



State of New Jersey

BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

MINUTES OF MEETING

July 22, 2026

(Wednesday)

Public meeting notice was certified by communication on July 16, 2026.

Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 et seq. adequate notice of this meeting has been provided by giving written notice of the time, date, location and to the extent known the agenda of this meeting. At least 48-hours in advance this notice has been posted on the third floor, Riverview Plaza, Trenton, New Jersey; mailed to the Newark Star Ledger; the Camden Courier Post; the Philadelphia Inquirer and filed with the Office of the Secretary of State.

President Bob Blew called the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture to order at 1:05 pm. Board members in attendance included President Bob Blew; Vice President Stephen V. Lee, IV, David DeFrangé, John Hart, Joel Viereck, Rick Gardner, Hillary Barile and Holly Sytsema. The meeting was held at 200 Riverview Plaza, Trenton, NJ.

Also in attendance were Secretary Wengryn; Deputy Assistant Secretary Tameko Webster; Dr. Amar Patil, Director, Division of Animal Health; Rose Chamberlain, Director, Division of Food & Nutrition; Sandra Howland, (TEAMS) Division of Agricultural & Natural Resources; Joe Zoltowski, Director, Division of Plant Industry; Nancy Wood, Division of Marketing & Development; Chuck Roohr, Executive Director, SADC; Chris LaRegina, Tim Idland (TEAMS), Jeff Beach (TEAMS), Bella Walz, Kaitlynn Dixon, Rob Vivian (TEAMS), Anthony Tarr, Billy Connors, Office of the Secretary. Also in attendance were Ashley Kerr, Al Murray, Andrew Cadwallader NJ Farm Bureau; Dr. Brian Schilling, Rutgers University; Bruce Eklund, NASS; Shareefah Williams, USDA/NASS – Office of the Administrator; Lindsay Carragher, Deputy Executive Director, Farm Service Agency; Julie Hawkins, State Conservationist, NRCS; Tim Hionis, State Board Member-Elect; Ryck Suydam, Somerset County farmer; Manatee Smith, Producers 1 Agriculture Group and Sustainable Solutions; Jasmine Moreano, Organic & Regenerative Farming Board, and Linda Walker, NJ Department of Agriculture.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

ON the MOTION of Joel Viereck, seconded by David DeFrangé, the Board voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the June 24, 2026, meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ryck Suydam of Somerset County was present to tell the Board about the continuing issue with DEP state-owned farmland and the restriction on leased lands that hay is not allowed to be harvested until the 15th of July. He stated that DEP Commissioner Potosnak came out for a second visit where he was able to see the difference in the texture and color of the hay was dramatically different and now that he has seen for himself, he understands the difference. In addition, he noted that DEP staff visited his farm to search for birds that might be endangered and he expects a report by the end of the week. He had also asked for data on state-owned leased lands and wanted to know if there were any changes in the past five years and with the help of NASS, he reported that it's basically flat – it has not changed much up or down. He did note that the information shows that the number of lease holders has gone down, but the acreage has stayed the same. Finally, he reported that once the report on the endangered birds has been received, as long as he doesn't have any of those birds, they can do an administrative waiver for that restriction. In addition, eminent domain concerns and buyback possibilities were also mentioned.

Manatee Smith, Producers 1 Agriculture Group & Sustainable Solutions, commented that they are working on scheduling the Urban Ag and Sustainability Community meeting with Trenton Mayor Reed Gusciora. He reported that they are inviting community leaders, educators, non-profit organizations and community members to help design an action plan focused on strengthening sustainable food systems in NJ on August 11 at Mercer County Community College. He stated his frustration that things are taking too long and he does not want to lose the momentum that they currently have.

President Blew announced that the Department would be having an Urban Agriculture tour and meeting on Wednesday, August 5, and that more information would be forthcoming. He also reported that meetings would be scheduled on an ongoing basis.

Board member David DeFrange talked about the importance of urban agriculture and noted that this is something that he has been working on for many years, noting land access, need for coordination between state/county, the need for a central state-level support structure, leadership engagement, communication, scheduling and most important, community involvement.

President Bob Blew stated that after a meeting with the Legal Specialist to review the current by-laws and reported that the Board can restructure/reorganize at any time. It was noted that even though the new Board members were not sworn-in today, the Board will reorganize and then once the new members are confirmed, the Board can reaffirm leadership at that time.

