



State of New Jersey

BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

MINUTES OF MEETING

April 24, 2024

(Wednesday)

Public meeting notice was certified by communication on April 18, 2023.

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 Holly Sytsema called the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture to order at 1:05 pm. Board members in attendance included President Holly Sytsema; Vice President Barney Hollinger (via TEAMS), Kurt Alstede, Lisa Specca, Bob Blew, David DeFrange, John Hart and Stephen V. Lee, IV. 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; Frank Minch, Director, Division of Agricultural & Natural Resources; Nancy Wood, Division of Marketing & Development; Brian Smith, SADC; Joe Zoltowski, Director, Division of Plant Industry; Chris LaRegina, Nathan Schatz, Robert Vivian, Jeff Wolfe and Jeff Beach, Office of the Secretary. Also in attendance were Peter Furey, Ashley Kerr, Al Murray, NJ Farm Bureau; Dr. Brian Schilling, Rutgers University; State Executive Director Bob Andrzejczak, Sarah Lally, Farm Service Agency; Erika Boyd (via TEAMS), NRCS; Bruce Eklund, NASS; Kendrya Close; Jeanine Cava; Lori Jennsen and Linda Walker, NJ Department of Agriculture.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

ON the MOTION of Bob Blew, seconded by Lisa Specca, the Board voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the March 22, 2024, special meeting.

ON the MOTION of John Hart, seconded by Stephen Lee, the Board voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the March 27, 2024, regular meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

President Sytsema asked that Kendrya Close, Executive Director, Foodshed Alliance, a nonprofit corporation, to speak to the organization's recent application for Organizational Membership to the Annual State Agricultural Convention. She reported to the Board that the purpose of the organization is to promote a robust farm economy in northwest New Jersey through local efforts and regional collaborations; develop programs that contribute to the profitability and sustainability of local farms; raise people's awareness about the value of locally grown food and farming; demonstrate how farming and food is an integral part of our health, our economy, our communities, and the environment; encourage and support farming practices that respect and replenish the land and its natural ecosystems while producing healthy food; contribute to the development of a regional network of farmers, consumers, and agricultural professionals devoted to building a local food system; serve as a clearinghouse for the information, resources and services provided by this community; advance agriculture as a way of preserving our rural landscapes and hindering their destruction by the spread of sprawl. The Foodshed Alliance works to strengthen sustainable farming, increase access to local, healthy food, and protect the environment for all members of our communities.

Board members asked that the Board be provided with the information from the statute that details what constitutes the designation of additional organizations to the annual State Agricultural Convention.

Board member Stephen Lee thanked Ms. Close for the information that she had provided to the Board, he asked if any Board members had any questions for Ms. Close. He stated that the Board would revisit this at their May meeting.

REPORT OF RUTGERS UNIVERSITY

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

- Rutgers tests vertical racking system for Agrivoltaics project on Cook Campus farm as well as at the Snyder Farm and RAREC.
- He noted that County Agents have been receiving a high number of calls due to the crazy weather issues that have made the beginning of the season challenging.
- Local Monmouth County farmers approached staff at the Cream Ridge Station expressing concern about protein levels in soybeans that are going to bigger markets which prompted the College to actually initiate some trials this season, in addition to hemp work that is also being done at Cream Ridge. He reported that they will be looking at some of the factors affecting the protein levels in soybeans.
- Tim Waller, an exceptional young pre-tenure agent in Cumberland County has been reappointed. This means that he went through the first level of review and now he's in the homestretch before we get to his review for tenure in three years.
- Chris Zellers, FCHS educator in Cape May County has also been reappointed; Janine Speis has hit the ground running as the new fruit IPM agent. He noted that there are still a few searches underway and noted that they will be interviewing soon for a natural resource agent in Warren County. The Salem County position will be a tough one to fill as they are looking for specialists in agronomy and there is a very tight market for those positions right now.

