

Watershed Agricultural Council

Agriculture ♦ Forestry ♦ Conservation Easements ♦ Economic Viability

33195 State Highway 10, Walton, New York 13856

phone: 607-865-7790

fax: 607-865-4932

nycwatershed.org



Executive Committee Meeting September 19, 2023

I. Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 10:05 a.m. by Bud Gladstone

Members Present: Dave Cammer, via Zoom Karl Gockel, via Zoom
 Bud Gladstone, via Zoom Fred Huneke
 Tom Hutson, via Zoom John Vickers, NYC DEP, via Zoom

Members Absent: Jennifer Grossman

Others Present: Ryan Naatz Amy Faulkner
 Steve Reed, via Zoom Michael VanderWerff, NYC DEP, via Zoom
 Lee Harris, NYC DOI Alla Saint-Fleur, NYC DOI, via Zoom
 Vicki Morris, NYC DOI, via Zoom

II. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the minutes of the August 15, 2023 meeting, as presented.

Motion: John Vickers

Second: Tom Hutson

Approved

III. Executive Director's Report

- A. Boardstrong Report:** Amy and Ryan provided an update on the status of the BoardStrong recommendations. The leadership team at WAC are moving forward on the next steps of the recommendations with the intent to propose any suggested modifications to the Executive Committee. Program managers will utilize a consistent format to include: Proposed updated committee charge; committee composition inclusive of number of members, as well as the areas of expertise, experience, etc. that should be represented on the Committee; frequency of meetings proposed; further information regarding what types of decisions currently are made at the committee level, detailing those that can actually be approved at the staff level in accordance with guidelines and guidelines that may need to be updated, if any, in order to allow for more efficient and effective meetings; and relevant guidelines attached.

There was question as to how the committee restructuring would be presented to the actual program committees. Ryan explained that the decision is the purview of the Executive Committee, first.

- B. Successor Contract Development:** Ryan reported that contract discussions are being held regularly with DEP and WAC staff. The first round of these discussions is almost complete.

TDD 1-800-662-1220

Watershed protection through partnership.

af: 9/19/23

Ryan expressed that it is a refreshing way of doing business, it's been positive, open dialogue with Michael and John. Bud asked if there were any challenges, to which Ryan responded that although we are not there yet, the challenge will be to reconcile our recommended initiatives, FAD requirements and the budgets. It will be finding a middle ground where it is beneficial for all. John added that the operating contract that pays for all staff allows for a bit more flexibility with being able to research new initiatives for consideration. Dave suggested building in more interaction and cooperation between WAC and DEP on many issues and initiatives in the future. John stated that his team is trying to set the tone that WAC and DEP are recommitting to working together and cooperatively.

- C. Columbia's Addressing Climate Challenges to Agriculture and Water Quality in the NYC Watershed:** WAC and Columbia University continue to work in good faith to design and execute an MOU. This is to define respective interests and outline proprietary information for each, but also to ensure data remains confidential and clarify expectations on usage of data. A draft agreement has been received and is being reviewed with the intent to provide a final agreement to the Executive Committee in October. The October Council meeting will be reserved for Columbia to do a working stakeholder group. Columbia is anticipating having a second stakeholder meeting at the CWC facility in mid-November.
- D. Transparency Policy/Information Requests:** WAC has been dealing with a series of information requests from a landowner. Additional FOIA requests have been received, the landowners is also contesting what was sent to date. These requests are taking a considerable amount of time. WAC continues to move forward consistent with our Transparency Policy. Fred asked for an update on the advice of WAC's legal counsel. Ryan stated that both WAC's counsel and DEP representative counsel agreed that WAC has a strong argument that it is not subject to FOIA, however we do have a current Transparency Policy that we need to follow, even though it may be over accommodating. An edited version of the Policy has been drafted, but we are reluctant to initiate those revisions with open requests. At the same time this landowner has expressed his intention to resign and remove himself from all WAC programs.
- E. Demolition of Hamden Property Buildings:** Ryan explained that the demolition project was extended to November 15, 2023. There is a preconstruction meeting this week.
- F. EoH Office Facility:** Ryan and Amy explained that there are environmental concerns in the EoH Office building as it relates to mold and asbestos. WAC is working with Westchester County to get these addressed immediately. The EoH Office staff are currently working remotely, full-time, for at least a two-week term awaiting testing and potential mitigation. There are concerns regarding the timeliness of which these issues will be addressed by the County.
- G. WAC/NRCS Memorandum of Agreement:** This MOU expires mid November, 2023, WAC is working with NRCS to consider what this MOU may look like in the future. Fred suggested that for the three positions that are provided by NRCS, WAC should bring those positions in house. Ryan, Connor Young and Dennis DeWeese will meet next week; Dennis was optimistic that they would like the partnership to continue but cognizant of NRCS' own limitations. Karl asked if NRCS has been informed of the issues we have experienced with the MOU. Ryan explained that will be addressed in the meeting next week. John stated that he would be hesitant to cut ties with something that is not costing any money. He would rather clarify the expectations and timelines in the next agreement to be able to work cooperatively and successfully. However, if they are prohibiting us from meeting our obligations then that needs to be addressed.

IV. Chair's Report –

- A. Commissioner Visit:** Bud was pleased with the discussion with all those present at the NYC

DEP Commissioner visit to Berry Brook Farm. He would like to invite the Commissioner to the Agricultural Program Tour.

V. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:17pm.

Motion: John Vickers

Second: Dave Cammer

Approved