Board member Hillary Barile reported that the Nominations Committee has met over the last few months, reviewed the interest from the candidates who had put in their names for leadership positions as well as engaging with oncoming new Board members to have the discussion around the nominations process and potential candidates, even though they are not voting at this time.

ON the MOTION of Hillary Barile, seconded by Rick Gardner, the Board voted unanimously by roll call vote, to elect Stephen V. Lee, IV, President and Joel Viereck as Vice President of the State Board.

Bob Blew stated that it was great to see the involvement of the future Board members as it gives them a chance to understand how the Board works and the dynamics behind what we do and to understand the personalities of the members. So, bringing these folks on ahead of time gives them an understanding of what our leadership structure looks like and how we create it and how we can affect it. I thought it was important and I hope it's something that continues long after I'm off the Board.

With that, Bob Blew handed over the gavel to the Board President Stephen Lee.

REPORT OF RUTGERS UNIVERSITY

Dr. Brian Schilling, Sr. Associate Director of the NJ Agricultural Experiment Station and Director of Rutgers Cooperative Extension, represented the College and reported the following:

- Fair season is underway! He reported that everyone is hoping for a great fair! He noted that many of the 4H programs have events at the fair. He noted that there have been some STEM ambassadors and STEM Pathfinder programs that bring young people into those fields that are going very well and he hopes for a continued good summer.
- Working together more with Extension Research Directors and the Executive teams and the land grants regarding ag technology, which is changing very, very quickly. He noted that they have submitted a grant application to get federal funding to help build out a new more modern greenhouse at the Jones Avenue site to support some of our urban ag work and community engagement. He noted that it is a very competitive grant and the USDA put in a lot of money through the Big Beautiful Bill into this program, it's like an Infrastructure Modernization Act, so we are hopeful.
- In New Jersey, the Office of the State Climatologist was established at Rutgers' Cook College, now the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences, in 1979 by then-Gov. Brendan Byrne to centralize climate expertise and activities across the state. Distinguished Professor David Robinson, New Jersey's state climatologist since 1991 and the longest-serving state climatologist on record in the U.S., is retiring from the role after 35 years of public service. John Krasting, a Rutgers-trained climate scientist and longtime NOAA researcher, was named his successor, effective July 1. Krasting earned his bachelor's degree in meteorology and Ph.D. in atmospheric science from Rutgers. His research has focused on climate risk, sea-level rise, coastal inundation, and Earth system modeling. A former broadcast meteorologist, he also brings experience communicating complex climate science to public audiences. In his new role as NJ State Climatologist, Krasting will continue to provide authoritative climate information and support research, education, and engagement with agencies, communities, and stakeholders statewide.
- Ag Experiment Station did receive a smaller allocation of special purpose funding, but there was a deal between the University and the Legislature to keep funding the experiment station's modernization and some of these programs that we've been supporting, the special purpose funding but through a different mechanism. So, there will be money going to Rutgers that will be allocated from Rutgers to the Experiment Station. He sincerely thanked industry, county boards, Farm Bureau, the State Board and the Department of Agriculture who supported us.
- Rutgers President Tate has issued a hiring freeze; there may be an exemption process for that hiring freeze in certain circumstances. He is awaiting further clarity and will report back at the next meeting.
- Finally, he reported that in 2024 the Joint Budget Oversight Committee (JBOC) charged the Experiment Station with doing an independent assessment of the special occasions event

program that was legislatively authorized and implemented through the SADC. The law basically puts the program into effect, and then the regulations would be and are being developed at a later date. But this was actually a give back of rights to people that have preserved farmland and allowing them to do within defined parameters, special occasion events on their farms that they otherwise wouldn't be able to do because it would have been a violation of the deed of easement. The SADC is also assessing the program but we have seen a little bit of an uptick in some cases, I should say that we saw an uptick in activities, so this year we had about 30–31 farms with SOEs on their farm and we had about 30 actually held them, the number of SOEs actually held went up by over 100, about 67 new over 160 this year. So, we're seeing an uptick in people capitalizing on this had a little less than 30,000 people come to these events on the farms. In addition, the number of counties and municipalities that we see these activities occurring in has grown. He noted that there are still some challenges that need to be clarified. The statute, when put into effect, but now with a couple years of activity to look at and see what needs to be tightened or clarified.

