



State of New Jersey

BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

MINUTES OF MEETING

August 27, 2025

(Wednesday)

Public meeting notice was certified by communication on August 21, 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.

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

Also in attendance were Secretary Wengryn; Assistant Secretary Joe Atchison, Dr. Amar Patil, Director, Division of Animal Health; Frank Minch, Director, Division of Agricultural & Natural Resources; Joe Zoltowski, Director, Division of Plant Industry, Melissa Pajak, Denise Liptak, Division of Food & Nutrition; Nancy Wood, Division of Marketing & Development; Chuck Roohr, Executive Director, SADC; Mark Dinglasan, Executive Director, Office of the Food Security Advocate; Tameko Webster, Chris LaRegina, Robert Vivian, Jeff Beach, Kaitlynn Dixon, Alyssa Pitt, Office of the Secretary. Also in attendance were Al Murray, NJ Farm Bureau; Dr. Brian Schilling, Rutgers University; Bruce Eklund, NASS; Bob Andrzejczak, State Executive Director, Lindsay Carragher, Deputy Executive Director, Farm Service Agency; Julie Hawkins, State Conservationist, Hilary Trotman Lane, NRCS, and Linda Walker, NJ Department of Agriculture.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

ON the MOTION of Rick Gardner, seconded by John Hart, the Board voted unanimously to approve the minutes of July 23, 2025, regular meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Laura Tessieri, Executive Director, North Jersey Resource Conservation & Development (NJRCDD), reported to the Board that aerial seeding of 4,200 acres of cropland across northern and central New Jersey farms would be occurring over the next couple of weeks starting after September 2. These cover crops, rather

than being harvested, will protect and enrich the soil through the winter. This project is being conducted in coordination with NRCS.

REPORT OF RUTGERS UNIVERSITY

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

- Rutgers Ag Experiment Station and the NJDA issued press releases about Rutgers' three agrivoltaics farm locations being named "Solar Farm of 2025" by the North American Agrivoltaics Awards program. The releases not only highlighted the success of the Rutgers program but also spotlighted the agrivoltaics resolution passed by the delegates at the 2025 State Agricultural Convention expressing the industry's support for integrating renewable energy into their operations.
- Class 13 of the NJ Agricultural Leadership Development Program will hold their first seminar in a few weeks but on June 30 they all met at the Russo Farm in Tabernacle with 17 in the group, they had a chance to meet and talk with their new classmates. He thanked Russo Farms for hosting the group.
- Times are moving quickly for the Ag Convention and the Vegetable Growers Educational sessions and thanked Michelle Casella and Bill Bamka for their hard work. He noted that the schedule is progressing, and he is excited for the new County Agents to be part of the process.
- The Experiment Station did well with budgeting for this year with support from the industry as well as the NJ Farm Bureau. They were awarded the special purpose funding that is a one-time annual decision that the Legislature makes.
- He reported that there are doubling down on AI and AG tech more broadly and there will be more use of drones and how to incorporate them into their management systems.
- Farm safety continues to be a major concern, and more training is being done to help prevent accidents on the farm.
- Several searches are underway, and he hopes to have them completed soon.

REPORT OF FARM SERVICE AGENCY (FSA)

Newly reappointed State Executive Director Bob Andrzejczak was in attendance to thank the audience for the support that he received from everyone about his reappointment as State Executive Director.

Lindsay Carragher reported on behalf of the Farm Service Agency:

Robert Andrzejczak serves as State Executive Director for the Farm Service Agency in New Jersey. He previously held this role from 2022 to 2025 before being reappointed in August 2025 by President Donald J. Trump. From Cape May, New Jersey, Andrzejczak is a U.S. Army veteran who earned the Bronze Star with Valor and Purple Heart after being severely wounded in Iraq in 2009. He served in the New Jersey General Assembly from 2013 to 2019, where he chaired the Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee, and later served in the State Senate.

Supplemental Disaster Relief Program

New Jersey FSA has approved 360 SDRP applications and paid \$5,379,518 million to New Jersey farmers. Nationally, FSA paid over \$4.6 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 later. The 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.

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 FSA-578, report of acreage, within 15-days after planting is complete.

Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) – Notice of Loss

When a crop or planting is affected by a natural disaster, producers with NAP coverage must notify the FSA office where their farm records are maintained and complete Part B (the Notice of Loss portion) of form CCC-576, "Notice of Loss and Application for Payment." This must be completed within 15 calendar days of the earlier of: A natural disaster occurrence; the final planting date if planting is prevented by a natural disaster; the date that damage to the crop or loss of production becomes apparent; or the normal harvest date. Producers of hand-harvested crops and certain perishable crops must notify FSA within 72 hours of when a loss becomes apparent. The crops subject to this requirement will be listed in the NAP Basic Provisions.