- JBOC is a Joint budget oversight committee that charged the Experiment Station with doing an assessment of the Special Occasion Events (SOE) program. With about a year into the program enrollments are going slowly. They will be evaluating the implementation of the program which will have a three-year assessment.
- Our weed specialist in South Jersey sent him a video of the new autonomous laser weeder and now we are evaluating how this helps in terms of chemical application reduction, economic efficiencies and labor savings.

Board member Bob Blew commented that he had attended the demonstration that they had and noted that it was very interesting. He noted that the costs involved for the equipment alone were \$1.5 million and that did not include the other major pieces of equipment needed to run the machine. It was very cool but there are not many farms in New Jersey that need something of that capability.

REPORT OF FARM SERVICE AGENCY (FSA)

Sarah Lally, Agriculture Program Specialist, reported on the following:

Emergency Relief Program 2022 (ERP 2022) Track 1 and Track 2

On December 29, 2022, President Biden signed into law the Disaster Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2023 (P.L. 117-328) that provides about \$3.7 billion in financial assistance for agricultural producers impacted by wildfires, droughts, hurricanes, winter storms and other eligible disasters occurring in calendar year 2022. The NOFA is available at: <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2023-10-31/pdf/2023-24009.pdf>

ERP 2022 Track 1 will provide assistance to producers who were impacted by wildfires, droughts, hurricanes, winter storms, and other eligible disasters experienced during calendar year 2022 using existing Federal Crop Insurance or Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) data already submitted to FSA. Producers will be receiving letters and FSA-523 applications if they received a 2022 Crop Insurance Indemnity or 2022 NAP Payment.

ERP 2022 Track 2 is a revenue-based certification program designed to assist producers who suffered a loss in revenue resulting from 2022 calendar year disaster events when compared with revenue in a benchmark year. The revenue-based track provides an alternative method to establish revenue in cases where there has been a change to operation capacity, circumstances where revenue does not reasonably reflect a normal year's revenue, or for crops that are used within the operation and do not generate revenue from the sale of the crop.

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.

Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC)

Enrollment for 2024 DMC is open and ends April 29, 2024. For those who sign up for 2024 DMC coverage, payments may be made immediately for any payment triggered in January 2024.

DMC continues to offer protection to dairy producers when the difference between the all-milk price and the average feed price (the margin) falls below a certain dollar amount selected by the producer.

FSA has revised the regulations for DMC to allow eligible dairy operations to make a one-time adjustment to established production history. This adjustment will be accomplished by combining previously established supplemental production history with DMC production history for those dairy operations that participated in Supplemental Dairy Margin Coverage during a prior coverage year. DMC has also been authorized through calendar year 2024. Congress passed a 2018 Farm Bill extension requiring these regulatory changes to the program.

The DMC decision tool has been enhanced and was developed in partnership with representatives from the University of Minnesota and University of Wisconsin to help producers determine the level of coverage under a variety of conditions that will provide them with the strongest financial safety net. The decision tool can be found at: <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/dairy-margin-coverage-program/index>

Continuous CRP

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will begin accepting applications for the Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (Continuous CRP) signup on January 12, 2024. USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) encourages agricultural producers and landowners interested in conservation opportunities for their land in exchange for yearly rental payments to consider the enrollment options available through Continuous CRP, which also includes the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) offered by FSA partners. Additionally, producers participating in CRP can apply to re-enroll beginning January 12, 2024, if their contracts will expire this year.

To submit an offer, producers should contact the FSA at their local USDA Service Center by July 31, 2024, in order to have an offer effective by October 1, 2024. To ensure enrollment acreages do not exceed the statutory cap, FSA will accept offers from producers on a first-come, first-served basis and will return offers for approval in batches throughout the year.

Additionally, producers with acres enrolled in Continuous CRP set to expire September 30, 2024, can offer acres for re-enrollment beginning January 12, 2024. A producer can both enroll new acres into Continuous CRP and re-enroll any acres expiring September 30, 2024.