REPORT OF FARM SERVICE AGENCY (FSA)

Lindsey Carragher, Deputy State Executive Director, reported on behalf of the Farm Service Agency:

Specialty Crop Farmers (ASCF) Program

FSA is delivering ASCF assistance to eligible producers based on reported 2025 planted Specialty Crop acres. Deadline for enrollment is August 7, 2026. As of Monday, July 13, over \$394 Million has been paid nationwide, NJ has paid over \$7.9 million.

Pre-filled ASCF applications are available to producers who timely filed their 2025 crop acreage report for eligible specialty crops. Only one application is required for all ASCF eligible specialty crops nationwide. Producers can apply through Login.gov or request their pre-filled ASCF application from their county office. FSA used national average revenue per crop as a metric for developing the ASCF program payment categories and payment rates listed below. There will not be a payment factor, and payments will be issued as applications are approved.

Payment Eligibility and Payment Limitations

FSA is expanding payment limitation and payment eligibility provisions that affect program payments. Producers will benefit from an increased payment limitation for certain programs, and a broader definition of farming income that will result in more exceptions to income limitations. Starting with the 2026 crop year, for payment eligibility purposes, FSA will treat applicable limited liability companies (LLCs) and S-Corporations (S-Corps), and other similar entities, as “pass through entities.” Each member of the qualified pass-through entity who meets actively engaged in farming criteria will help qualify the entity for expanded payments. For program year 2026 only, farm operations that are structured as LLCs or S-Corps or one of the new qualified pass-through entities must file updated farm operating plans with FSA for program year 2026 by September 15, 2026. After program year 2026, FSA will continue to use June 1 as the date for determining ownership interest in an entity. An additional change allows members of all entity types to receive compensation for labor and management contributions and use the same contribution to qualify as “actively engaged in farming.” This update provides consistent treatment of member contributions across all entity types.

ARCPLC

Payment limitation changes include an increased payment limit for the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) program. Starting with crop year 2025, the ARC and PLC payment limit will increase from \$125,000 to \$155,000. This payment limit will be adjusted going forward annually based on inflation.

Base Allocation Summary

Landowners were sent a postcard or email with instructions for accessing their Base Allocation Summary either through Login.gov or through their local Farm Service Agency office. Landowners who have a Login.gov account can access their Base Allocation Summary online or by contacting their local Farm Service Agency office for information on how to receive their summary. After reviewing the Base Allocation Summary, landowners should contact their local FSA office if:

- Acreage history data is incorrect or missing;
- There are “subsequent acres” listed and they would like to choose the subsequent acreage for base allocation;
- To opt out of receiving any additional base acres.

Landowners have until August 31, 2026, to take any of the actions listed above or to appeal the accuracy of information contained in the Base Allocation Summary to the FSA County Committee by filing a written request. After reviewing your base allocation summary, no further action is required if the information is correct. If FSA is not notified, the Base Allocation Summary will be considered accurate and complete. All acreage reported as eligible in the summary will be used to determine the new base allocation percentage, and new base acres will automatically be allocated to the farm(s) with the designated percentage for each farm(s). Farms will maintain current base acres; however, eligible farms may increase base acres through the base allocation process. After the base allocation process is completed, election and enrollment for ARC and PLC will be announced for program year 2026.

County Committee 2026 Election Period

Farm Service Agency County Committees are a critical component of the day-to-day operations of FSA and allow grassroots input and local administration of federal farm programs. Elections occur each year in certain Local Administrative Areas (LAA). LAAs are elective areas for FSA committees in a single county or multi-county jurisdiction. This can include LAAs that are focused on an urban or suburban area.

The nomination period for the 2026 COC election began on June 15. Eligible voter lists are available to the public and postcards with information on how to obtain nomination forms will be mailed out to those eligible voters. Anyone that would like to nominate someone for an LAA (Local Administrative Area) up for election will need to submit an FSA-669A to their County Office prior to August 3.

Supplemental Disaster Relief Program (Stage 1 and Stage 2)

SDRP is still open. Deadline has been extended through August 12, 2026, for both Stage 1 and Stage 2. As of Monday July 13, over \$15.5 billion has been paid nationwide and NJ has paid over \$15.3 million. Initial SDRP payments were factored at 35%, but USDA has increased the payment factor to 70%, therefore producers with approved applications have received an additional 35% of their calculated SDRP payment. Future SDRP payments will be made using a 70% payment factor.

