



State of New Jersey

BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

MINUTES OF MEETING

November 19, 2025

(Wednesday)

Public meeting notice was certified by communication on November 13, 2025.

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 Trenton Times 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 DeFrane, 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; Assistant Secretary Joe Atchison; Dr. Amar Patil, Director, Division of Animal Health; Melissa Pajak, Assistant Director, Division of Food & Nutrition (TEAMS); Frank Minch, Director, Division of Agricultural & Natural Resources; Joe Zoltowski, Director, Division of Plant Industry; Nancy Wood, Division of Marketing & Development; Chuck Roohr, Executive Director, SADC; Tameko Webster, Chris LaRegina, Tim Idland, Robert Vivian, Jeff Beach, Kaitlynn Dixon, Alyssa Pitt, William Connors, Bella Walz, Office of the Secretary. Also in attendance were Ashley Kerr, (TEAMS), Al Murray, NJ Farm Bureau; Dr. Brian Schilling, Rutgers University; Bob Andrzejczak, State Executive Director, Farm Service Agency, Bruce Eklund, State Statistician, NASS; Julie Hawkins, State Conservationist, NRCS, Meredith Taylor, Organic & Regenerative Farming Board and Linda Walker, NJ Department of Agriculture.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

ON the MOTION of Joel Viereck, seconded by Rick Gardner, the Board voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the October 22, 2025, regular meeting.

REPORT OF RUTGERS UNIVERSITY

Dr. Brian Schilling represented the College and reported on the following topics:

- Congratulations to the Farm Bureau for putting together a great convention. It was an excellent opportunity for growers to talk about issues facing all of us. He congratulated Peter Furey on his

retirement and noted that he will certainly be missed but noted that he has great faith in Liz Thompson in her new position as Executive Director.

- He reported that Extension staff are currently starting to lead efforts in drone programming. Steve Komar and others have been doing some investigations at the Snyder Farm where they are doing a comparison between traditional cover cropping and aerial seeding with drones.
- Tim Waller, Cumberland County agent, has been working with many of the Christmas tree growers, he was recently in Quebec talking about some root disease issues and misidentification of certain pathogens. He has been invited to speak with a group that is forming, the North American Christmas tree pathology working group.
- The College will be holding an AG and AI Conference on February 20 in Cape May County. He noted that the Board would be invited.

REPORT OF FARM SERVICE AGENCY (FSA)

Bob Andrzejczak, reported on behalf of the Farm Service Agency:

- Just back from the government shutdown, Bob noted that at the Farm Bureau convention he was able to speak about a couple of programs that FSA has coming up. He noted that they are currently undergoing trainings on some of the new programs. He announced that due to the government shutdown, the county committee election time frames have been modified.
- **FSA County Committee Elections**
Farm Service Agency County Committees are a critical component of the day-to-day operations of FSA and allow grassroots input and location 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. At this time, ballots have begun to be mailed out to any eligible voters recognized in the LAA up for this year's election. December 2 is the final date for all ballots to be returned and/or postmarked to the County Office. Ballot counting will be completed prior to December 16 and those who were elected will start in the new year. Additional information regarding the LAAs up for election in each NJ FSA office can be found on the NJ FSA website: www.fsa.usda.gov/state-offices/New-Jersey/#Elections_2024.
- **Loss Adjusters**
New Jersey Farm Service Agency 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 Farm Program Disaster Specialist, Aly.Dyson@usda.gov, with any questions.
- **Food Safety Certification for Specialty Crops Program (FSCSC)**
FSCSC provides financial assistance for specialty crop operations that incur eligible on-farm food safety program expenses related to obtaining or renewing a food safety certification. This program helps offset costs to comply with regulatory requirements and market-driven food safety certification requirements. To be eligible for FSCSC, an applicant must:
 - Have obtained or renewed a: 2024 food safety certification that was issued between June 26, 2024, and December 31, 2024; or 2025 food safety certification issued during the 2025 calendar year, and
 - Have paid eligible expenses. Expenses that have been incurred by the applicant, but have not yet been paid, will not be eligible.

