – passed by both Houses on 6/30/25. At what date does this become law if not acted upon by the Governor?
- Latest MAHA report (Make our Children Healthy Again Strategy) was much friendlier to agriculture than the first commission report, with a newfound recognition that farmers play a key role in health and nutrition.

- US Court of Appeals rejected President Trump's authority to impose reciprocal tariffs without an act of Congress. Trump Administration appealed to SCOTUS, and they have accepted the case. It will likely be heard in November.
- NJFB underway with mental health and roadway safety campaigns. Utilizing AFBF mental health resources including Farm State of Mind of Together all free counseling. Working with NC and VA who both have had successful roadway safety campaigns.
- Farm Safety Week – Agrisafe has a series of webinars all week long posted to our social media, Friday's two events will focus on ATV/UTV safety on farms and roadways.
- Farmer Against Hunger Day, part of New Jersey's official Gleaning Week. Fundraiser dinner Thursday night at Locust Hill Farm in Burlington and gleaning this Saturday with Assembly Speaker Coughlin.
- Working with SADC to promote their farm succession planning services through their Next Gen staff.
- Mercer County hosted a successful legislative breakfast with their CBOA, Senator Turner and many local officials. Senator Turner expressed her interest in "keeping the garden in the Garden State", pesticide recycling and industry consensus for her urban ag bill.
- NJFB Board of Directors met with Mikie Sherrill and are waiting to reschedule a virtual meeting with gubernatorial candidate, Jack Ciattarelli. State Board leadership will be invited.
- Planning for NJFB Convention in Cherry Hill on November 17–18, honoring former Executive Director Peter Furey at the banquet. County Boards of Agriculture are sending in their delegate selections this month, October 14<sup>th</sup> is our Resolutions meeting. Currently accepting nominations for Service to NJFB and Service to Agriculture awards.

#### **REPORT OF NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE (NASS)**

Bruce Eklund reported to the Board the following:

- As of September 1, New Jersey soybean growers are looking at harvesting an average of 43 bushels an acre.
- Recently published annual county estimates cash rents. Depending on if there is a government shutdown, they hope to publish 10-year ownership and transition of ag land results from the census.
- Part of a national team that will be conducting surveys in Maryland and Delaware and all are preparing for a national horticulture survey.

#### **REPORT OF NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE (NASS)**

Julie Hawkins, State Conservationist, reported the following:

- Farmer first, farmer focused vision and the agency is currently in the midst of a series of trainings to simplify programs. Sessions include Improving management of programs, applications and contracts for farmers. Hopefully we will be able to share some significant changes with you next month. In addition, as we finish their fiscal year, they will be able to share final program numbers and the farmers we were able to fund this fiscal year.

A question about the need for engineers, is there any update? Ms. Hawkins explained that there was a critical vacancy process that they were able to take part in a few months ago and they were able to get an engineer from Maryland who will be transferring to New Jersey in October, while that was a success,

we have two engineers that will be retiring by the end of the year and due to the current hiring freeze, they are not able to do anything. She noted that they are pursuing avenue with partners and agreement's, the agreement process and they are trying to share resources.

### **REPORT OF ORGANIC & REGENERATIVE FARMING BOARD**

Jasmine Moreano, was in attendance to make a short presentation on the results of the Organic and Regenerative Farming Board's Farm Owner Survey Report:

- Report of the needs assessment survey conducted by the Organic and Regenerative Farming Board of New Jersey (ORFBNJ) in January and February 2025.
- Purpose of the survey was describing organic and regenerative farming in NJ and what the farmers most need to be successful.
- Survey included responses from over 200 individuals. This report is of a selection of data from Farm Business Owners only. We collected data from farm employees and from agricultural service providers, and that is not shown here.
- To our knowledge, this is the most complete survey of organic and regenerative farmers and their needs that has been conducted in any state in the Northeast.
- Data collected paints a picture of organic and regenerative farming in NJ through
  - a. Demographics
  - b. Profitability
  - c. Support, services and assistance
  - d. Climate and soil

What was learned?

- New Jersey's organic and regenerative farmers are overall young, diverse, and new to farming.
- They grow most things you can think of but concentrate heavily on fast growing specialty crops.
- They have needs that are not being met by existing support services within the state.

What can we do with this information?

- Using the insights from this report, NJ legislators, the Department of Agriculture, Rutgers Cooperative Extension, and the wealth of nonprofit service providers in our state can better serve our community!

What were the key findings?