Loss Adjusters

New Jersey FSA is seeking Loss Adjusters (LAs) for the Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) and the Tree Assistance Program (TAP). Loss Adjusters are required to have knowledge of field crops and specialty crops, as well as a thorough understanding and execution of crop adjusting guidelines and program provisions, as applicable to FSA programs. If interested, please contact Aly Dyson, NJ FSA Disaster Specialist, Aly.Dyson@usda.gov, with any questions.

REPORT OF NJ FARM BUREAU

Ashley Kerr represented the Farm Bureau and reported on the following topics:

- State support is still needed for the spring freeze losses. Has there been any movement on an emergency state appropriation for farmers? We have heard that it's time to ask the Legislature for a budget add-on of \$150,000,000.
- The FY2026 state budget was passed at the end of June. The only additional money for Ag went to the Office of the Food Security Advocate for emergency feeding programs. Rutgers NJAES received \$4.25 million (including some for the Equine Science Center) thanks to Senator Burzichelli and that money was made a part of the larger university appropriation. The full \$20 million for equine racing purses was restored, but we have heard this will be the last year. Also hearing that there will need to be money in next year's budget to continue venison donation programs.
- The legislation to give soil conservation districts more supervisors was signed by Governor Sherrill.
- State Board appointments have not yet been confirmed. Both candidates have met with their Senators, one will potentially be confirmed this summer if there is a special meeting of the Senate, the other we have heard will move this fall.
- The NJDEP Fish & Game Council approved changes to the Game Code for this year's hunting seasons at their meeting on June 30, sign off by the Chairman is expected at the August meeting.
- August 1 deadline reminder for farmland assessment applications. Upcoming FEC meeting scheduled for August 12.
- The NJFB Board of Directors invited Jeff Everett, Executive Director of the Garden State Preservation Trust to give a presentation at last month's Board meeting on urban agriculture, our urban ag producers subcommittee also attended.
- Great work by SBOA member Joel Viereck and Secretary Wengryn on their relationship with Wakefern and their commitment to purchase Jersey Fresh.
- In the beginning of July, domestic tomato producers won an international trade commission ruling upholding their earlier antidumping order. Domestic growers, led by the Florida Tomato Council and other producer interests including SBOA member Joel Viereck, engaged the ITC complaint process to seek relief for unfair trade conditions leading to the failed appeal in a vote of the commissioners.
- The Supreme Court ruled 7-2 in *Monsanto Co. v. Durnell* that federal law (the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act) preempts state-level "failure-to-warn" lawsuits regarding cancer risks. Because the USEPA does not require the active ingredient in Roundup—to carry a cancer warning, states cannot mandate additional or differing label requirements. Meanwhile, Senator Greenstein introduced a state bill to ban glyphosate.
- Executive Director Liz Thompson and President Allen Carter are currently in Maine, at the annual meeting of the Northeast Farm Bureau leadership.

- She introduced the newest research associate from Salem County, Andrew Cadwallader, grandson of Asa Cadwallader, who served on the State Board from 1984–1988.

REPORT OF NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE (NASS)

Bruce Eklund, State Statistician, reported the following to the Board:

- July 24, Farm Production Expenditures will be released, that shows that you have expenses in addition to making money, and it shows the effects of tariffs and everything, and a high diesel price and everything's going on in your operations.
- August 19, the mushroom release – we have an increasing number of growers.
- June 17, the Floriculture
- May 1 – citrus – blueberries, cranberries and peaches.
- Hay acreage – highest since 2018

He introduced Shareefah Williams, USDA/NASS – Office of the Administrator, who will be working with our New Jersey office.

REPORT OF NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

Julie Hawkins, State Conservationist, reported the following:

- Attended the Morris & Somerset County Ag event earlier today – it was a great event.
- Application period for 2027 opened today with the first batching cut off is September 18. The official press release from the agency but the website has been updated with the information for the financial assistance programs as well as the conservation easement grants.
- Contracts with farmers and forest owners are being finalized with more than 80% complete. It is expected that the numbers for the programs will be released between October and November.
- There will be a local roundtable producer meeting in the Woodstown office which she will be attending as well as the Assistant Chief and the Deputy Assistant Chief

ORGANIC & REGENERATIVE FARMING BOARD

Jasmine Moreano reported that they had no updates since the last meeting. Next meeting of the Organic & Regenerative Board will be held on September 15 at the Mercer County Extension office.