- Be a specialty crop operation; and meet the definition of a small business or a medium-sized business.
- A small business has an average annual monetary value of specialty crops the applicant sold during the three-year period preceding the program year of no more than \$500,000.
- A medium size business has an average annual monetary value of specialty crops the applicant sold during the three-year period preceding the program year of at least \$500,001 but no more than \$1,000,000.
- Be located in the 50 United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.
- **ELAP – H5N1**

FSA is now accepting applications through Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-raised Fish Program (ELAP) to provide financial assistance to eligible dairy producers who incur milk losses due to Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza, also known as H5N1 infection in their dairy herds. The program assists with a portion of financial losses resulting from reduced milk production when cattle are removed from commercial milking in dairy herds having a confirmed positive H5N1 test. Positive test results must be confirmed through the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL).

 - H5N1 infections have been detected in 14 states including California, Colorado, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas and Wyoming. Dairy producers in all states are reminded to stay vigilant and follow established APHIS biosecurity, detection and testing guidelines. In addition to testing, enhanced biosecurity is critical to containing this virus. USDA works closely with state animal health officials, producers, and industry organizations to provide guidance and resources for cleaning and disinfection not only on affected farms but for all livestock producers as a part of practicing good biosecurity.
 - Eligible adult dairy cattle must be:
 - Part of a herd that has a confirmed positive H5N1 test from NVSL;
 - Initially removed from commercial milk production at some point during the 14-day period before the sample collection date for the positive H5N1 test date through 120 days after the sample collection date for the positive H5N1 test;
 - Milk-producing, currently lactating; and
 - Maintained for commercial milk production, in which the producer has a financial risk, on the beginning date of the eligible loss condition.

REPORT OF NJ FARM BUREAU

Al Murray represented the Farm Bureau; members of the Board were sent a copy of the report from Farm Bureau report and Ashley Kerr was on Teams should they have any questions:

- They look forward to working with Governor Elect Sherrill and her transition team.
- Lame Duck has begun – S1576 which establishes farm pesticide, herbicide, and fertilizer collection and disposal program was second referenced in Senate Budget last Thursday and released. Hearing that Assembly ACE Committee will meet on 11/24.
- Still looking for industry/SBOA input on urban ag bill.
- Met with the Senate Majority Office (SMO) on the agritourism liability bill, recommended course of action is to amend the Pick Your Own (PYO) law to include agritourism events.

- RTF bill awarding reasonable costs and attorney fees to farmers (A4603) was signed into law last Thursday.
- Great news is that the Henry farm has been saved from eminent domain for affordable housing and that an offer has been made for farmland preservation.
- Thank you for including Farm Bureau at the Strategic Planning Summit, will a summary of the day's proceedings be shared?
- The federal government shutdown is over as of a week ago, hoping it went smoothly for federal employees getting back to work. Some optimism for soybean sales to China.
- It has come to our attention that the NJDOL is not authorizing the approval of any applications containing agricultural worker labor camp housing-related adjustments, which is inconsistent with the recent AEWR Interim Final Rule.
- Successful NJFB convention and great dinner honoring Pete Furey. Thank you to speakers Frank Minch and SADC next gen. Top priority policies remain ag viability and farmland assessment.

REPORT OF NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE (NASS)

The Board welcomed Bruce Eklund back following the government shutdown and he reported the following:

- As of November 1, New Jersey growers expect to harvest 44 bushels per acre of soybeans from 98,000 acres. He noted that things are still quiet, but they are trying to get things moving along.
- Census of Horticulture that had been scheduled has been delayed due to the shutdown.
- In addition, Bruce will be doing national survey preparations for the organic census that is coming up.
- Lost 40% of staff, but many are stepping to get things accomplished.