- The cost of farmland is the largest barrier for farmers
- Many of these farmers concentrate on enterprises that have a low cost of entry
- Direct sales to individual customers is overwhelmingly how these farmers sell their products
- Extreme weather is a major concern
- The best chance of profitability is linked to being a business sized to employ and manage 11–20 people, indicating the need for management skills
- Lower profitability farms report less engagement with support services, suggesting the better support outreach can have important impacts

Conclusion:

The Organic and Regenerative Farming Board of New Jersey's overwhelming takeaway from the survey results is that this population of farmers is passionate and hardworking. Many are building organic and

regenerative businesses under enormous constraints, and some have begun to “crack the code” on regenerative farming that has sustainable profitability. At a time when farmers statewide are aging out of the industry, this younger generation of growers represents a critical opportunity to help sustain our state’s agricultural legacy.

The data is clear: that opportunity is at risk. Without meaningful support, services and assistance, the financial strain experienced by many of these farms threatens their survival. The need is urgent– and so is the responsibility.

Mark Dinglasan reported to the Board that the Office of the Food Security Advocate is getting ready to have their second annual Food Security Summit that is scheduled for the following week with more than 300 planning to attend and another 100 joining by live stream. He reported that there were several national partners that would be attending. He noted that New Jersey is getting a lot of national and international attention for the work that we’re doing around food security, especially because a lot of our focus in food security is not just about giving people canned goods, it’s about building more resilient local food systems and investing in local agriculture. In addition, he reported that moving forward, even into the next administration, his office’s work will be informed by the Food Security Strategic plan that they have been working on, it is in draft format right now and the effort is being led by Dr. Jenny Schramm. He noted that the next few years will be informed by the Strategic Plan that he will be sharing with the State Board.

#### **SECRETARY’S REPORT**

Frank Minch, Director, Division of Agricultural & Natural Resources, reported on behalf of Secretary Wengryn and made the following comments:

Secretary Wengryn met with the new Rutgers President William Tate, he noted that President Tate is a renowned social scientist and was previously the president of the Louisiana State University (LSU). His vision for Rutgers – to lead a university that embodies a hands-on, inclusive, immersive, and deeply human approach to learning. His leadership at LSU was marked by significant achievements, including record-setting gains in research, student success, and philanthropy. The meeting was very productive, and the Secretary felt that he was a real strong advocate of the land grant mission and very supportive of agriculture in the state. Secretary Wengryn and Assistant Secretary Atchison were in Arkansas the previous week for the Annual National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) where a good part of the policy was about reinstituting local food purchase programs.

Nancy Wood, reported on behalf of Assistant Secretary Atchison, that he had moderated the panel at the Somerset County Influencing Ag after the Harvest and she noted that the official campaign with the ad agency has concluded for the season. Staff is beginning to prepare for the Consumer Awareness Survey and will provide copies to the Board once it is complete. In addition, staff is working on potential AI responses for the market section of the new website as well as preparing for the International Fresh Produce Association Trade Show in Anaheim, CA at the end of October.

Rose Chamberlain, Director, Division of Food & Nutrition, reported to the Board that this was Farm to School Week here in New Jersey and there have been events each day highlighting what is being done by schools in the Garden State to celebrate. The events for the week have included:

- Jersey Fresh Farm to School week, Secretary Wengryn will be awarding the following:
  - “Farmer Recognition Award 2024” Norz Hill Farm, Monday, September 22
  - “Best of Farm to School 2024–2025” Cranbury School District, Friday, September 26
- NJ Farm to School Academy Pilot Program School Districts visits:
  - West New York School District, Tuesday, September 23
  - St. Joseph’s Pro Cathedral School, Wednesday, September 24
  - Camden City School District, Wednesday, September 24
  - New Brunswick School District, Thursday, September 25
- Outstanding Farm to School Partnership visit:
  - Bogota School District for their partnership with Bogota School Farm and Pomptonian Food Service, Tuesday, September 23.

Joe Zoltowski, Director, Division of Plant Industry, reported that during the month, treatments for SLF were conducted on 18 properties primarily using systemic insecticides. Herbicides can be used to remove the favorite food of spotted lanternfly; the Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*) from areas. This month herbicide treatments were also conducted by staff. Besides chemical treatment this project has several physical (non-spray) population control procedures. This month 11,150 spotted lanternfly adults were removed using vacuums. Another non-spray technique to reduce SLF populations is insect trapping. A total of 130 insect traps has been deployed throughout south Jersey and are being serviced regularly in high priority areas. Staff responded to calls and emails regarding hornets and possible Asian giant hornets; all were European hornets upon identification. In addition, nursery staff conducted 144 nursery inspections during the month as well as issued 71 Phytosanitary certificates for a variety of horticultural products for international and interstate movement. A total of 16 of 38 LDD municipal egg mass surveys have been completed in Atlantic, Cumberland, Hunterdon, Monmouth, Morris, Sussex and Warren Counties. No infestations have been observed in any of the surveyed municipalities.