Important Dates:

April 29: DMC enrollment deadline

May 1: NAP coverage deadline for Nursery (2025 crop year)

May 31: Acreage Reporting deadline for Nursery (2025 crop year)

July 31: Deadline to submit a Continuous CRP Offer

Board member Kurt Alstede commented that he had heard from producers regarding the cold weather that's being experienced regarding notice of loss requirements for tree fruit covered under NAP. He was told that there is a new requirement that the growers need to disclose what type of protective tools and practices they are utilizing to help protect the crop. There was concern about this additional information being collected and what it would be used for.

State FSA Director Bob Andrzejczak commented that currently there is a national NAP Taskforce, and they are currently trying to make it more manageable and better for all states, not just the larger ones.

Board member Kurt Alstede asked if a letter from the State Board would be helpful. Director Andrzejczak commented that he would provide some information in order to prepare a letter. In addition, Director Andrzejczak asked that Board members encourage all producers to highlight the importance of acreage reporting not benefits the people reporting but also benefits the farmers throughout the entire State.

REPORT OF NJ FARM BUREAU

Peter Furey represented the Farm Bureau and reported on the following topics:

- Pesticide container disposal has been discussed at several county board meetings, including Mercer and Sussex. It was also discussed at the Directors meeting and noted that perhaps the NJDA approach DEP about renewing the pesticide container disposal program and a selection of county solid waste facilities and suggest a regional disposal site.
- They recently sent a letter requesting an extension regarding the tree removal issues and they are working with a staff person from DEP that will work with those in the specific towns that need assistance.
- Members of Farm Bureau staff participated in a meeting with the Board's Legislative Committee, they keep a watch list of priority legislation and shared it with the State Board's committee. The heat stress and invasives species; tax credit for food donation and agritourism limited liability immunity.
- Congratulations to Monmouth County on the excellent legislative tour that they started with breakfast, on a weekday at an innovative farm and they had an excellent turnout. In addition, he noted that Camden County held a meeting, and they were lucky enough to have the Assemblyman Spearman in attendance and they talked about the well / septic issue / labor housing, etc. He was very well received and took in a lot of information.
- The climate conference at Duke Farm on April 10 had a good turnout and thought that there was some good conversation.
- SADC to meet on SPS tomorrow - the Farm Bureau sent a statement to the SADC ahead of their meeting noting that the Farm Bureau remains opposed to the use of regulations rather than guidance regarding the Deed of Easement; Farm Bureau applauds having all DOE landowners start at zero level of "prior disturbance"; Farm Bureau agrees with dropping the waiver requirement for "innovation" and calls for the SADC to create a taskforce of farmers/industry leaders to determine what constitutes "innovation"; Farm Bureau insists that the State Board of Agriculture maintain its preeminent position in setting major farm policy in the State, leaving the SADC to its prime responsibilities of farmland preservation.

- The state Department of Health this week issued a two–page digest of recommended practices to protect field workers in agriculture during periods of high heat weather conditions.

REPORT OF NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE (NASS)

Bruce Eklund reported that the following:

- March intentions included 110,000 acres for soybeans; 72,000 acres for corn and 105,000 acres for hay.
- In addition, they did a second survey for hemp and noted that 110 acres had been planted and they hope to harvest 90 acres.

REPORT OF NATIONAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE (NRCS)

Erika Boyland, Acting State Conservationist, (via TEAMS) reported the following:

- April 10–11 was honored to host Chief Terry Cosby, the Northeast Regional Conservationist, who visited the Garden State. While here, there was a roundtable with staff and a roundtable for their partners. She noted that some of the takeaways that the Chief had discussed during his visit focused on capacity building and leveraging opportunities to train jointly with partners.
- Currently seeking opportunities to develop some cooperative agreements with some new partners and we are always willing to engage in dialogue along the way with other partners so that the missions can align, and we can continue to leverage those opportunities.
- Expanding their forestry programs with the focus on the southern part of the state. In addition, they are partnering to get support so that permits for stream restoration projects, with that they will be getting close to being fully staffed.
- However, with the Inflation Reduction Act there have been workload challenges as they have received an unprecedented amount of funding this fiscal year and it's going to increase over the next two years.
- Chief Cosby had mentioned that he has the focus on making sure that we are streamlining some of our processes more specially with the RCPP program, trying to make it as less complicated as possible and with our easement program.