REPORT OF NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE (NRCS)

Julie Hawkins, State Conservationist, also back from the government shut down, reported the following:

- Conservation contract software came back up yesterday, so they can start issuing conservation payments or getting out as quickly as they can to certify practices that may have been installed while they were on furlough.
- Conservation stewardship program payments are due by the end of December, so they are moving as quickly as they can to make that happen.
- She asked if anyone has questions to please contact their local office. In addition, she reported that the Chief's office made a decision to push all application deadlines to January 15 for all of their financial assistance programs and easement programs. She reported that they have not gotten their final budget just yet on the amount of financial assistance that they will have this year, but she should have the information soon.

ORGANIC & REGENERATIVE FARMING BOARD

Meredith Taylor reported on behalf of the Organic & Regenerative Farming Board the following:

- Thanks to everyone that participated in their recent meeting this week during the Farm Bureau annual meeting. The purpose of that committee meeting was to identify clear and actionable steps that were related to the results from the Organic & Regenerative Farm Board survey. The group specifically focused on highest priority issues that were identified by organic regenerative

farm owners and those included land access and affordability, infrastructure and equipment funding and farm business and management training. There was a lot of robust discussion, and our Organic & Regenerative Farm Board looks forward to being able to continue to collaborate with members of SADCs Next Generation and also Rutgers Cooperative Extension that had representatives at that meeting. The next meeting is Tuesday, December 2 from 4:00 to 6:00 pm at the Food Innovation Center in Bridgeton. The meeting is also available via Teams, if you can't make it trip down to Bridgeton, you're welcome to join online.

- The first winter meeting in 2026 will be at the NOFA Winter Conference on Saturday, January 31 from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Secretary Wengryn reported that the Department of Labor sent out a recall message about the message they sent about not using the Wage Adjustment hours, part of the reason was with the government shutdown, they were not getting clear answers out of US Department of Labor and they finally got some clarification and they will be getting out further information to all. He reported that there was a big food emergency in New Jersey with the government shutdown, SNAP benefits were put on hold, for most SNAP families that have children, you can cover the SNAP gap with school meals, unfortunately, for New Jersey, the first week in November is Election day and Teachers Convention so many of the schools were closed so there was quite a gap to fill. We were able to get the monies from the nutrition grant programs distributed to the food banks and then an additional \$4million went out to them for local purchase to fill their holiday gap. He reported that we have been working with the Governor's Office on replacing the money we put into the emergency feeding programs. In addition, he reported that the Farm Bureau had done a great job with their Convention and the dinner honoring Peter Furey was a great event. He noted that the resolutions that were discussed will help to shape our convention in January.

Frank Minch, Director, Division of Agricultural & Natural Resources, reported to the Board that he spoke at the Farm Bureau Convention earlier in the week about PFAS, right now, we are waiting for the second phase of crop testing to be processed. He explained to the Board that we are working with the FDA and the EPA very closely. We have the initial results from the early testing as well as blood serum results from the livestock testing which is with staff to analyze. We are looking at the results and what they mean for you. Once the second round gets underway, we will be working with EPA and DEP to get the risk assessment. He reported that the report is 160-page analysis of 24 different types of chemicals.

Assistant Secretary Joe Atchison reported that the consumer awareness study that we do through a third-party research agency is almost complete and we should be getting those results in the next week or so and we will share the results with the Board once we have them. Coming up on December 2-4, is the New York Produce Show. On December 4, he along with some Division staff will be attending the US Foods Conference that the Division of Food & Nutrition is hosting. This event is well attended and features a morning session and then they have students come in to help evaluate the vendors and exhibitors sample products for the food service professionals.