President Lee announced that as a reminder to our partners that we hear from at this meeting, if you would like to submit a written prior to the Board meeting, please feel free to do so.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Secretary Wengryn reported that he would have to leave shortly as he is heading to the opening ceremony of the Monmouth County Fair and if that gets finished early enough, he will swing by Burlington County as their opening ceremonies were canceled the previous night due to weather. He is also scheduled to attend the Warren County Fair opening on Saturday night. He noted that the month started working with our USDA partners, Rural Development, NRCS, FSA and the new Office of Seafood. There was a good open call with the producers as well as a tour of some of the New Jersey seafood freezing facilities and also down to Lund's Seafood and they are having a good, productive season with squid. He reported that Ag & Natural Resources Director Frank Minch was currently attending a meeting

with the Department of Health as a follow up meeting to the one with the Commissioner related to inspections on farms and some of the corrections that both agencies need to make in communications regarding the inspections going forward. In addition, he reported that National Blueberry Day was celebrated with Division of Markets staff giving away blueberries on three New Jersey boardwalks, the Secretary also attended a small legislative tour at the Macrie Brothers Farm in Hammonton. He noted that Congressman Van Drew was on hand to talk about what the federal government can do to help with the spring freeze and saw the impact of what is going on in the fields, yes there was a crop, but not at the same level and with a shortened season. In addition, those same conversations continue with the Commissioners from the Northeast. There was a Wakefern Food show that the Department was invited to participate in, the industry show was for current suppliers, potential new suppliers and to have conversations between the store owners and the suppliers themselves. He and Board member Joel Viereck were part of the panel that talked about Jersey Fresh and the importance of the program. There were some excellent conversations, and he looks forward to seeing what comes of the collaboration.

Chuck Roohr, Executive Director, SADC, reported that at their meeting tomorrow, the SADC staff will present the third annual review of the special occasion events (SOE) program. He noted that the report will provide documentation on the number of requests, actual events, number of farms and number of attendees occurring at approved SOE locations which shows the increasing trend year over year. In addition, the report also identifies some detriments of the program including the varying degrees of review required from one municipality to the other and landowners who host SOE's without approval or without renewing prior approvals. The report will be available on the SADC's website or by paper copy upon adoption by the Committee. He continued, the Next Gen Program can refer preserved farmland owners (as well as those in the process of preserving their farm) to a \$10,000 grant through American Farmland Trust to support farm transfer and succession planning. AFT recently clarified that both the senior and junior generations can apply (or the outgoing and incoming farmers, if unrelated), meaning the farm/farmers could technically receive up to \$20,000 to develop or implement their plans. This grant will only be available until June 2027.

Rose Chamberlain, Director, Division of Food & Nutrition, the Farm to School team recently hosted a Field to Tray Workshop which was held on July 20, providing educators and school nutrition professionals with hands-on learning, networking opportunities, and practical strategies to strengthen Farm to School programming. She reported that the Summer EBT redemption is up to just over \$5 million dollars, the Farm to School Procurement Initiative (NJF2SPI) grant officially concluded on June 30. The team is currently processing reimbursement requests through July 31. As of today, they are at \$960,000 redeemed and hope to be close to the \$1 million received. She reported that the implementation of the new Food Distribution Management System (FDMS) developed by our in-house IT staff, Phase II, continues to progress successfully through system testing. In addition, she reported that to support a successful rollout, three user training sessions have been scheduled in advance of the August program launch.

Joe Zoltowski, Director, Division of Plant Industry, reported that the 2026 LDD aerial defoliation began in South Jersey on June 16 and was completed on June 24. A total of four days of flight time was required to complete the statewide survey. He reported that on June 25, the Department announced the detection of Box Tree Moth (BTM); *Cydalima perspectalis* in Cape May County, New Jersey. BTM caterpillars are destructive pests of boxwood, feeding indiscriminately on all species of their host in the

landscape resulting in costly damage. News of a suspect infestation came from representatives from Rutgers Cooperative Ag Extension earlier in May. He reported that residents from a small retirement community in Middle Township had noticed significant damage to their boxwood landscapes and contacted Rutgers to help determine the cause. A webpage and reporting tool for the public to report suspected BTM is now available through the Division website.