Board member Kurt Alstede commented that he had received many phone calls from producers that were very frustrated with the lack of funding for the ash tree removal and the system that determines eligibility and ranking. He commented that some producers feel that full time farmers were left out even though they are trying to invest in meaningful soil and water conservation methods they are left with having to divert funds to deal with the ash trees. He noted that there have been numerous problems with power outages, downed fences, etc., because of downed trees and he explained that producers thought that there would be additional funding, but we now understand that is not the case. This is a serious situation impacting producers in the northern part of the state to the tune of thousands of dollars. He continued, with a record number of applicants, is there absolutely no additional funding that could be made available to producers?

Ms. Boyland thanked Kurt for the question and the calls to their offices. The best thing that people can do right now is make sure there is active communication happening at the local working group. That is

where they are having discussions on setting the priorities for their local area. She reported that of the 110 applications they received, they were able to fund 74.

Board member John Hart commented that Chief Cosby had visited his farm as part of the tour and saw firsthand the problem with livestock and the dead ash trees. He said that he wants to be able to get more funding for this project.

After continued discussions regarding the ash tree issue, board member Kurt Alstede commented that for producers in the northern part of the state, there is nothing more important to this year's bottom line than helping to secure additional funding for the ash tree situation.

FSA Director Bob Andrzejczak commented that he was going to try to get a meeting as soon as possible with the Secretary.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Secretary Wengryn made the following comments:

He was happy to report that he had an interesting first month, and that as he was leaving Hunterdon County recently, he encountered two fallen ash trees on his way home. He reported that he has been getting out to the county board meetings and that it has been interesting to hear what the issues are and areas that we can work together on as an industry to improve the industry, so he has received a lot of good comments and feedback. He noted that along with the ash tree issue, ways we can better communicate with each other about programs, and the heat stress. He noted that the Department continues to work with Rutgers and the Farm Bureau on updating fact sheets concerning heat stress and agriculture. The CDC has a new heat stress tool where you can enter your zip code to find heat stress risk at your location. He is committed to making sure that we are communicating this information to producers so that they can make smart decisions about their workers' health safety. He reported that we will be working with county boards about changing the model for legislative outreach. In addition, he reported that the Board's Legislative Committee will also be scheduling some legislative tours. He reported that as a result of the public comments received the SADC is making important changes to the draft rule. He noted that they would be proposing the regs for readoption at the SADC meeting the following day. In addition, he noted that the wildlife fencing program and maybe we need to promote this to a broader range of commodity producers.

Board member Kurt Alstede asked if there were any stewardship monies that could be used for the ash tree remediation.

Dr. Amar Patil, Director, Division of Animal Health, reported that the HPAI that was circulating in poultry has now been detected in cattle, specifically lactating dairy cattle. He reported that just a short time before this meeting started today, the USDA has issued a federal order that interstate movement of cattle must that is happening throughout the United States will require testing. He noted that the Department will be sending out information to all dairy producers in the state. He noted that USDA will also be issuing some additional guidance later today or tomorrow to support the federal order. The concern about the milk supply was discussed and Dr. Brian Schilling offered to share any information that the Department deemed appropriate on their website.

Frank Minch, Director, Division of Agricultural & Natural Resources, reported that there an issue that some producers got from Board of Public Utilities (BPU) regarding energy benchmark testing, but it was mistakenly issued due to the way things are coded in the database and they are working to fix the problem. Staff from several divisions have been working to get a better idea of what PFAS issues could arise within the state.