Dr. Amar Patil, Director, Division of Animal Health, reported that he had attended the United States Animal Health Association meeting where all the partners in animal health come together to discuss the current and emerging issues in animal health. Unfortunately, because of the government shutdown, there were only a few staff from USDA in attendance which was very inadequate because the meeting

runs parallel sessions and there were a lot of other meetings going on simultaneously and we really needed USDA staff there. He noted that there has been discussion about a vaccine for HPAI and they are not sure if they will consider having one. There was a brief discussion about the rabies situation in South Jersey and there was a question on why it took so long to have the animal euthanized. Dr. Patil explained that they should have used the Department laboratory as it would have taken much less time than sending it to New Bolton Center in PA.

Joe Zoltowski, Director, Division of Plant Industry, reported that all LDD municipal egg mass surveys have been completed in Atlantic, Cumberland, Bergen, Hunterdon, Mercer, Monmouth, Morris, Passaic, Somerset, Sussex and Warren counties. To date, two municipalities in Sussex County had six areas totaling 586 acres that qualify for treatment for the Spring of 2026. The New Jersey Forest Service had also completed their surveys for the season and identified seven areas of infestation in three state parks totaling 358 acres. In addition, staff completed a survey for the non-native Rice Grasshopper; *Oxya chinensis* at several locations in Burlington County. They also visited locations in Monmouth and Burlington counties that reported large grasshopper populations to the county ag agents. NJDA staff confirmed that they were active but noted the size of these grasshoppers were significantly smaller than *O. chinensis*. Staff entomologists determined the specimens from both locations to be the red-legged grasshopper; *Melanoplus femur-rubrum*. This is a common (native) grasshopper, known to be an occasional pest of certain field crops including Sudan grass.

Melissa Pajak, Assistant Director, Division of Food & Nutrition, also reported about the USDA Food Show that the Division will be hosting on December 4 at the Expo Center in Edison. She stated that they are expecting a huge turnout with more than 600 attendees already registered and 83 students who will be sampling the vendor foods and providing feedback. She noted that this will be their biggest food show so far and Division staff are very excited about it.

Chuck Roohr, Executive Director, SADC, reported that the SADC is sponsoring two workshops to discuss landowner financial benefits of preservation, payment tax implications, integrating preservation into estate and succession planning. He noted that the first one was earlier this week in Princeton and it was a full house, he noted that they did not know what the turnout would be, but it turns out the folks are very interested in this topic. He reported that the second one would be held on December 17 at the Salem County Ag Building beginning at 6:30 pm. In addition, he reported that the proposed recommendations for amending the Soil & Water Cost Share program, they learned would be printed in the December 1 NJ Register, so the amendments will be effective on December 1. He noted that the maximum eligibility was raised from \$75,000 to \$100,000. Previously, in order to max out would have needed 450 acres, under the new scenario to max out is 200 acres. The old scenario had payment rates at \$600.00 per acre, so if I was a 25-acre farm I would get \$15,000 to pay my max and if the SADC was willing to kick in \$15,000 to a project, I had to do anyway, that's great. No one's going to look to give the horse in mouth, but we've realized that \$15,000 is not really enough money to do a major project. The SADC would like the folks who have made that commitment to go into farmland preservation to be able to do major projects. So, the way the new funding works is even the smallest farms. Their base number will be \$50,000 and then it'll be \$500.00 an acre after that. So those three big changes in dollar amounts and then last is we also have put some money aside for farmers to be able to hire their own professionals to help write the conservation plans. Now it is their hope that it will not only expedite

things, but it'll help fill the gap with NRCS not being able to help with the planning process that they used to be.

Board member Joel Viereck asked about the status of the Woolwich Township situation, Mr. Roohr noted that the Bank Board met and made their decision which was relayed to the Township, and they indicated that they would be getting back to them with their response. He noted that there was a long, comprehensive meeting about violations and what needed to be done but that it looks like this situation can be resolved.

Vice President Stephen Lee asked when the SADC would be issuing their 2025 annual report, as he thinks it would be really good to demonstrate to the public the amount of work that went into the formula showing the growth of the program and most importantly the commitment of the dollar amount commitment between one year no program and now with the formula to where we are now, he thinks the formula is a great thing to happen, but he thinks it's going to be really good to be able to demonstrate to the public how this has been beneficial to agriculture.

