



New Jersey Community Forestry Council
Meeting Minutes
In-Person and Virtual Meeting, Forest Resource Education Center
September 12, 2024; 10:00 AM

The September bi-monthly meeting of the New Jersey Community Forestry Council (“Council”) was called to order by Chairperson Bill Brash at 10am and the Open Public Meetings Act notice was read. The notice was also available in the meeting packet. The roll call was taken by Brian McDonald.

Members Present: Bill Brash, Kristin Ace, Neil Blitz, Carl Bowles, Amanda Diamond, Barry Emens, Dr. Jason Grabosky, Joseph M. Greipp, Tim Ifill, Lori Jenssen, Vinh Lang, Michael Martini, Dr. Melanie McDermott, Ryan Metz, Dr. Matthew Olson

Excused: Mark Beamish, Steve Chisholm, Marty Mayes, Lisa Simms, Pam Zipse

NJ Forest Service Present: State Forester Todd Wyckoff, Brian McDonald, Michael Hart, Ryan Belling, David DeCredico, Gail Harrje, Anthony Burgos, Victoria Bec, Delysse Leonard, Rachael Vannatta, Terri Slack, and Cara Escalona. Quorum was met upon completion of the roll call.

Approval of Meeting Minutes from 7/11/2024 Meeting

Bill Brash called attention to the March meeting minutes and noted that he was not listed as excused from the 7/11/2024 meeting. Dr. Jason Grabosky moved to approve, seconded by Neil Blitz. The vote to approve was unanimous. Vinh Lang, Bill Brash, Ryan Metz (new member), and Amanda Diamond (new member) abstained.

State Forester’s Report

State Forester Todd Wyckoff welcomed new council members Ryan Metz (Newark), Amanda Diamond (Jersey City), and Marty Mayes (City of Orange). Mr. Wyckoff noted that with these appointments, there is now full representation on the Council. He also extended a welcome to Victoria Bec as the IRA Outreach Coordinator. Green Communities Grant is not yet live, though optimistic it will happen soon. Consultants training held, municipal training for guidelines is forthcoming. With the guidelines rollout UCF is expecting an influx of new/updated CFMPs. Discussion ensued about Council committees and term expirations. Mr. Wyckoff also reminded the Council about the upcoming Shade Tree Federation Conference and noted that he will attend the National Cohesive Strategy to Wildfire Meeting and the National Association of State Foresters meeting this month.

Chairperson's Report

Bill Brash thanks Program Coordinator Brian McDonald for his responsiveness in answering questions about the program. Chairperson Brash mentions availability of the new SAF 'Certified Urban & Community Forester' credential. There was some discussion about the requirements of the exam. Chairperson Brash also congratulated NJNLA for a successful Summer Plant Symposium at Georgia Court College. Another reminder for Shade Tree Federation Conference.

New Business

Fiscal Report

Brian McDonald (Pat Shapella absent) reported on the fiscal state of the program, which was provided in the packet. Offered to pass on any questions that council members have.

Program Report

Brian McDonald provided the program report, also included in the packet. Largely unchanged from last meeting. There was a discussion about grant requirements, including match.

Legislative Issues

No legislative update/action since July Meeting. Session begins today.

Subcommittee Reports

Brian McDonald noted that the CFMP committee had no new plans for review, though met last week to discuss new council members.

Michael Hart discussed No Net Loss project in Ewing Township, Mercer County, included in printed packet.

Dr. Grabosky noted that there was no update for the CFMP Guidelines committee other than what has been previously discussed (i.e., municipal training). Chairperson Brash suggested anticipating questions that may be asked in the municipal training.

Council Business

Council term expirations are mentioned again. Mr. Wyckoff requested to be notified by those persons about their intent to continue (or not continue) their role with the Council.

Approval of meeting dates for 2025 moved by Dr. Grabosky, seconded by Barry Emens. The vote to approve was unanimous.

Approval of meeting location(s) for 2025 discussed. Dr. Grabosky moved that meetings occur at the NJFS Forest Resource Education Center unless there is a scheduling conflict, then NJFS staff may investigate alternative locations based on their capability to host a hybrid meeting. Carl Bowls second. The vote was unanimous.

Chairperson Bill then informed the Council to reach out to him if they would like to participate in a committee. Dr. Grabosky discussed the evolution of the CFMP Guidelines committee into a supporting role for CFMP review in 2025.

Unfinished Business

None

Public Comment

Vinh Lang asked for clarification about the relationship of the new Guidelines to some permitting changes from NJDEP.

Kristin Ace asked about DPW trainings for tree care, requested clarification about TRAQ requirements and continuing education, and expressed concern from municipalities about the short timeline for Green Communities grants to update CFMPs. There was discussion about all three topics.

Neil Blitz requested information about what others are doing (or not doing) regarding tree pits/wells.

Dr. Grabosky noted that he will be on academic sabbatical in spring 2025.