Joe Atchison, Assistant Secretary, reported he travelled with Dan Wunderlich to attend the Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center (DBIC) Summit in Albany, NY which included planning for the next 10 years in dairy and looking at the projections of where the dairy industry in the Northeast might be and what states can do to expand and sustain the industry at all levels. He noted that eight of the 11 states from the Program were in attendance. Also attended the Food Export Conference in Virginia to make sure that we continue to receive export dollars, the majority of that funding is just processed products from New Jersey, not necessarily agricultural products. He reported that the 40th annual campaign is up and running, the Freshest for 40 Years! He noted that billboards are up, our asparagus commercial is currently running as well as radio and print and some cable tv. He invited the members of the Board to the annual Eastern Produce Dinner at Demarest Farms in Bergen County which will be held on May 21. In addition, he reported that the annual giveaway days this season would be July 8 for National Blueberry Day; mid-July for grape tomatoes and August 22 for National Eat A Peach Day. Mini grants for socially disadvantaged new and military veteran farmers will be available soon.

Joe Zoltowski, Director, Division of Plant Industry, reported that staff has been working with the USDA APHIS-PPQ to trace shipments of rhododendron and other known hostplants that may be carrying Phytophthora ramorum. He reported that the plants originated from a California nursery that has since tested positive for the destructive disease. More than 50 plants were sold online to eight separate locations in New Jersey. Inspectors visited the residences that received these plants, collected samples and submitted them to the approved diagnostic laboratory for testing. They are still awaiting their determination. He reported that SLF crews scraped 8,620 egg masses at 23 properties in March. During the month, 1,656 egg masses were collected and delivered to the Bug Lab where emerging nymphs are placed on Ailanthus altissima until the nymphs reach second instar. This month 93 second instar nymphs were shipped to the USDA APHIS lab in Buzzards Bay, MA.

Secretary Wengryn reported that Rose Chamberlain was attending a conference with her team but noted that Division of Food & Nutrition staff continue to collaborate with other departments and stakeholders on the launch of Summer EBT. The Division of Food & Nutrition's summer EBT webinar was conducted on April 17. In addition to providing live training for School Food Authorities, staff were also available to answer questions about the program.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

John Hart reported that the NRCS Director Cosby visited his farm with a group of people from the Freehold office to see firsthand the ash tree situation with dead trees and branches all over the place. He noted that more money is needed for tree removal. We need to help preserve the farmer trying to preserve farmland. He really felt that Chief Cosby understood their concerns. In addition, he reported that there are some issues with open space lands in Mercer County and the lack of care that is given. He

reported that work continues on their on-farm brewery with everything that is grown on the farm. They are looking to have some agritourism events, hoping to open mid-summer.

Stephen Lee stated that has been great to attend County Board meetings with the new Secretary of Agriculture. He noted that at the recent Atlantic County Board of Agriculture meeting, they got to hear the Pinelands Commission’s Executive Director and the Stewardship Director. It gave the Secretary and himself a clearer understanding of how much of a challenge the farmers in Atlantic County are having specifically in regard to labor/labor housing. He stated the importance of the discussions at the County Board level and whenever we can have a legislator in attendance is a win. We have had some ideas about tours and the importance of getting the information as soon as possible. He also noted that with the cold weather situations, we need to streamline the process for farmers to be able to utilize any resource necessary to protect from frost. It’s a very serious issue and we need to do anything we can as a Department to ensure that the streamlined process to be able to get producers what they need.

Grants Committee

Chairman Stephen Lee reported that the Grants Committee had met recently to review the applications for the Specialty Crop Block Grant applications that had been received. He thanked Board members Bob Blew, David DeFrance and Vice President Barney Hollinger as well as Markets staff Deelip Mhaske and William Connors. He reported that the Committee reviewed all the applications and applied the grading system that was used to rank them and the applicants with the highest scores were the ones who received the funding. He reported that the ones that were selected touch on a lot of different components of our industry. He noted that there are a lot of regulations and requirements that must be adhered to by the USDA. Those obligations must be met.