Dr. Amar Patil, Director, Division of Animal Health, reported that federal and state officials will be reviewing biosecurity protocols with all live bird markets as summer continues. The first cases of New World Screwworm were detected in domestic animals in the U.S. after decades of absence. The NJDA DAH, in collaboration with NJ DOH, drafted new importation requirements for livestock and all other warm-blooded animals originating in a state with New World Screwworm detections. The DAH has included educational information and guidance on the emerging issue of New World Screwworm on its website, along with direct messaging to numerous key stakeholders. New World Screwworm (NWS), *Cochliomyia hominivorax*, is a species of fly found throughout portions of North, Central, and South America and the Caribbean. NWS is particularly devastating because the fly larvae burrow and feed on living tissue, often causing severe, sometimes fatal damage to animals. NWS can infest any warm-blooded animal, including livestock, companion animals, wildlife, and birds.

Nancy Wood, Division of Marketing and Development, reported to the Board that Assistant Secretary Joe Atchison was attending Northeast SARE Administrative Council conference this week for administrative counsel to review grant application programs, rules and standards, among other topics. National Blueberry Day was a success with over 2,500 pints of blueberries given away across three boardwalks in Seaside, Atlantic City and Wildwood. He attended the PA Urban Ag Tour at the Community Grocer in Philadelphia, a new concept that reaches across their State Departments of Agriculture and Health with the cooperation from the Legislature, customers can purchase raw ingredient meal kits with their EBT and then take them to an adjacent but separate entity for a hot meal.

Anthony Tarr, CFO, reported to the Board that the fiscal office is working diligently to complete the Department's work on the end of the fiscal year closeout for 2026 with the new fiscal year set to begin on July 1.

Tameko Webster, Deputy Assistant Secretary, provided the Board the quarterly Department newsletter, she congratulated President Lee and Vice President Viereck on their elections. Division Directors submitted their responses to the succession planning questionnaire. Ongoing coordination continues for the 2026 COOP submission as well as identification of emergency captains and review of emergency planning for each location is underway. Match day operational planning for the FIFA World Cup remains active. Staff continue supporting NJESF-11 at the ROIC and SEOC.

Sandra Howland, Division of Agricultural & Natural Resources, reported to the Board that the statewide drought warning is still in effect. While the recent rains have helped to improve DEPs drinking water indicators in several of our regions, stream flows remain extremely dry as well as groundwater. Looking at the U.S. drought monitor, it does show some improvement from last week with a drop for the D2 area from 44% of the state to 35%. An extreme drought or D3 dropping from 10% to just over 3% in the coastal areas of Ocean, Atlantic and Cape May counties. So, while the rain has provided some welcome relief, the entire state remains abnormally dry or worse, with about 76% of the state in that D1 category

or more significant. She continued that the Department's agricultural heat stress resources remain available online. These include English and Spanish language, educational materials, voluntary heat illness management and prevention plan, and a daily checklist for employers. In addition, staff participated in an interdepartmental meeting with DEP leadership for an update on the NJ Pact Real rules. DEP plans to begin stakeholder meetings on October 1. The rules are expected to be published in the New Jersey Register for comment in December, with an adoption date target of July 20, 2027, DEP has also proposed extending the current legacy period through that same date, July 20, 2027. Finally, she reported that the BPU dual use solar pilot has received 17 applications, 16 of those are moving through the conditional approval process, with some applicants being asked for additional clarification. We're hopeful that approved projects can begin planning and preliminary site work this fall.

President Lee reported that the Specialty Crop Block grants on the agenda. Billy Connors has been instrumental in helping to put that together. The Grant's Committee has reviewed them and collectively and came up with a proposal in terms of funding for that grant, which you would have received. The Board has to approve these based on the recommendations of the Grants Committee. Billy noted that there was discussion about the Jersey Fresh allocation, he reported that it was reduced from the requested \$500,000 down to around \$330, 000.