Chuck Roohr, Executive Director, SADC, reported that the first farm using the new Statewide Funding Formula was preserved on August 25 followed by a small event to celebrate the occasion. Staff presented the annual Special Occasion Events Legislative Report to the committee at its July meeting and supplied copies to the appropriate government offices. A copy of the report will be available on our website. He noted that the SADC has added a link to an agricultural resources page on its website. The easy-to-use spreadsheet includes the names and contact information for hundreds of agricultural service businesses used by NJ farmers. SADC Staff is hosting a virtual meeting on September 24 for all CADB Administrators. He noted that the public comment period ended on August 1, 2025 for the Soil and Water Rule Revisions, staff anticipates presenting responses to public comment and the final rule to the committee at its September 25<sup>th</sup> meeting. SADC staff have extended offers to meet with each CADB this fall and winter to provide updates and/or customized training on issues important to each specific Board. Possible topics include:

- Legislation and CADB responsibilities
- Right to Farm
- Acquisition Process – ADA amendments
- Special Occasion Events
- Soil Protection Standards

Dr. Amar Patil, Director, Division of Animal Health, reported that there has been a detection of screw worm about 70 miles south of the border. However, Mexican authorities are saying that the detection



was from cattle that was moved from an infected area into that area recently. They are continuing to survey the area. Texas and other border states are keeping a close eye on the situation. He noted that with the USDA embargo on movement of cattle and horses from Mexico into the United States so that is very helpful. In addition, he reported that during August, animal health technicians (AHTs) conducted unannounced inspections at 22 registered NJ live bird markets (LBMs) and sampled poultry from 14 markets for avian influenza. Essex 01-02 had their third monthly tests after detection. Results from the two tests were not detected. Inspectors completed the annual biosecurity protocol reviews with live bird markets and in-state distributors. Best management practices were discussed, along with strategies to enhance biosecurity and prevent LPAI and HPAI during the upcoming fall and winter seasons.

Sandra Howland, Division of Ag & Natural Resources, provided the Board with information regarding the drought watch. She noted that the information was prepared by DEP and noted the current conditions. She noted that the statewide drought warning was lifted in June 2025, however the coastal south has remained in a drought watch. She noted that the wet spring brought us out of the drought, however, rainfall has been quite scattered and limited across the state. She noted that DEP is actively watching the weather conditions. She noted that if they have any specific reports about issues irrigating or dry wells please report them to us. She suggested that farmers submit a report to the Condition Monitoring Observer Reports system (CMOR) at [go.unl.edu/cmor\\_drought](http://go.unl.edu/cmor_drought) to help scientists understand what drought looks like where you are. The CMOR system, managed by the National Drought Mitigation Center, collects reports of local weather conditions and impacts around the country. Your report will become part of the permanent record, appearing immediately on an interactive map visible to the public, including authors of the U.S. Drought Monitor and the media.

#### **BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS**

Joel Viereck reported that the Gloucester County Board of Agriculture appointed Ann Dorsett to serve on the Board of Managers again. There was a discussion on Department of Labor inspections that had taken place over the past few weeks in the county and noted that they had been milder than what they had originally heard but that they are still going on. He noted that Bill Heritage was pleased to be included in the recent discussions of the wine council. The County asked if someone would be replacing Jeff Wolfe as the liaison to the County. In addition, he reported that the Budget Committee had met with Tony Tarr, the CFO, and just getting some initial information and preparing for the upcoming Budget Listening session scheduled for October 1. He noted that the invitations were sent and hopes to have a good number of participants for the Listening Session.

Hillary Barile noted that she had reported last month about a Department of Labor inspection that had taken place in Vineland and was following up that there had been some resolution on some of the violations that had been listed. She noted that in further conversations with other farmers, she suggested that the Department provide a guide or fact sheet or post on the website information about a farmer's rights when you have a Department of Labor inspection. It is understood that these inspections are mandatory, but it might be helpful resource for the ag community. She reported that in Salem County there is an organization calling themselves Salem County Preservation and Development and they are planning some kind of South Jersey farmers summit for early 2026 where they want to talk about agricultural growth and farm friendly legislation. She noted that it seemed very vague and broad reaching and didn't realize that that time of year is very busy with other conventions/meetings.