Applicant	Grant Request	Suggested Funding
Franklin Township Food Bank*	\$40,000.00	\$22,307.20
Garden State Wine Growers Assoc.*	\$40,000.00	\$30,000.00
GeoGreens Charities LLC*	\$39,260.00	\$19,630.00
NJ Beekeepers Assoc.*	\$39,989.40	\$20,000.00
NJ Peach Promotion Council*	\$40,000.00	\$15,000.00
NJ Blueberry Growers Assoc.*	\$40,000.00	\$15,000.00
Rolling Harvest Food Rescue*	\$31,206.00	\$22,307.20
Rowan University*	\$39,989.00	\$22,307.20
Rutgers – Al Cranberry	\$39,999.00	\$39,999.00
Rutgers – Blueberries	\$39,999.00	\$39,999.00
Rutgers – Boxwood Pest	\$39,970.80	\$39,970.80
Rutgers – Turfgrass	\$39,994.00	\$39,994.00
Vegetable Growers Association	\$40,000.00	\$40,000.00
NJDA/Jersey Fresh	\$390,572.66	\$390,572.66
NJDA Grant Administration	\$40,000.00	\$40,000.00
*Partial funding suggested		
Total Funding Requested		\$797,087.06

ON the MOTION of Stephen Lee, seconded by Kurt Alstede the Board voted unanimously to approve the recommendation of the Grants Committee for the Specialty Crop Block Grants as presented.

Board member Stephen Lee reported that he had to leave the meeting early today for a previous engagement.

Lisa Specca reported that she had attended the Duke Farms Climate Summit, an all-day event sponsored by Duke Farms, Rutgers and Farm Bureau. She reported that there was a diverse panel of speakers from academia, research, farm leadership and Farm Bureau, environment, preservation and political. It was a very wide net of think tank kind of presentation. The presentation was very high level. In addition, she reported that Monmouth County Board of Agriculture recently held their first annual legislative breakfast and there was a great turnout for the tour that followed. She reported that there was a presentation by the Farm to School team to tell them all about the Farm to School program and how to get people interested. Finally, she reported that Secretary Wengryn gave a very good overview of soil protection and got into a heated debate with some of the members, but she thought the issue went more smoothly than it has in the past. She noted that Ocean County Board of Agriculture is still struggling to get attendance up and leadership is working on a revision of their bylaws.

Board member Kurt Alstede reported that the coming freezing weather has some fruit producers very worried and with several days of bad weather expected, it was good to have the permit to burn issued for the entire week instead of day by day. This gives producers another tool to work with. He announced that there was an opportunity for training with Aimpoint that is going to allow us as a Board along with the SADC and our senior management team to delve into the agriculture composite that exists in New Jersey and the United States now and we can help plan the policies that will help support the industry long term. He reported that they held an Ag Viability Committee meeting earlier today and Brian Schilling went over a tremendous amount of data which really points to the importance of us understanding where we anticipate the industry to go in New Jersey, but we can tailor policies that help support the industry, be viable and productive. He asked Secretary Wengryn to give an update about the Department budget. The Secretary reported that the Division Directors and senior staff have been preparing for the upcoming Senate and Assembly Budget hearings scheduled for May 6 and 7. He noted that July 1 will start the next budget year and we will be starting those conversations. Finally, he asked about the SPS and if there would be any discussion.

Board member David DeFrange commented that the SPS Committee was waiting to see the final revisions before making any further comments.

Bob Blew reported that the frost/freeze issue is real and they are watching and preparing. He noted that Salem County was planning some type of Legislator's Tour and Gloucester County may also be planning something to follow Salem County. He noted concern that there is not enough state funding for Jersey Fresh and what else can be done. There was continued discussion on the budget monies for Jersey Fresh and it was discussed that was something that needs to be addressed by the Legislature.

David DeFrange thanked Secretary Wengryn for attending the Hunterdon County Board of Agriculture meeting. He noted that the members of the County Board were pleased to have the Secretary in attendance. There were some good conversations with the old timers, and it was good to see everyone

felt comfortable having the conversations that they had in front of him. He noted that the Legislators want to hear from their constituents and that Hunterdon would probably plan a tour as well. He noted the ash tree problem as well and reported that they have spent more than \$25,000 to have ash trees removed.