ON the MOTION of Rick Gardner, seconded by Bob Blew, the Board voted to approve the SCBGs as presented. Joel Viereck recused from the vote. Holly Sytsema abstained.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Rick Gardner congratulated President Lee and Vice President Viereck on their elections. He noted that there was not a lot happening at the county board level as many are out for summer recess. He announced that Warren County will be holding a Legislative Dinner in September and will provide more information on that as it becomes available. He noted that the Warren County Farmers Fair will begin this Saturday and invited all to attend. Finally, he reported that the DEP Committee met with Katrina Angarone from DEP on July 9 and felt that it was an excellent start to the conversations and noted her willingness to listen to the comments and suggestions in addition to having a continued dialogue with them going forward.

John Hart reported that the Mercer County will hold their 4H fair this weekend, it's getting smaller every year, but there are a lot of kids there with their chickens and bunny rabbits. I walk around to talk to the kids to hopefully keep the 4H. He noted that some have gone to Hunterdon County because they have a more progressive fair there, but Mercer is trying to keep that fair going. He reported that he got a call from Abe's Acres farmstand about some of his products being embargoed. This was a similar situation to what happened last month with others. It was noted that Director Frank Minch was meeting with the Department of Health on this very issue. He noted that the Caucus process may need to be reviewed as the North has had a problem finding candidates.

Dave DeFrance reported that the weather in Hunterdon County continues to be an issue, no measurable rain continues to be critical. He, too, mentioned the issue of having more engagement with the North/South Caucuses as they are the pipeline to the Board and both North and South must work together so representation on the State Board continues to be strong. He reported that there is much work being done to be ready for the Hunterdon County Fair that will be held August 19–23, this is one of

the most robust fairs and encouraged all to come out and see for yourself. He noted that climate readiness is going to be an appropriate discussion and making sure that the Board addresses when these issues occur.

Bob Blew reported that in a three-mile distance was three inches difference in rainfall last week. The producers that I'm talking to are still struggling if they're using surface water. Those of us that are on wells are doing OK, but we try to rely on the wells as little as possible. So, it's pretty spotty. Cape May County is really struggling. I give my annual plug for the Salem County Fair is August 3-7. He noted that I've been to a few county fairs around the state, and I think Salem County is one of the best.

Congrats to Joel and Steve on your new leadership positions! He publicly thanked Steve Lee for the support that he gave me over the past year. It is not a fun chair to sit in from time to time; it's hours of your week that get taken up and he appreciates everything that he has done to help him get through this past year. He wished him luck with his tenure on the Board.

Hillary Barile also noted the county boards are all on recess. She noted that much work has been on the Committee level, and I think we've pretty much already updated almost that between Grants Committee with the Specialty Crop Block Grants and Rick's update on the DEP committee. She just wanted to add on the DEP committee that I was really encouraged by the level of engagement from DEP representation, there was very positive conversation, and I'm encouraged by how quickly they've come back to us with a date for continuing that conversation. I listened to the NJDEP hearings regarding the extension for NJ Real regulations where Joel gave some testimony. I would echo Dave's comments about climate readiness, listening to the commentary that was given by either environmental groups or towns asking for regulations because they are aware that they need climate readiness.

Holly Sytsema thanked President Lee for being willing to serve. She reported that Sussex County has suffered several storms and possible tornadoes. The Sussex County Fair is July 31 - August 6 and invited all to attend. She also echoed what other members said regarding the North and South Caucuses.

Vice President Viereck thanked the Board for electing him Vice President and stated that he is looking forward to working hard. He noted that will be making sure that transparency occurs and noted that he is happy to help in any way shape or form, bringing his perspective to serve the entire industry. He thanked those that attended the Legislative Tour at his farm last month. He reported that there was a meeting with the Chief of Staff LaKeya Jones Smith regarding the Bruce Eklund position and he was encouraged that we even had a seat at the table for discussion. We are a smaller piece of pie when it comes to agriculture in the whole country. So, the fact that they're listening, they're looking at it and hearing our concerns. It is going to look at difference, the way that the statistics are reported in federal government. There is a pilot program through NASDA. I believe that they are going to be putting somebody here and they're going to be a little bit more integrated in the department. But they said there's more details to come on that. So that was really encouraging to hear.