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, with any questions.

Emergency Commodity Assistance Program (ECAP)

New Jersey FSA has approved 529 ECAP applications and paid \$5,569,094 to New Jersey farmers. Nationally, FSA paid almost \$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.

Farm Storage Facility Loan

Farm Storage Facility Loans (FSFLs) provide low-interest financing for producers to store, handle and/or transport eligible commodities they produce. This includes acquiring, constructing or upgrading new or used, portable or permanently affixed, on-farm storage and handling facilities, acquiring new or used storage and handling trucks, acquiring portable or permanently affixed storage and handling equipment.

Farm Storage Facility Loan Rates for August 2025:

3-year loan term: 3.750%

10-year loan term: 4.375%

5-year loan term: 3.875%

12-year loan term: 4.500%

7-year loan term: 4.125%

REPORT OF NJ FARM BUREAU

Alfred Murray represented the Farm Bureau and reported on the following topics:

- Urban Agriculture Summit – interested to hear about consensus and progress being made.
- Farmland Assessment – agree with minimum threshold increase based on sound economic data. Portal looks promising to make it easier to apply.
- RTF bill awarding reasonable costs and attorney fees to farmers (A4603) still awaiting Governor's signature.
- Thoughts and prayers to the Hunter family in Burlington County after the tragic accident involving the family patriarch.
- NJFB Directors met with Mikie Sherrill and will meet with Jack Ciattarelli in September, thank you to the State Board president for attending these gubernatorial meetings.
- Concerns about the USDA reorganization plan. Comments were sent on the importance of NASS presence here in New Jersey and concerns about the potential break up and relocation of the research labs in Beltsville, MD.
- How will USDA's rescinding of tax subsidies for solar on prime farmland affect grid scale projects in NJ.
- Congratulations to the NJDA and Rutgers on winning an award for their work on dual use solar.

REPORT OF NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE (NASS)

Bruce Eklund, State Statistician, reported to the Board the following:

- For 2025 looking at 75,000 acres of corn planted, 65,000 targeted for grain, that is up from last year.
- Soybeans looking at 100,000 planted, 98,000 harvested, 42 bushels an acre.

- Cranberries – all states down, we are looking at 42,000 barrels.
- Peaches also down a little bit at 11,000 tons.
- August 25 expenditures released – a big deal for economists to see how the farm economy is doing.

He noted that they are looking to incorporate some new surveys including a national vineyard and orchard survey and a national turf survey.

ORGANIC & REGENERATIVE FARMING BOARD

Laura Tessieri reported on behalf of the Organic & Regenerative Farming Board and noted that the Governor sat the first members of the Board, and their first act was to get a needs assessment. She reported that the assessment is currently in draft form but is a working document and the next step is that we can commit to get that to the Board prior to your next meeting for your review. She reported that there was a virtual meeting scheduled for tonight but that the next in-person meeting is scheduled for September 16 here at 200 Riverview Plaza, Trenton beginning at 4:00 pm. She reported that the group meets four times per year, regionally, so the September meeting is in Trenton and the next one will be in November in South Jersey (location to be determined).

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE (NRCS)

Julie Hawkins, State Conservationist, introduced Hilary Trotman Lane to the Board and she provided a short presentation on the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service in New Jersey (NRCS-NJ) a FY26 NRCS Air Quality Initiative which will help producers across the state improve air quality.

NRCS-NJ will focus on air quality improvements in the upcoming fiscal year where agricultural emissions from cropping systems are determined to be contributors to air quality impairment. Strategies to reduce agricultural emissions include:

- Maintaining cover on the soil surface
- Reducing in-field passes by agricultural equipment
- Installing herbaceous or woody vegetation in strategic locations
- Replacing, repowering, or retrofitting agricultural combustion systems
- Adopting precision agricultural techniques

The primary goal of this initiative is to help farmers improve air quality across New Jersey and the northeast region. The initiative targets emissions of nitrogen oxides and particulate matter. Assistance is available in New Jersey through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). NRCS accepts applications for these programs year-round. Submission of a program application does not guarantee funding. EQIP and CSP are voluntary, technical, and financial assistance programs designed to help farmers, ranchers, forestland owners, and Tribes with the application of conservation measures. These programs focus strongly on conservation planning, conservation implementation, and solving natural resource concerns.

