Minutes of the Watershed Agricultural Council
May 25, 2021

I. Meeting called to order at 6:33 pm via Zoom call.

Directors Present, via video conference call:
Dwight Bruno  Marilyn Wyman
Dave Cammer  Richard Giles
Wayland Gladstone  Steve Reed
Karl Gockel  Jennifer Grossman
Fred Huneke  John Riedl
John Verhoeven  Eleanor Blakeslee-Drain
Jeff Graff, NYC DEP

Directors Absent:
Larry Burgin  James Darling
Tom Hutson

Others Present, via Zoom:
Ryan Naatz  Amy Faulkner
Gibson Durnford  Kristan Morley
Larry Hulle  Josh Gorman
Rob Birdsall  Heather Magnan
Morgan Zyzik, NYS DOH

II. Approval of Minutes
Motion to approve the minutes of April 27, 2021, as presented.
Motion: Steve Reed
Second: John Verhoeven
Approved

III. Executive Director’s Report – Ryan Naatz
   A. Program Report
      1. WAC and Pure Catskills Website, Analytics, Traffic and Reach – Heather Magnan and
         Kristan Morley: Kristan and Heather provided a brief presentation on the website
         content, updates, analytics, traffic and reach for the group.
      2. Monthly Managers’ Memo was distributed to the group in the meeting packet. Jeff
         asked for Ryan to elaborate on the statements of the Easement Program in the memo;
         Ryan explained that it serves as a reminder that Conservation Easement Acquisition
         is a critical program and remains the most cost-effective land conservation tool that is
         a part of that greater land acquisition program. Jeff mentioned that DEP was
         concerned with regards to the statement regarding the reallocation of funds; there has
been no formal discussion regarding the reallocation of funds. Richard Giles responded that it is important for the Council to hear what the staff are thinking and feeling - the fact that staff may be confused or discouraged, especially regarding the future of their careers, is crucial for the Board to know. Jeff responded that he felt the statement was written in a way that made it appear that it was fact based and that is not part of any conversation that has been had. John Riedl added that until we hear more definitively about the funding for CAT 503 there is a reason to be concerned. Jeff again added that the statement is pure speculation on the part of staff; Josh added that the NAS report does say to shift the funds, however not specifically the CAT 503 contract funds. Josh added that the point of the memo is to spur conversation and this is a good conversation, and he appreciates the clarification from Jeff/DEP.

B. Operational Report
- Payment Requests: Amy gave an update on the status of payment requests; OEA issued a stop-the-clock on payment request #7C, requesting further documentation regarding related parties; Jeff informed Amy earlier that he has heard that the stop-the-clock has been lifted. #8c is prepared and ready to be submitted to OEA as soon as #7c is officially moving forward again. Payment request #8e has been submitted to OEA, and staff are working with Jeff to finalize #9e so that it is ready to submit as soon as OEA will accept it. We have received initial feedback that there will be line h deductions applied to #7c, #8c and #8e although the details of those deductions are not completely clear; they will be further discussed in Executive session. Payment request #24 has been submitted and is with OEA for review and staff are working with John Schwartz to get #25 finalized and ready to submit once OEA will accept it.
- YPTC Update: Amy provided a brief update on the work with YPTC to date; currently everyone is working to get YPTC up to speed on all things WAC.
- Ryan provided a brief update on cash flow; it remains critical that payment requests get caught up and funds received in a timely manner.

IV. Chair’s Report – Bud Gladstone
A. Update on Meeting with DEP
- The first bi-weekly meeting with DEP and ACCO was held last week. The meeting was established to attempt to have a more direct connection with key WAC staff, Karl, Bud and the ACCO’s office. The next meeting is scheduled for this Friday with just Amy and Ryan to better align all of the efforts of DEP, Finance, OEA, ACCO, Padilla, YPTC, etc. to introduce each other and to try to streamline the information asks.

B. Strategic Visioning Team – Jennifer Grossman
- Jennifer reported that the fourth session will focus on WAC Policies; she encouraged everyone to review the current policy book. A memo will be distributed to inform the discussion at the June 14th meeting. The hope is to meet in person in July as a grand finale to review everything these sessions have accomplished.

V. Finance Committee – Karl Gockel
A. March Financials
Motion to accept the March Financial Statements on the recommendation of the Finance Committee.
Motion: Fred Huneke
Second: Dave Cammer
Approved
VI. Endowment Committee – John Riedl
   A. Modification to Investment Policy
Upon the recommendation of the Endowment Committee, Motion to approve the following modifications to the Watershed Agricultural Council Endowment Fund Investment Policy held by NBT Bank:
   - The target strategic allocation for the Watershed Agricultural Council Endowment’s assets will be changed from 56% Equity/Real Assets – 44% Fixed Income & Cash to 53% Equity/ Real Assets - 47% Fixed Income & Cash.
Motion: Karl Gockel
Second: John Verhoeven
Approved

Jeff Graff asked John for clarification that the changes are in alignment with the Endowment Policy; John confirmed.

VII. Easement Committee – Josh Gorman and Rob Birdsall
   - Josh reported that both Truesdell landowners passed away recently. The Easement Committee requested to extend that contract with the estate; the family is reviewing the will and working with their attorneys. The family does want to proceed with the contract. Rob provided a brief update on stewardship activities.

VIII. Agricultural Committee – Bud Gladstone and Larry Hulle
   - Larry Hulle provided an update on some key projects and that the Program is awaiting additional funding to be allowed to put projects out to bid. Recently released projects have not received the bids the Program was anticipating.

IX. Forestry Committee – Marilyn Wyman
   - Marilyn provided an update on the recent Forestry Committee meeting, including that there was lengthy discussion on modifications to the Forestry Program Dashboard to further clarify where the Program is on projects, budgets and timeframes.

X. East of Hudson Committee – Fred Huneke
   - Fred will be providing monthly reports for this Committee and provided a brief review of the East of Hudson Program and their current projects.

XI. Human Resources Meeting – John Riedl and Amy Faulkner
   - John reported that there has not been a recent meeting of the Committee; a notice was sent to all WAC staff regarding the inability to approve FY22 salary increases.

XII. Economic Viability Committee – Richard Giles and Kristan Morley
   - Richard provided a brief update on the work on the Program. One current focus is on Farms in Transition that Richard, Kristan and Jeff Graff are working to develop guidelines around.

XIII. NYC DEP – Jeff Graff
   - Jeff stated that he continues to work on the revisions and potential updates to the Long Term Watershed Protection Plan. The remainder of Jeff’s report will be given in Executive Session.
XIV. Executive Session
Motion to go into Executive Session to discuss financial matters.
Motion: Marilyn Wyman
Second: Steve Reed
Approved

All staff members were excused at this time except for Amy Faulkner and Ryan Naatz.

Motion to come out of Executive Session.
Motion: Dave Cammer
Second: Steve Reed
Approved

XV. Adjournment
Meeting adjourned by common consent at 9:23 pm.