Tameko Webster reported that the Department had submitted our gubernatorial transition document, which was a great opportunity for us to show what makes our Department great. She noted that this is also budget planning time and this Friday we will be meeting to discuss the Capital Budget, and we will be asking for money for a tissue digester, some lab expansion and the combustion analyzer. She reported that the Department hosted a Strategic Planning Summit on October 27 at the EcoComplex that was well attended and the information from the breakout groups has been provided to the Board and a summary for their review and next step planning. We are partnering for the 2026 State Agricultural Convention with the leadership of the Vegetable Growers Association and we are looking forward to that. She introduced Bella Walz as the new Principal Public Information Assistant for the Department; she comes to us from the Division of Marketing and Development and is excited to take on this new role. She announced that the Department's website has been recently updated and now we are training staff to go back and clean up the updated site as we migrate to a newer version.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Hillary Barile reported that the Salem County meeting was on Monday and it was mostly focused on recruitment for new members and some bylaw reviews. She noted that Atlantic County had some inquiries about the Department of Labor communication and asked that they get a copy to share.

Rick Gardner reported that he thinks that there is more interest now in the Farmland Preservation Program due to the new funding formula and he is happy to see that. He noted that on the crop front, the guys in his area that got their crops in early are doing well in terms of corn and soybeans. He noted that some areas are not as great, but overall it's not a bad harvest.

Holly Sytsema announced that Sussex County would be moving forward on an ag promotion campaign, trying to capitalize on the 519 sector, looking at different farms along there, they wanted to showcase with Hunterdon and Warren but they were not able to make that happen at the time, so they will be moving ahead but if either county wants to join at a later date they would welcome that. She noted that a beef forum was held, Frank Minch of the Department was there, and they are looking to resurrect the beef industry in New Jersey in the Spring. This would include panelists looking at expanding markets,

supply chains, and incentivizing retail outlets. She noted that Warren and Sussex County Community College will be involved. She noted that there was a lot of positive feedback from people that attended the Strategic Planning Summitt and hopes that it will continue to open communication with the Department. She noted that a concern was raised about allowing deer and bear depredation permits on DEP leased land, this has come up before, people are upset, they are paying all this money for leases and they can't take care of the lands. Is there anything that the Department can do to help out with that? I'm assuming that because it is public lands, but when you are paying that kind of money for that rent and then to have all that damage, it's very discouraging. Finally, she reported that crops in Sussex are ok, they were relatively dry, so yields have been down.

John Hart reported that he had attended the Monmouth County Board of Ag the previous evening and there were questions regarding the proposed farmland assessment legislation and whether it had been introduced, it will die. He noted that they have a lot of farmland open space in Monmouth County and farmers that farm next to it are worried about the invasive species bill. He reported that Mercer County Board of Ag met recently with the Hunterdon County Board of Ag and it was a good opportunity to talk about some of the same issues that are going on in both counties. He noted that there were questions about the Urban Ag legislation and what would be happening going forward.

Joel Viereck congratulated Bella on her new position. He reported that Gloucester County had their annual dinner where they presented awards to Plant Food Company and the Gaventa's for their winery. He noted that their President, James Rambo, made comments about the depressed prices this year and the markets and all of the food that gets plowed under because of the depressed markets. He congratulated the awardees of the Farm Bureau, Peter Fuey and Dr. Ernie Beier. Finally, he reported that it was good to hear that the H2A issue seems to have been handled. He attended the producer forum for Farm Credit East and just to know that some of the struggles that we are seeing in New Jersey are regional. He noted that he would like to see some additional information in the weekly report as to what is coming up on the agenda for the week ahead. It was noted that there was discussion during the interview with Bella about some of the changes that they would like to see in future reports.