While NRCS accepts applications year-round, New Jersey producers and landowners should **apply by October 17, 2025** to be considered for funding in the current cycle.

Each applicant must establish themselves as a USDA customer and obtain all Farm Service Agency (FSA) eligibility requirements. Please note, Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) determination takes an average three weeks to be processed by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Secretary Wengryn reported to the Board that he attended the Solar Farm Summit in Chicago where the award was presented to the NJDA and Rutgers University named as the "Solar Farm of 2025" by the North American Agrivoltaics Awards Program. In addition, here in NJ the next phase of the solar pilot program is the applications coming in from BPU, the Department is reviewing them with BPU, and final evaluations will go out to those applicants and BPU will report which ones can proceed to build out their projects. He reported that the Farmland Advisory Committee met and after reviewing the economic data, pasture fees and land values and possibly changing the base income on the first five acres and forestry to be left alone as that is an area that needs to be studied further. He reported that we presented a good report, the increase in agricultural values through COVID and the ability to adapt to a higher benchmark. The Committee voted to increase the income to \$1,900 on the first five acres to go into effect 2028 or 2029 depending on when taxation adopts the rules. He reported that the fair season has wrapped up, with Bergen County to still have their fair in September. He and some staff members attended most of the fairs that were held. In Sussex County, Board member Holly Sytsema took him around to some of the local ag businesses. He noted that broadband service is still an issue for many counties and that is a big concern. He reported that he would be attending the upcoming NASDA meeting in Arkansas and his Committees will be meeting to discuss all the changes from the new administration.

Mark Dinglasan, Executive Director, Office of the Food Security Advocate, (OFSA) reported to the Board for the first time to give them an update on his work. He reported that his office was created through legislation in 2021. OFSA is charged with coordinating food security efforts for the entire state. Additionally, the office is charged with identifying gaps and opportunities in New Jersey's food security programs and benefits programs and drafting a strategic plan to identify these drafts. Additionally, the office has legislative mandates to produce strategic recommendations for expanded use of school meals as well as to perform oversight over state funds appropriated by the legislature to combat hunger in the state. OFSA is physically based out of the Department of Agriculture.

OFSA focuses its work in four areas:

- Advising the Governor's office and the legislature on food security issues and best practices using research, evaluation, and community feedback
- Partnering with state agencies on programs and efforts with shared goals
- Creating public/private partnerships and partnering with the philanthropic sector
- Support collective impact and county-level coalition efforts in New Jersey communities

OFSA's work is grounded in the international definition of food security created by the Committee on World Food Security from the U.N.'s Food & Agriculture Organization and its High-Level Panel of Experts and the six dimensions of food security. This definition states that: *Food security is a situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food for dietary and cultural preferences for an active and healthy lifestyle.* The six dimensions of food security within this definition are availability, access, utilization, stability, sustainability, and agency.

Food Security Strategic Plan

OFSA began its strategic planning process in October 2024. An executive was formed that is comprised of multiple sectors to work on the plan and provide feedback. OFSA reviewed and synthesized more than 22 national and state reports that have been drafted in the last five years or so related to building food security in New Jersey. Feedback from the executive was combined with the synthesis of the reports to begin drafting the plan.

OFSA is about to launch community feedback efforts for the plan. The opportunity to provide community feedback will go live on OFSA's website and social media platforms from the end of August throughout September.

Feedback is sought and welcomed from the agricultural community. OFSA will work with Sec. Wengryn to organize an effort to gather feedback from the State Board and other stakeholders.

Ongoing efforts:

- Supporting the creation of agricultural and innovation hubs
- Partnering with the Department of Health on public health efforts
- Supporting state agencies as federal landscape shifts
- Continuously supporting county coalitions and community coalitions

Chuck Roohr, Executive Director, SADC, announced to the Board that staff presented the annual Special Occasion Events Legislative Report to the committee at its July meeting. A copy of the report is available online. He reported that SADC staff are offering to meet with each CADB this fall and winter to provide updates and/or customized training on issues important to the Board. In addition, the first farm to be preserved using the new Statewide Funding Formula closed on 8/25. A small event celebrating this accomplishment and the combined efforts of numerous legislative and government offices to establish the new funding method was held after the closing. Finally, he reported 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. The next meeting of the SADC will be Thursday, September 25 in Trenton.