He commended Secretary Wengryn for the great job he did at the Wakefern Summit. I was surprised when I got there that Zack Heiken, Vice President of the Vegetable Growers, the most notable thing from that was that they're putting the Jersey Fresh logo on front of every circular for the next six weeks, and that goes out to 10 million households weekly throughout the region, it's not just New Jersey. They're

really doing a showcasing of what we're doing here in New Jersey, pushing it to the whole region. Hopefully that will make an impact. He thinks that there's a lot of potential there, and the Secretary did speak about how this came about, it is a childhood friend of mine that's been with Wakefern since High School, in their grocery division, it was also noted that there is an opportunity for florals as well. He commented it seems like it could work out well and hopefully we continue the relationship; it's a big step forward and I also believe that other grocery stores and other entities will follow suit. In addition, he reported that he had testified to the NJ Real hearings and was extremely concerned about the amount of support there was for the rules and noted that it will be extremely important that farmers' concerns need to be heard, as it is going to be a battle. He noted that there is a meeting on water allocation set. He reported that the Budget Committee will soon be doing their review of the Division of Food & Nutrition and following that the Committee will start to work on the development of recommendations on how to best align the fiscal policies of allocations and program priorities. He noted concern about the issue of climate change and stated that climate readiness also gives you the pathway for protection of your products.

President Lee thanked the Board for their confidence in support of his leadership and stated that he was the third generation that has served on this Board, first his grandfather, Stephen Lee, II and his uncle, Abbott Lee. He stated that we are only as successful as we are together, period. I absolutely empathize with restructuring of the caucus process, our board is responsible for way too much to have as much rotation as we do to have people come in, in and out of here every two years. We have a huge responsibility as members of the State Board of Agriculture and we've learned a lot in the period, probably the last four or five years, and seen how the structure has gone. We changed Secretaries, we have a Chief of Staff, we have a CFO, there's been a lot of work we've done collectively as a unit, but there is more to be done. I think that it starts at the caucus level and we had increased turn out at the caucus last March, which was great. He stated that the delegates are the ones that really guide us and guide the process in terms of how this Board works. This Board is responsible for all of New Jersey agriculture, no matter the commodity. He stated that they would be working on Committee and County Board assignments over the next month. He also noted concern about the statewide drought warning and noted weather is the one component that we cannot control. He reported that he had attended the pollinator event at Drumthwacket and reported that it was very well attended. Finally, he reported that the Burlington County Farm fair was currently underway.

David DeFrance thanked Tameko Webster, Kaitlynn Dixon and Alyssa Pitt for pivoting the Urban Ag tour from Crops in Atlantic City to Trenton and putting together an opportunity to tour several spots in Trenton and looks forward to keeping the Urban Ag Committee moving forward. The tour is scheduled for August 5.

NEW BUSINESS

Rule Proposal: N.J.A.C. 2:20-11 – Box Tree Moth

Joe Zoltowski commented that Box tree moth is an invasive pest that can significantly damage and potentially kill boxwood (*Buxus* species) plants if left unchecked. The caterpillars are ravenous feeders, and heavy infestations can completely defoliate host plants. After the leaves are gone, they feed on the bark which eventually kills the plant. Boxwoods are a popular ornamental evergreen shrub common to many landscape environments in the United States. He recommended approval.

ON the MOTION of Bob Blew, seconded by Hillary Barile, the Board voted unanimously to approve N.J.A.C. 2:20-11 – Box Tree Moth pursuant to the Administrative Procedures Act.

Approval – 2027 State Board Meeting Schedule

ON the MOTION of Hillary Barile, seconded by Rick Gardner, the Board voted unanimously to approve the schedule as presented.

Application for Organizational Membership

The Board received a request from the Garden State Rabbit and Cavy Breeders Association for membership to the Annual State Agricultural Convention.

ON the MOTION of Bob Blew, seconded by David DeFrango, the Board voted unanimously to accept the application for membership beginning with the 2027 State Agricultural Convention.

Approval – 2027 Outstanding Young Farmer

ON the MOTION of Bob Blew, seconded by Hillary Barile, the Board voted unanimously to approve the Outstanding Young Farmer as presented to the Board but did not disclose the name so that the selected applicant can be informed.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

MEETINGS

The next regular meeting of the State Board of Agriculture will be held on Wednesday, August 26, 2026 at 200 Riverview Plaza, Trenton, beginning at 1:00 pm.

ADJOURNMENT

ON the MOTION of Bob Blew, seconded by Dave DeFrango, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the regular meeting at 4:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Edward D. Wengryn