John Hart reported that the Mercer County Board of Agriculture held their annual legislative breakfast meeting and there was a good turnout including Senator Shirley Turner. He reported that the Mercer County area is very dry, and it is a problem for the barley that he has planted. He noted that soil conditions are very critical as this has been two years in a row. He noted that at a recent fire inspection there were a few problems that had not been an issue before but it was a new inspector. He has 30 days to fix the problems.

Holly Sytsema noted that Sussex County had a presentation on Farmland Preservation Program, she noted that they do have an active account in the county but that they would be putting on the ballot for November as to whether or not the program will continue because there has been some concern that constituents do not want this anymore. She noted that there is a new Ag Resource Specialist in the County. The annual chicken barbecue was held but they are looking for different ideas as they just can't get the help that is needed. The next meeting is October 27 being hosted by President Mike Burger, all are invited to attend. She reported that the bear and deer damage is once again, very extensive. She noted that even with a depredation permit it's still out of hand. In addition, they could not get ahead of the planting of beans because of the deer and the wet weather they were having, hence the yields will be off. She noted that due to all these concerns, there is a real concern about farming going forward.

David DeFrangé announced that Hunterdon County would be holding their annual resolution dinner meeting tonight and invited everyone to attend as it is an opportunity to talk about regulations and other issues that are affecting farmers, there are some neighboring counties that send representatives and then the information is sent to the Farm Bureau for their annual conference in November. He noted that the dry weather conditions to be an issue and they have had to reevaluate their weather stations and they are talking with technology people now. He noted that drought monitors are having to be placed much deeper than in previous years. He noted that large trees that are going out right now are costing more because it is costing the grower more to get it out of the ground. He reported that the vegetable growers in his county have struggled this year as there was a very rough spring. He noted that when providing information to counties, that we send to more than just the President as sometimes that information is not given to the members of the Board in a timely fashion so that counties have the most current information. He encouraged other Board members when they visit counties to encourage them to share information.

Rick Gardner reported that the Warren County legislative dinner would be held the next evening where one of the topics will include the future livestock processing facility. He reported that he is certain that the ash tree problem, especially those near power lines will continue as the winter sets in. He reported that the new Warren County Ag Agent Dr. Hassan Mahmood Warriach has hit the ground running and thinks he will make a great Ag Agent going forward and hopes that they will be able to accomplish a lot of good things.

#### **OLD BUSINESS**

Vice President Stephen Lee reported that the Board had received the Wine Council's recommendations for grants that are funded through their wine tax monies. It is a simple program where the wine producers have a tax, they pay on the consumption on a production basis that goes into a pot of money that their Wine Council, which is their elected position that we appoint. As the Board has oversight of this, some of the members wanted to speak with members of the wine council to discuss some concerns that had been voiced to some members of the State Board. We had a meeting of the Grants Committee

and the members of the Wine Council so that we could hear directly from them. They appreciated the opportunity to speak with the members of the Grants Committee. In addition, he noted that he would like them to have an opportunity to meet at the Ag Convention, to talk about issues that involve the wine industry. It is not a meeting of the Garden State Wine Growers, it is a wine industry meeting.

ON the MOTION of Stephen Lee, seconded by Rick Gardner the Board voted unanimously to approve the wine grants as presented:

Garden State Wine Growers \$427,580.75

Application: Marketing and public relations campaign with focus on “modern & contemporary” marketing for younger consumers. Continued support for Wine Trail Weekends, Wine Showcase, and Wine Week.

NJ Wine Advisory Council: recommends for 2026 Showcase to utilize NJ grown grapes with entry wines of values of 75% or AVA standards of 85% containing NJ grown grapes.

The Winemakers Co-Op (research) \$41,400.00

Application: Continued publishing New Jersey Grape & Wine Insider. Viticulture and vinification educational forum. Cost sharing program for tools, sorting tables, and oak barrels. Study of sustainable packaging and bottle reuse. NJ Wine Advisory Council: Only funding the Education forums, which are of high value and administrative costs. Bottle reuse is currently implemented in NJ.

Vice President Lee continued and talked about the work that the Department has been working on with Travel & Tourism, there is a \$5,000,000 appropriation that was awarded to Travel & Tourism for agritourism and we have been working with them to get an Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed and hopefully we will have the signed agreement soon and we can start to accept applications.