Board member Joel Viereck asked on the status of the Woolwich Twp. issue that was addressed at the July 23 meeting by the mayor of the town. Mr. Roohr stated that the Attorney General's office is still reviewing the matter. He noted that a meeting of the TDR Bank Board is scheduled for October, and it is hoped that we will have some resolution on this.

Melissa Pajak, Assistant Director, Division of Food & Nutrition, reported to the Board in the Director's absence. She reported that the Summer EBT program continues with staff continuing to address parent inquiries related to their cards. To date, we have \$62.4 million in benefits that have been redeemed which is approximately 72.5% of benefits issued so far. They have posted their fiscal year '26 reimbursement rates for our sponsors as provided by the USDA and the federal register. In addition, she reported that staff is wrapping up administrative reviews and the summer feeding program. She reported that they have finalized all the events for Farm to School week and that they would be receiving invitations and hope that they may be able to participate in some of the exciting events planned.

Denise Liptak briefly reported to the Board information regarding the state NJF2SPI replacing the federal LFS. At the direction of the Secretary, this initiative utilizes \$2 million from the FY26 Hunger Initiative/Food Assistance Program, *formerly* known as the State Food Purchase Program.

Suggested Roll-out steps:

- Roll out to SFAs on September 2
- Require submission of attestation by September 23
- Schools will be notified of funding levels by October 1
- Reimbursement Based Program, 10% of funding will be Division administration funds

Frank Minch, Director, Division of Agricultural & Natural Resources, commented on the Farmland Evaluation Committee meeting and thanked the Secretary for taking part in the meeting. He noted that there was good interaction with the taxation and the assessors. He attended a meeting the previous day of the Count Association of County Tax Boards to do a presentation and as part of the panel on farmland assessment as well as work with taxation on their training programs. He reported that a meeting with the Urban Agriculture Workgroup centered on planning and coordinating upcoming site visits to deepen the understanding of urban agriculture operations and community needs. PFAS continues to be a topic of great interest as the EPA is certainly asking a lot more about testing as crops are coming in. They want to start looking at crop testing again. They have identified 70 different locations they want to do some more sampling, and his staff is working with them. Finally, he reported that the Division still has money available for deer fencing. It was also suggested that the Department have a presence at the League of Municipalities so that they can talk with elected officials on the changes to farmland assessment. Board member Stephen Lee commented that the League of Municipalities is the one place that all elected officials attend, and it is a great opportunity for the Department to have a presence.

Dr. Amar Patil, Director, Division of Animal Health, reported to the Board that the Department has quarantined a property in Sussex County after at least one horse there developed the highly infectious equine herpes myeloencephalopathy (EHM). The horse, a 20-year-old mare, developed acute clinical signs on August 3, and was subsequently humanely euthanized. In addition, he reported that the USDA on August 15 unveiled an initiative to combat the New World Screwworm (NWS) as concern has grown over its expansion into northern parts of Mexico bordering the Southwestern United States. He reported that the Division of Animal Health staff conducted the monthly HPAI Working Group meeting, which featured a guest speaker from USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) who reviewed a new tool that NRCS developed for planners and farmers to determine suitable areas for handling animal-mortality events. Finally, he reported that Dr. Sandra Strilec has been named Assistant Director of Animal Health. She will be assisting with the supervision of field staff, field veterinarians and field technicians.

Joe Zoltowski, Director, Division of Plant Industry, reported to the Board that Division staff are continuing to monitor service traps for the presence of Boxtree moth at 20 nursery locations throughout the state. This include changing lures and kill strips and delivering any moths collected to be screened at the Rutgers Diagnostic Laboratory in New Brunswick. In addition, staff returned to the Phytophthora ramorum quarantined nursery location on July 29 to record solarization progress and determined that the minimum requirements for cumulative heat hours had met or exceeded the target (28 days at 35 degrees). Soil from the site has been tested and found negative for any presence of P.ram. He reported

that during the month, a total of 36 LDD egg mass survey requested had been submitted by interested municipalities for the 2025–2026 LDD Program. These surveys will begin from mid–August through the end of November to identify areas for treatment during the spring of 2026. Most of the requests are in Morris, Passaic and Sussex Counties. Finally, he reported that Division staff have completed the audits for this year’s Canadian Blueberry (fruit) Certification Program. NJ blueberry fruit yields were very good early but diminished later in the season due to the heat and humidity in July and a substantial reduction in seasonal labor to harvest. Of the twenty–six growers enrolled in this year’s program, 12 shipped 72,571 containers to Canada.

