

Watershed Agricultural Council

Agriculture ♦ Forestry ♦ Conservation Easements ♦ Economic Viability

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Minutes of the Watershed Agricultural Council April 26, 2022

I. Meeting called to order at 10:10 am via Zoom call.

Roll Call:

Directors Present:

Dwight Bruno, via Zoom

Dave Cammer

Wayland "Bud" Gladstone

Fred Huneke

Tom Hutson

John Verhoeven

Eleanor Blakeslee-Drain, via Zoom

Marilyn Wyman

Karl Gockel, via Zoom

Steve Reed

John Riedl

James Darling

Jennifer Grossman

John Vickers, NYC DEP

Directors Absent:

Richard Giles

Others Present:

Ryan Naatz

Carol Bishop

Larry Hulle

Gibson Durnford, via Zoom

Heather Magnan, via Zoom

Brian LaTourette

Cynthia Irizarry, NYC DOI, via Zoom

Jeff Graff, NYC DEP, via Zoom

Bruce Dolph, via Zoom

Morgan Zyzik-Tarbell, NYS DOH

Amy Faulkner

Tom Pavlesich

Pete Steenland

Kristan Morley

Elaine Poulin

Nate Townsend, via Zoom

Jessica Nowlin, NYC DOI, via Zoom

Michael Vander Werff, NYC DEP

Paul Kaczmarczyk, NYS DOH, via Zoom

Patrick Palmer, NYS DOH

Bud asked if there were any additions to the agenda, Ryan mentioned that as this is a quarterly meeting, programmatic updates will be done by the respective program managers. Jennifer Grossman would also like to discuss the Climate Smart Commodities Grant.

II. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the March 22, 2022 minutes, as presented.

Motion: Fred Huneke

Second: John Verhoeven

Approved

III. Executive Director Report

A. Programmatic and Operational Updates: The Operational Report was distributed in

the packet, Heather Magnan and Amy Faulkner reported on Operational aspects of the organization; John Jackson will be presenting on the status of FAME and WIT, organizational databases at the May meeting.

III. Chair's Report – Bud Gladstone

- Bud had nothing to report. He asked Pat Palmer to give an update on the FAD update. Pat reported that last Wednesday the Draft mid-term revision was released that will take in to account some of the changing factors that have occurred over the last two years, as well as recommendations of the NAS study issued in August of 2020. The references to the WAC Agriculture and Forestry Programs will see minor changes that include pushing back some of the milestone dates to allow for an extra year to meet those deliverables. Additional requirements include: an Agricultural Program metrics report due in 2024 that will be utilized to inform the 2027 FAD; A long term management plan for the WAP due in 2026 to evaluate the progress of the program from inception; An evaluation of the MyWoodlot site due in 2024; A report on the MAP modification and improvements due in 2025; and extending the pilot program for CREP and CSBI, the understanding so far is that the program has been successful but there are still some criteria and metrics that continue to be studied to determine how that program can be best positioned to be a permanent part of the portfolio of WAP programs. The 45-day comment period is currently open, Pat asked that WAC share the link to the report and public comment period with others, as applicable. Fred asked if there were any changes proposed regarding WAC easements and Pat said no that any changes on that are targeted to DEPs land acquisition program, not the agricultural and forestry easements. The intent is to have the final revised FAD released by the end of the summer. Pat offered that anyone call and chat with him at any time regarding the draft.

V. Finance Committee – Karl Gockel

A. Financials

Motion to accept the January financials as amended and discussed.

Motion: Tom Hutson

Second: Fred Huneke

Approved

Carol reported that Sickler, Torchia, Allen & Chuchill, Auditors will be starting soon; the 990 will be filed by May 15th although it may require an amendment upon the completion of the audit. Both Staff Accountant positions will be filled by the end of May, which will allow the finance department to start transitioning the work back from YPTC.

V. Agricultural Committee – Steve Reed

A. Agricultural Committee Approvals

1. Agricultural Committee Approvals

Upon the recommendation of the Agricultural Committee, motion to approve the following whole farm plan revisions:

Fred Huneke recused himself from the discussion and left the meeting at this time.

- **Thomas Clark – DEC-139 – Revision 14 – 2022 Design Workload Revision**

Motion: Karl Gockel

Second: John Verhoeven

Approved

Fred Huneke returned to the meeting at this time.