In addition, he reported that five applications were received for the Gleaning Grants funds, he reported that there were discussions early in the spring to modify the gleaning grant to include gleaned seafood. He stated that seafood is a commodity and they are doing the same thing that we are doing, it’s just in water, so the Committee modified the grant to include seafood.

Americas Gleaned Seafood	\$ 51,248.00
Bushels of Blessings	101,684.70
Foodshed Alliance	170,625.00
Impact Community Development Corp.	64,860.00
New Jersey Agricultural Society	<u>218,900.00</u>
Total	\$607,317.70

ON the MOTION of Joel Viereck, seconded by John Hart, the Board voted unanimously to approve the grants as requested.

Vice President Lee also reported that the Nominations Committee would be meeting the next day with the Chairpersons of the North & South Jersey Caucus to discuss the caucus and the process and system that they have and to determine if they need any help for the upcoming meetings in November. He reported that Chris LaRegina has done some extensive work to see how the caucus is structured and

how it is supposed to work, and we have offered any assistance that they might need. In addition, he reported that he had attended a meeting for Camden and Burlington County on the same night and there were questions at both meetings where discussions regarding the position of an ombudsman for the Department and how beneficial it would be to have someone to act as an independent and impartial intermediary who investigates complaints against organizations and works to resolve issues through informal means like mediation and recommendations. An ombudsmen could provide a confidential, free, and accessible channel for individuals to air concerns and promote fairness, transparency, and accountability within the system or organization they serve, ultimately leading to systemic improvements and better governance. We need to be the Department that our constituents can go to in a time of need. Finally, he commended the staff for the Orientation Program that was held this morning and noted that there was a good deal of information that was covered, and it was much appreciated by the Board members.

President Blew reported that at Cumberland County Board of Agriculture meeting they got a report on the Agrivoltaics that is taking place at the RAREC Farm. It was noted that overall yields were better this year. It was noted that Board member Joel Viereck farms one of the properties and noted that peppers would be one of the crops considered growing there. He reported that Cumberland Regional High School FFA would be holding a tractor show on November 22. He noted that Nicole Smith, who is the person that runs the FFA program was hoping to create a list/spreadsheet that would link FFA students that want to get service hours or internships/volunteer/shadow experiences for FFA students. This is something that the Cumberland County Board of Agriculture is trying to help facilitate building the list. Finally, he reported that in Cape May County the federal government is trying to shut down the Beltsville Farm in Maryland, which is primarily a specialty crop research farm, and it would be sad to lose this farm as they have provided research that has been incredibly valuable here in New Jersey. He asked that any Board members that have contact with their federal legislators that they tell them how important the farm is to New Jersey.

David DeFrance reported that the Legislative Committee had met the previous day and that they will be trying to meet every other week so that they can begin to drill down on the legislative bills that are out there. He would like to send out a letter to the County Boards, delegates and legislative partners to see what is important to them? What are the issues that they are facing? This information will help the Legislative Committee going forward.

ON the MOTION of David DeFrance, seconded by Holly Sytsema, the Board voted unanimously to send a letter to County Board Presidents/Vice Presidents, delegates and leadership to see what legislative efforts that they are looking for.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### **Approval – N.J.A.C – Readoption with Amendments – General Provisions**

ON the MOTION of Joel Viereck, seconded by Hillary Barile, the Board voted unanimously the rule as presented pursuant to the Administrative Procedures Act.

ON the MOTION of Robert Blew, seconded by Rick Gardner, the Board voted unanimously to give the Convention Committee the authority to finalize the list of names for the Resolutions Committee and Nominations Committee as they were still receiving delegate certificates and want to have enough to form both Committees without having to wait till the next Board meeting in October as the Convention has moved from February to January.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

None.

#### **MEETINGS**

The next regular meeting of the State Board of Agriculture will be held on Wednesday, October 22, 2025 beginning at 1:00 pm at 200 Riverview Plaza, Trenton.

#### **RESOLUTION FOR EXECUTIVE SESSION**

The Board adopts a resolution to enter into executive session pursuant to N.J.S.A. 10:4-12(b)(8), to evaluate the performance of an employee. The Board will evaluate the employee's performance in implementing strategic outreach to stakeholders and in reviewing and implementing hiring practices at the Department.


The Board will disclose the contents of the closed session as soon as we are able to do so. Minutes will be approved at a future Board meeting.

ON the MOTION of Stephen Lee, seconded by Holly Sytsema, the Board voted unanimously to enter into executive session.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

ON the MOTION of Joel Viereck, seconded by Holly Sytsema, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the regular meeting at 5:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Edward D. Wengryn