**RESOLUTION # 17**

**SOLAR AND AGRIVOLTAICS**

**WHEREAS**, especially in an age of increasing costs for fossil fuels, farmers continue to explore alternative/renewable energy sources as part of how they power equipment and source electricity for their operations; and

**WHEREAS**, the efforts of agricultural operators to both use and produce alternative, renewable energy are consistent with the goals of the Administration to “build a clean energy economy” in New Jersey, a plan that has 100 percent of the state’s energy coming from renewable sources by 2050; and

**WHEREAS**, under the state’s 2019 Energy Master Plan, 32,000 megawatts of installed photovoltaic electricity will be required to meet the 2050 goal, and successfully meeting that goal will need utilizing both developed and currently undeveloped land (including farmland) for photovoltaic infrastructure; and

**WHEREAS,** under recently passed legislation, farmers are encouraged to pursue “dual use” solar arrays, whereby they can install solar panels in fields to help in producing alternative energy while continuing to farm under or around those installations in order to maintain the overall agricultural character of their properties; and

**WHEREAS**, Rutgers University’s New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station (NJAES) has been examining all the ways in which “agricultural photovoltaics” can best be incorporated on farms in ways that increase the farmer’s ability to create, and derive a revenue stream from, solar energy and photovoltaics without reducing the farm’s agricultural output; and

**WHEREAS**, pending bills in the Legislature would provide more than $300 million through the Board of Public Utilities (NJBPU) to electric utilities in the state to expand their infrastructure in a way that enables them, among other things, to accept more voltage generated by solar arrays, including those on farms, into their grid, thus making a higher percentage of the electric generated coming from alternative, renewable sources instead of fossil fuel-fired electric generation stations; and

**WHEREAS**, the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture has expressed its support for purpose of and the funding included in this legislation, especially as relates to the dire need for the Atlantic City Electric (ACE) grid to be upgraded, as it has not had the capacity to accept net-metered voltage from on-farm solar installations into that grid.

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that we, the delegates to the 109th State Agricultural Convention, assembled in Atlantic City, New Jersey, on February 7-8, 2024, urge the Legislature to pass, and the Governor to sign, legislation that appropriates $300 million to the state’s electric utilities, through administration by the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (NJBPU), for upgrading the utilities’ grid capacity in order to help meet the alternative-energy goals in the State Energy Master Plan.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge language be added to this pending legislation to direct that these monies are to be spent on specific grid-enhancement projects that will, in part, enable more net-metered voltage created through on-farm solar installations and agriculture photovoltaics to be accepted into those grids.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we strongly urge those farmers pursuing “dual use” solar installations to be mindful that the farming aspects of those energy-producing projects are most important to maintaining the agricultural character of their operations, and we urge that preserved farms also be able to employ such “dual use” applications, including farms in the Highlands and Pinelands preservation areas.