Assistant Secretary Joe Atchison welcomed Hillary Barile and Holly to the Board since he had missed the last month’s Board meeting where they were sworn in. He reported that he missed the meeting as he and the marketing staff were hosting 71 NAAMO (North American Agriculture Marketing Officials in Cherry Hill representing 26 states, including as far away as Hawaii, Washington State and California. It was an excellent opportunity to showcase some of the greatest parts of NJ. In addition, he reported that on August 8, NJ hosted the Food Export Summer in the Cities program which had 16 international buyers from 21 countries visiting with exporter processors from New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. He recently returned from the New England Produce Show and had some good conversations with two of the largest retailers and a large distributor out of the Maryland area. He reported that the Division hosted Peach Day giveaway which was extremely well attended noting that last year they went through 120 cases of peaches, this year they quickly went through 145 cases with a very positive response from people on the boardwalks. He reported that conversations have continued with Travel & Tourism regarding the funding bill and language is being finalized on the MOU and some of the grant language. It is hoped that we will be able to get everything finalized soon.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

President Blew (TEAMS) commented that he wants to highlight something that we all need to focus on, FARM SAFETY, with the recent tragedy on a farm in Burlington County, we all need to remind ourselves and our employees that safety comes first and that many of the things that we do on a daily basis are very dangerous and we all need to take farm safety very seriously.

Holly Sytsema (TEAMS) reported that Sussex County is very dry considering all the rain we had early on, and crops are coming off a lot earlier than what they expected. She reported that they had an excellent fair this year with the highest attendance they have ever had. She reported that participation by the 4–H was also the most they have had in years. She expressed her sympathies and prayers to the farm family that had the accident.

Joel Viereck commented that he did have a Budget Committee meeting scheduled but because of a conflict he had to cancel it, it is being rescheduled. The meeting was to discuss departmental needs and the overall impressions of the first few months of the CFO Tony Tarr. In addition, he wanted to get started on preparations for the upcoming budget listening session which will be held on Zoom scheduled for October 1, the session is open to anybody that wants to attend and speak. He attended both the Gloucester and Salem County 4–H fairs, both had excellent attendance. Finally, he reported that Farm Credit East released a grant resource that is designed to help growers identify available grants and navigate the process. He stated the information is on the website in case anyone is interested. They announced that they did supply \$76,500 in small grants to 141 farmers in the northeast. In

addition, he noted that some NE states have something called an investment tax credit. It is new in the books, they have been doing it in New York for a while and in Connecticut, they just had legislation where they put through a 20% tax reduction in your state income tax due to improvements. He thinks New Jersey should consider something like this because it is getting too hard to compete with New York and Connecticut because our costs are higher because we don't have these benefits.

Vice President Lee reported that in Massachusetts when they are preparing the state budget, they have an allocation that is earmarked for farmers. These are tax credits and tax benefits for farmers that are improving infrastructure, repairing buildings, etc. It really is beneficial, and some can stay in business because these programs exist.

John Hart reported that everything in Mercer County is very dry, so it's been hard to get a second cutting. He attended the Mercer County 4-H fair and noted that attendance there was also very good. He is happy to be part of the Legislative Committee as he hopes that the Board can be more proactive to meet with Legislators prior to their introducing new legislation that deals with agriculture.

Rick Gardner reported to the Board that the Warren County fair had a record attendance, the weather also cooperated and their new County Ag Agent. He noted that at the Morris County Board of Ag they had homemade ice cream, and it was good. He attended a meeting at Alstede Farms in Morris County that featured Congressman Tom Kean, Jr. from the 7th legislative district which is the second largest agriculture district. He noted that it was an excellent opportunity to talk with him about the things that are affecting farmers, over regulation, streamlining regulation and ag viability. He talked about international trade and how that impacts producers here, particularly in the off season. The impact of prices hurt our local farmers, and the Congressman was taking copious notes.

Board member David DeFrance asked about the status of the Livestock Processing Facility. Rick commented that DEP is still reviewing the area, and they must give the County the green light before they can sell that piece of property. It was suggested that a group of tri-county individuals putting a little more pressure on might help push that along. Dave noted that the County Commissioners in Hunterdon County are aware of the situation and are very much in support of it. Rick commented that the Warren County Commissioners have been asked to send a letter of support.