- **Rich Toebe/Kim Cassano – DEC-SF324 – Revision 8**

Motion: Bud Gladstone

Second: James Darling

Approved

2. Conservation Innovation Grant Proposal – Gideon Frisbee and Nate Townsend

Gideon and Nate provided a brief presentation on the proposal.

Upon the recommendation of the Agricultural Committee, motion to support the submission of the Conservation Innovation Grant Proposal as presented.

Motion: Jennifer Grossman

Second: James Darling

Approved

3. Climate Smart Commodity Grant – Jennifer Grossman

Jennifer and Gibson provided the group with an update on the work on the USDA Grant Project “Developing a Climate Smart Commodities (CSC) Market Model for NYS” proposal they have been working on. Jennifer explained that CADE would be the applicant for this grant and WAC would be a partner in the proposal. A summary update was provided to the group prior to the meeting and was discussed at length. Karl Gockel requested additional specifics on what WAC’s responsibility would be and who would fulfill those responsibilities. He would also like to understand DEPs position and determine their buy-in.

Karl Gockel left the meeting at this time.

John Vickers asked if WAC anticipated this grant would provide for entirely new staff or would existing WAC staff and programs be involved? Or would it be a combination of both. Jennifer responded a combination but very heavy on new staff, she mentioned that the additional practices would be implemented and tracked predominantly by Columbia. WAC staff would be utilized as an additive to work they are already doing, if DEP supports the project. Jennifer mentioned that it is not the intent of this project to have current WAC staff take on more work and responsibilities and not be compensated accordingly.

Marilyn Wyman questioned whether input had been requested from WAC program managers about how this fits with their program work plans. Gibson responded that he had spoken to the majority of managers, and the common theme in response was that the programs would need more staff in order to take on any additional initiatives. There was discussion regarding where new staff would be housed.

Jennifer explained that the grant does not require a match and it is not reimbursable, applicants would be able to receive funding up front.

May 8th is the deadline for the full application, with awards to be announced in September. Jennifer explained that all of the logistics could be worked out between May and September. Numerous Council members asked if it was acceptable if WAC offered support at this time, for the application, with the understanding that if the logistics cannot be settled in a satisfactory way prior to award, could WAC decline the award and back out at that time. Jennifer said that yes that would be possible, although not ideal.

Jennifer further explained that the decision would be to move forward committing to the project

with DEP support and the plan to utilize existing staff to an extent; to move forward committing without DEP support, as an independent 501(c)3, which would mean that existing staff do not have the ability to do any work under the grant; or to not move forward with committing to the project at all.

John Vickers also said any program funded staff that will be working on this project DEP approval is required in advance, in the event DEP denies WAC's request to use program funds for this grant does the letter of support create a financial liability upon the council? Jennifer said at the point of grant awards being announced (if CADE is successful), they would come back to the board with a very clear outline for a budget to seek Council support to contract with CADE on this project. CADE will apply, if successful CADE will receive and at that time WAC would need to determine if they wanted to enter in to contract with CADE. Fred stated that he felt that was a safe level of commitment, Marilyn added this is in line with the NAS report. There was question as to what percentage of the award would go to CADE? The response was that most of the funds would go to WAC and Columbia. WAC would be a partner in the application. Gibson said that the ask is very ambitious in the amount asked for, so there is possibility that the award would be a lower dollar amount. Once an amount is awarded that is when WAC gets the opportunity to say yes or no.

Eleanor asked about CADE's capacity for administration of the grant. The approach would be to have the funds go to CADE and then be disbursed immediately to WAC. WAC would be in charge of its finances for that. When WAC has worked with CADE in the past it wasn't always seamless.

Dave Cammer asked when the details of proposal would be done; Jennifer said this should be done by Monday of next week.

Gibson added that the monitor agreement and DOI's current oversight offers an extra assurance to all that the administration and finances of this project be handled appropriately. Cynthia added that DOI is here as a safeguard and she numerous questions.

Program Managers expressed the need to have an opportunity to provide input. Tom P. added that in order to assess the value and potential of the program, we can't simply assume what is good for water quality is also good climate mitigation.