Dave DeFrane reported that the joint Hunterdon and Mercer County Board meeting was very beneficial and it was discussed that they meet jointly with some other county boards, it gives each Board the opportunity to see what is going on in everybody else's county and see the struggles that they are having. It was noted that it is nice when there is a hybrid option, it gives even more people the opportunity to attend. He noted that the Farm Bureau Convention was really good. He noted that the dryness during the harvest season was challenging but with things a little later, they have still been pushing product, which is very good for them at this time of year. In addition, he reported that the Legislative Committee has met and they have been reviewing legislation that could move during the lame duck session. He noted that Ashey Kerr was part of the Committee call to review with them the legislation that Farm Bureau is following during this time as well. Finally, he reported that the Urban Ag Committee was newly formed and they are trying to digest what urban agriculture is, what it means and where it is going. He noted that Senate Bill 4350 is the one bill that is proposed, understands that there may be some additional language that might be added. Until something else is introduced, S 4350 is the only one we are referring to at this time.

Vice President Lee commented that he and Board member Joel Viereck recently had an opportunity to sit down at a round table discussion with Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin and there were a lot of folks that are from the urban ag component and they talked about the production side and Joel was telling stories about how he wasn't able to sell product and the reactions from some of the folks at the table was a big shock.

Joel Viereck commented that Speaker Coughlin was stunned to hear what they were telling him that day about the amount of food that goes wasted in the state. The Speaker did not realize that was something that was happening in the state.

Vice President Lee commented that this week in Atlantic City is the annual League of Municipalities Conference and every elected official in New Jersey has the opportunity to be there. He noted that it would be a great opportunity for the Department to have a booth there as well as Farm Bureau. Secretary Wengryn noted that he had participated when he was a staff member at Farm Bureau. In addition, Vice President Lee thanked the Department staff for putting together the Legislator's Tour that was held at the Pine Island Cranberry Bog back in October, it was very well received. He was unable to be there for too long as they were doing a video shoot for a chef in New York. He noted that they finished their cranberry harvest about a week ago. He noted that their harvest was down considerably from what they had anticipated due to the drought-like conditions. He reported that he attended the Burlington County Board of Agriculture dinner on November 1, where former Board Vice President Lisa Specca was honored. In addition, he attended the Camden County Board of Agriculture with Al Murray. He noted that they have been moving around the county and there is a good group of people that has really worked hard to get this County involved again and it has been really great to witness. He noted that they are looking to have a Legislator's Tour sometime in the Spring and he has been asked to help with the planning. He attended the Farm Bureau Convention on Monday afternoon. He congratulated Governor-elect Sherrill on her recent victory and looks forward to working with the new Administration going forward. He noted that the Caucus meetings are being held tomorrow evening and noted that anyone interested in being on the State Board, that is the place to be.

President Blew stated that Board members received a draft letter today to send to the Sherrill Administration, the draft prepared by staff with some amendments by Vice President Lee and himself that congratulates her while letting her know the statute that says who we are and that we select the Secretary of Agriculture and reaching out to them to offer any assistance and our contact information.

ON the MOTION of Rick Gardner, seconded by Joel Viereck, there was a roll call vote which was unanimous, to send the letter as presented.

NEW BUSINESS

New Jersey Agritourism Grant Program

Vice President Lee reported that this is the program that Assistant Secretary Atchison has been talking about that is a partnership between the Department and the Division of Travel & Tourism that offers \$5,000,000 for agritourism proposals. He noted that Billy Connors of the Grants Team has gone through the process of putting together the grant language and the RFP that was done in partnership with Travel & Tourism and is asking for the Board's approval so that the grant can be announced. This is an opportunity for any agricultural operations involved in agritourism to apply for the grant. He noted

that this is a tremendous opportunity to be able to take state dollars through Travel & Tourism and promote an operation that has been certainly working to promote agriculture. He stated that this is a great award and he is hopeful that we will see more opportunities like this for the industry.