Dave DeFrance reported that Hunterdon County had a great county agricultural fair, and it was exciting to see all the people in attendance. He noted that the weather on the first night wasn't great but compared to the typical 100 degrees at the fair, it felt nice. He noted that for the first time they had wine tasting at the fair and though it wasn't easy to have that happen, it opened the opportunity to see the wineries in the county and thanked Department staff member Frank Minch for his assistance. He noted that the Urban Agriculture Symposium was held to give individuals within the urban agriculture community a forum to speak freely, and he was pleased that Mercer County Community College gave them the opportunity to have this discussion. This was something that should have been done years ago but it was just the tip of the iceberg. He noted that they are planning to have something in September in Essex County that would include their County Board to populate more discussion. He noted that as the Chairman of the Urban Agriculture Committee to now start to integrate how it looks for us. The Committee will receive a report of what the outcome was. He stated that he has been developing an Urban Agriculture curriculum for Mercer County Community College and looks forward to

the continuing discussions. He hopes that the Urban Agriculture Committee can work with the Organic & Regenerative Farming Board

Hillary Barile reported that it had been a favorable growing season in Cumberland County outside of those intense heat period which did have some implications for some of the fruit and vegetable growers in terms of blossom set and things like that. She attended a Legislative tour with President Blew that was organized by Assemblyman Spearman from District 5 at the Food Innovation Center in Bridgeton. It was great tour of the facility which she had not seen, they highlighted some of the projects that they have been working with and a lot of companies that come to them internationally that are looking to establish in the US. Assemblyman Spearman spoke about trying to have the Food Innovation Center help farmers to get their produce processed that could then get into the school system and trying to figure out how he could help with that. She suggested that it possibly be a topic of one of the Ag Convention listening sessions. She reported that she spoke with Ryan Flaim from Flaim Farms about some recent US Department of Labor inspections that he and some of his neighbors were having and felt that it was amounting to a harassing level of inspections and wondered if there was something that the Department can to do help support him and understand the situation so that we can educate the ag community about how they prepared for these types of inspections.

Board member John Hart asked about the status of the Middlesex County farm that was the subject of the eminent domain issue. It was reported that they have applied for farmland preservation and that because things were in progress, they cannot speak more about it.

Vice President Lee reported that things in Burlington County have not been quiet as several of the Board members know, we lost longtime farmer John Hunter. He was the mayor of his town when Tony Russo passed away from a farming accident and it was hard to talk about farm safety to the press when it is a dear friend. It also is a reminder of how dangerous the farming industry is. He noted that he had spoken with former Board Vice President Specca about the importance of farm safety and noted that it may be an excellent listening session at the Convention. He noted that Burlington County has a new Ag Agent Dr. David Hlubik who is replacing Ray Samulis, former County Agent who was a huge advocate for farm safety and it is a reminder that it is important to be aware and conscious of what we do. He noted that Dr. Hlubik also attended a cranberry meeting where he was introduced to the group. He thanked Rutgers for finally getting the position filled. He and his wife Monica attended the Burlington County Farm Fair last night and was manning the County Board of Agriculture table and the great part that Congresswoman Mikie Sherril was there, and he secured a Jersey Fresh hat for her to wear while there. He thanked Farm Bureau for inviting him and President Blew to the discussion that they had with her and look forward to meeting with Jack Ciattarelli when that meeting is held. He noted that drought conditions are creeping back into the County, not as bad as last year but we are keeping a close eye. He reported that during his travel for the Cranberry Growers, he was in Massachusetts and noted that their Department of Agriculture really works hard with farmers and he had a great discussion with him and the Commissioner noted that he was close with Secretary Wengryn and it was great to hear about the different components of things that other states do for their farmers.

Vice President Lee commented that the Wine Grant information that was distributed in the packets last month showed the detail that the Committee was looking for but that there were a few more questions that the Grants Committee would like to ask of the Wine Council members before voting.

ON the MOTION of Joel Viereck, seconded by Hillary Barile, the Board voted unanimously to table the Wine Grants.

NEW BUSINESS

Approval – State Board Meeting Dates

ON the MOTION of Rick Gardner, seconded by Hillary Barile, the Board voted unanimously to approve the dates as presented.

Board member Dave DeFrangé commented that he would like to see the Board go paperless as was discussed previously but Secretary Wengryn reported that at the September Board meeting, they would be receiving tablets so that everything will be sent electronically.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

MEETINGS

The next regular meeting of the State Board of Agriculture will be held on Wednesday, September 24, 2025, beginning at 1:00 at 200 Riverview Plaza, Trenton. It was noted that the second part of Board Orientation would be held that morning.

ADJOURNMENT

ON the MOTION of Rick Gardner, seconded by John Hart, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the regular meeting at 4:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Edward D. Wengryn