Jennifer shared a potential motion of the Council; Whereas, the USDA NRCS Climate Smart Commodities grant is intended to support sustainable agricultural and forestry practices that reduce GHGs and mitigate climate change impacts from these sectors through verification and marketing support to producers; Whereas, CADE acting as the lead applicant shall apply for, contract and administer all funding and reporting requirements related to the CSC grant; Whereas, WAC, in addition to routine City funded tasks shall commit to participating as a partner to lead the pilot in the Catskill-Delaware Watershed if funds are received; Now, therefore, be it resolved that the Board of Directors of the Watershed Agricultural Council hereby supports the application by CADE and intends to participate if awarded.

John Vickers asked to delay consideration of any motions and schedule a zoom call to share the application and the proposal and then get a motion. Cynthia agreed with that direction. The Council will hold a special meeting Wednesday, May 4th at 8:30am. Jennifer will forward the proposal to the group by end of day Friday.

VII. Governance Committee – John Verhoeven

- SVT Working Group Updates: John reported that the smaller working groups continue to meet. John will follow up with individuals to set up meetings with candidates interested in serving on the Council.

VIII. Easement Committee – Tom Hutson and Serena Orleski

- Serena provided a brief update on the program activities for the previous quarter.

IX. Forestry Committee – Dave Cammer and Tom Pavlesich

1. CPI Rate Increases

Upon the recommendation of the Forestry Committee, motion to approve a 3% Forestry Program Rate increase to MAP and 480a Incentives as well as a 6% Forestry Program Rate change and funding cap increase for the BMP, Stream Crossing, Green Connections and Bus Tour programs to compensate for inflation and direct staff to obtain DEP approval for these increases in accordance with the CAT 487 contract prior to implementation.

Motion: John Vickers

Second: Dave Cammer

Approved

2. Forestry Handbook Edits

Upon the recommendation of the Forestry Committee, motion to approve the Forestry Program Handbook guideline edits and additions as presented, with the modification to remove #6 changes from consideration, and direct staff to obtain DEP approval for these Handbook edits in accordance with the CAT 487 contract prior to implementation.

Motion: Dave Cammer

Second: John Verhoeven

Approved

X. Economic Viability Program – Kristan Morley

1. Economic Viability Micro Grant Awards: Marketing

- Gladstone Farms

Motion to approve the Grant Application for Gladstone Farms in the amount of **\$1,700.00**

Motion: Fred Huneke

Second: Steve Reed

Approved

Bud Gladstone recused himself and left the meeting for this discussion.

- Stony Creek Farmstead

Motion to approve the Grant Application for Stony Creek Farmstead in the amount of **\$5,000.00**

Motion: Steve Reed

Second: Jim Darling

Approved

Bud Gladstone returned to the meeting at this time.

2. Economic Viability Micro Grant Awards: Staffing

- Crespell

Motion to approve the Grant Application for Crespell in the amount of **\$5,000.00**

Motion: Dave Cammer

Second: Steve Reed
Approved

- **Township Valley Farm**

Motion to approve the Grant Application for Township Valley Farm in the amount of \$5,000.00

Motion: Steve Reed
Second: John Vickers
Approved

- **Tree Juice Maple Syrup**

Motion to approve the Grant Application for Tree Juice Maple Syrup in the amount of \$5,000.00

Motion: John Riedl
Second: Marilyn Wyman
Approved

XI. East of Hudson Committee – Fred Huneke and Gibson Durnford

1. East of Hudson Committee Approvals

Upon the recommendation of the East of Hudson Committee, motion to approve the following Ryder Farm – PUMU-024 – Revision 5

Motion: Fred Huneke
Second: Steve Reed
Approved

XII. Human Resources Committee – John Riedl and Amy Faulkner

- John Riedl provided a brief update on Human Resources over the last quarter.

XIII. NYC DEP Report – John Vickers

- John reported that CAT 403 payment request #28 has been received by WAC, #29 is being processed. #11C has been processed and #13E has been submitted and OEA is reviewing that request. DEP has worked with WAC staff on the CAT 487 FY23 budget.

XIV. Department of Health Report – Pat Palmer

- Pat Palmer reiterated that DOH looks forward to hearing input from stakeholders on the Draft FAD update.

XV. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 12:50 pm.

Motion: John Vickers
Second: Dave Cammer
Approved

The next regular scheduled meeting will be held May 24, 2022 at 10:00am