President Blew also commented that if we can spend this money down, which I'm sure our Grants Team can do, that is when we can actually make the argument to say, "look what we did with this money and look at the good it can do for both the New Jersey community at large and the agricultural community". So, by getting this money out there efficiently and being put to good use gives us a leg to stand on to ask Travel and Tourism to stand up and say this needs to be a budget item every year.

ON the MOTION of Joel Viereck, seconded by Holly Sytsema, the Board voted unanimously to approve the Local Food Security Program (NJFSP) as presented.

New Jersey Local Food Security Program

Vice President Lee continued that this used to be known as the LFPA which was run through the USDA as an appropriation that came from the federal government and would filter down through the Department of Agriculture. There was a \$9,000,000 commitment last spring and we had a commitment from the federal government to administer the grant, and we wrote an RFP for specifically for the administration of the grant. Unfortunately, the federal government said they were not going to fund that which was unfortunate. Luckily, Assembly Speaker Coughlin had appropriated \$6.818 million dollars back into our budget for feeding people and there was money appropriated for the Gleaning Grant which was \$600,000 and we had \$2 million that was earmarked for local Farm to School and there was \$4 million that was appropriated to this particular program but with the challenges from the closing of the government, the state began to figure out what do we need to do to feed folks right now? The Department was asked to help and so the Department sent \$4 million dollars to the big six food banks which leaves \$2 million left of the \$6.818. He was encouraged that there will be an opportunity to be able to get more appropriation between now and the end of the year or beginning of next. He stated that we should publish the NJRFP and hope that we will get applications and be ready to go and we should have a better idea within the next few weeks, how much we will actually have to work with.

Board member Hillary Barile of the Grants Committee stated that she wanted to clarify to everybody that this RFP would make this money eligible to food banks that are not the emergency feeding operations. So far, a lot of the money has been going to the big six or seven food banks around the state that do. This program would be going out to the much smaller food banks and food banks that are historically underfunded that do not get as much state funding. It would also include soup kitchens and other feeding entities that have not been on those same food streams.

Vice President Lee stated that it is a great opportunity for us to be able to help the smaller organizations, that do really good work. We were able to provide a substantial amount of money to the big EFO's, and this is a chance for us to be able to connect the dots between farmers and the organizations that do a lot of work in the community.

ON the MOTION of Rick Gardner, seconded by Joel Viereck, the Board voted unanimously to approve the New Jersey Local Food Security Program (NJFSP) – Request for Applications (RFA) as presented.

President Blew reported that he had missed the Cape May County Board of Ag this month because it was the same night as the Farm Bureau dinner but heard that it had been a short meeting. In addition, he reported that Cumberland County had to change their next meeting to December 4 because of many calendar conflicts. He reported that the nursery industry had a strong Fall aided by the recent nice weather, but it has been a pretty good year for Cumberland County producers because of the extended season. Finally, he noted that with Thanksgiving next week, he gives thanks to the Secretary and members of the Board and Department staff, we work with an amazing group of individuals that work really hard to make us look really good, so I'm thankful for all of you and please safely enjoy the holiday weekend.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

MEETINGS

The next regular meeting of the State Board of Agriculture will be held on Wednesday, December 17 at 200 Riverview Plaza beginning at 1:00 pm.

RESOLUTION FOR EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Board adopts a resolution to enter into executive session pursuant to N.J.S.A. 10:4-12(b)(8), to evaluate the performance of an employee. The Board will evaluate the employees' performance in implementing strategic outreach to stakeholders and in reviewing and implementing hiring practices in the Department.

The Board will disclose the contents of the closed session as soon as we are able to do so. Minutes will be approved at a future Board meeting.

ON the MOTION of Holly Sytsema, seconded by Rick Gardner, the Board voted unanimously to enter into executive session.

ON the MOTION of Stephen Lee, seconded by Rick Gardner, the Board voted unanimously to go back into the public session of the meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

ON the MOTION of Stephen Lee, seconded by Rick Gardner, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the regular meeting at 3:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Edward D. Wengry