

April 29 Meeting Minutes

Attendees:

Board – Amy Sayegh, Cassandra, Betsy, Dave, Ruby, Barbara, Trish, Christine, Nicole

Public – Lisa Ricci - farmer, Donald Arrant - WAC East of Hudson Conservation Planner, Heather Abissi

- 1) Call to Order at 9:45am
- 2) Approved minutes from 03/25/26 meeting
- 3) SWCD report:
 - a) Purpose & mission of District; AEM
 - i) *Ask Cassandra for her notes for the minutes*
 - b) AEM definition
 - i) Action Item: Cassandra and Barb will connect to discuss previous farm records who have been enrolled in AEM previously
 - ii) Currently hiring a technician
 - iii) Going forward, will be friend of ag
 - iv) Currently no tier II farms in the county
 - c) Soil assessments for county ag exemptions are currently being sent to Westchester SWCD
- 4) CCE report: Aspiring Farmers; Potluck dinners; seedling sale; upcoming MG plant sale
 - a) Skipping this month
- 5) Ag District applications as of April 29, 2026
 - a) Clara Patunga Farm - Andrew Wulkan
 - b) Lisa Ricci (*Lisa spoke*)
 - i) 17 acres, 2 brooks that feed into the east branch
 - ii) Has cleared 3 acres of brush, it's currently planted into timothy and mixed grasses and planning to plant lavender plugs in this area
 - iii) 2 beehives. Planning to add 5+ next spring and wants to get up to 30-40
 - iv) Working to rehab the property
 - v) Shared business plan
 - vi) Dave asked "Why lavender?"
 - (1) Great feedstock for the bees
 - (2) Harvesting for oils, tinctures, etc. also interested in creating a beeswax paper
 - c) Crooked Fence - Brophys (attended the March 2026 meeting)
- 6) Weighted Rubric & site checklist
 - a) Dave likes the checklist but objects to the weighted rubric - and doesn't want other folks to use it. Worried that this could be an arbitrary
 - b) These are not required for board members to fill out. They are not formally adopted but they are okay to use
 - c) Barb asked Heather if this is foilable. She says it's discoverable and could be used in a lawsuit

- d) Site checklist has been used in the past on the ag board
 - e) Weighted rubric was suggested by Christine
 - f) Dave proposes that we do not use the weighted rubric.
 - i) Seconded by trish
 - ii) Only 1 opposed – christine
 - iii) And 7 for it
 - g) Cassandra makes a motion to adopt the site visit checklist for all board members to use.
 - i) Second by Dave
 - ii) All in favor, no opposed
- 7) Procedures
- a) Christine: were not asked for an official opinion as an ag board on the CCE money. The special meeting called on April 7 was not called properly. Cce rep should have recused herself and then there would not have been a quorum
 - b) Trish: if several folks approach the chair, we should still be able to call a meeting to have a further discussion
 - c) Barbara: asked several times to discuss this matter starting from the December meetings
 - d) Christine: the AFPB emails have not been forwarded to her...or it has been a problem that the emails have been going to the entire board instead of solely Christine
 - i) Too many cooks spoil the broth...christine would prefer the emails go to her so she can be the liaison between the communications with the public and the board
 - e) Cassandra: doesn't think the Leg should get the applications before they have been amended by planning and real property
 - i) All the applications go to the Clerk and then forwards it to the entire Leg
 - f) Action item: Christine will contact IT to make sure her email is on the list
 - g) Christine: has not been responding because of the decision last meeting
 - h) Barb: when responses go to the homeowner, please reply all
 - i) Cassandra: SWCD won't offer technical perspective given on applications
 - j) Amy: what do other SWCDs do? = Participate similarly to other board members
 - k) Process going forward:
 - i) Planning and Real Property are reviewing for errors in the applications
 - ii) Planning and Real Property will email the Chair with any notes. They will cc the entire board so everyone is aware of all comms
 - iii) Chair will contact the applicant to discuss amended application
 - iv) *Next year's application - need to add the township*
 - v) Heather Abissi will speak to the Clerk about the updated procedure so the Clerk will send an email receipt to all applicants
 - l) ALL DISCUSSED: applications cannot be amended during the active application period
 - m) Cassandra: need to modify the emergency contact language again...need to make it clearer that it's an emergency contact for the farm

- i) Amy suggested "alternative contact" instead
- ii) Heather suggested: *"Who is responsible for the farm in the event of an emergency, who can also be the applicant"*
- n) What has gone right?: Resolution 139 was replaced, cleaned up the board members - got the right members on the board, got a training session planned and executed, got a \$5k budget
 - i) We've come a long way since when Jocelyn was kicked off the board. Following the procedure has led us to getting a lot done

8) Elections

- No specific procedure in the by-laws
- Open meetings law so we have to vote openly
- Heather: why is happening now instead of the beginning or the end of the year? This is supposed to be happening annually
- will take nominations from the floor
 - Cassandra makes a motion to nominate Christine
 - Seconded by Christine
 - Trish makes a motion to nominate Nicole
 - Seconded by Barbara
 - Dave makes a motion to nominate Barb
 - Barb does not accept the nomination
 - Dave moves for the nominations to close. Amy seconds this motion.
- Roll call vote (vote all together between the two: (both candidates spoke)
 - Christine:
 - Cassandra
 - Christine
 - Nicole:
 - Nicole
 - Amy
 - Betsy
 - Dave
 - Ruby
 - Barb
 - Trish
- Amy thanks Christine on the behalf of the entire Leg. She's transformed the board from the last year.
- Moved the nomination for vice chair is open:
 - Cassandra nominates Christine for vice chair
 - Christine accepts
 - Barb nominates Trish, Amy seconds
 - Trish accepts
 - Roll call vote between the two:
 - Both Christine and Trish spoke

- Cassandra comments that she likes having farmers as leaders and wants continuity with the leadership
- Dave moves the nominations close, Cassandra seconds
 - Christine
 - Christine
 - Cassandra
 - Nicole
 - Betsy
 - Dave
 - Trish
 - Amy
 - Ruby
 - Trish
 - Trish
- Move the nominations for secretary be open, Trish seconds
 - Barb nominated herself, Trish seconds
 - Motion to close nominations, cassandra seconds
 - All in favor of this nomination
- Dave opens the floor for nominations for treasurer
- Amy nominates Barb
- Close nominations
- All in favor

Motion to adjourn

9) Adjourn

Next agenda items:

- Review all applicants and discuss recommendations for inclusion into the Ag District
- Discuss the special meeting from April 7th
- Review by-laws

Action Items:

- How does the chair want to handle recruiting new board members this year? Ask Dan – Barb will do this!!