Vice President Hollinger reported that he had attended the Zoom meeting that was held by Assemblyman Spearman on the \$500 million school feeding program. He attended Cumberland County Board of Agriculture and reported that they now have two FFA Chapters, which were both funded. He noted that they tried to pass their revised Bylaws but there were not enough votes to pass so they will be making further revisions. He reported that Secretary Wengryn was in attendance and gave a brief report about how he sees the Department moving ahead in the future.

President Holly Sytsema reported that the Secretary attended the Sussex County Board of Agriculture meeting where he talked about the bear issues. She noted that they are trying to get more farmers engaged and boost attendance. Many that attend are older and not actively farming but noted that they were so excited too. Bergen County is working to create a calendar of old photos and captions and will be available at their Ag Fair in September and on individual farms in Bergen County. Anyone interested in this calendar can contact Emily Secor. They expressed concern about the Board of Managers needs assessment. They want to research crops that are resilient to frost, high winds and extreme heat. In addition, they are also addressing retiring county agents.

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

Lisa Specca reported that the Right to Farm Committee had been alerted to a DEP rule proposal that was announced on April 1 regarding the plastic bag ban. The rule is basically a clarification in a rule of the verbal direction that we got from DEP about the exemption not applying to farmers, farm markets, etc. They made it clear that a bag with a handle is out and that only single use plastic or the drawstring, vented produce bag (from the grocery store) are still ok. In addition, they will not be allowing compostable bags any longer. It was noted that roadside litter is down and there are no plastic bags blowing in the fields. The ocean cleanup crew said the number of plastic bags that they pick up has dramatically reduced. She stated that the public hearing would be May 1 and the comment period ends May 30.

Dave DeFrance reported that the Legislative Committee referred the Invasives legislation to the Invasives Committee and right now we are in a holding pattern until we can get identification on language and once we have that we will be able to reconvene and move forward. He reported that there was a very good meeting with the Farm Bureau to discuss some of the next steps moving forward. He noted that it is important to manage the message so that we all have a better understanding and that we are all on the same page. He stated that the Committee is still reviewing the trespass bill and we will have an update next month. Board member Kurt Alstede noted that there was a draft letter before the Board regarding the heat stress bill, he noted that he thought that it seemed odd that the guidance was issued by the Department of Health and asked if there was any collaboration with our Department and thought that maybe there should be.

ON the MOTION of Kurt Alstede, seconded by John Hart, the Board voted unanimously to send the letter for A3521/S2422 to the sponsors of the bill as farmworker safety and health issues are of importance to farmers.

Board member Kurt Alstede strongly encouraged all to attend the meaningful training that has been scheduled for May 8 at the Rutgers EcoComplex.

President Sytsema reported that the Personnel Committee would be getting involved with the Secretary as he searches for a Chief of Staff.

NEW BUSINESS

Proposed Rulemaking – Proposal to Readopt NJAC 2:36 (Child Nutrition Programs) with Amendments

ON the MOTION of Barney Hollinger, seconded by David DeFrange, the Board voted unanimously to approve the Proposed Rulemaking – Proposal to Readopt NJAC 2:36 (Child Nutrition Programs) with Amendments pursuant to the Administrative Procedures Act.

Approval – Commercial Fertilizer Values

Assistant Secretary Atchison reported that this is just a proposal so that it can be posted and opens the comment period and then next month you will have a final vote.

ON the MOTION of Kurt Alstede, seconded by Lisa Specca, the Board voted unanimously to approve the proposal as presented.

Secretary Wengryn recused himself from any discussion having to do with Item 7D – Humane Treatment of Domestic Livestock.

Final Approval of Proposed Rulemaking – Adoption of Amendments to NJAC 2:8 (Humane Treatment Domestic Livestock)

Assistant Secretary Atchison reported that the public comment period has ended and only three public comments were received. The Department recommends adoption of the rulemaking as proposed.

ON the MOTION of Lisa Specca, seconded by Kurt Alstede, the Board voted unanimously to approve the Adoption of Amendments to NJAC 2:8 (Humane Treatment Domestic Livestock).

PUBLIC COMMENT

Jeanine Cava introduced herself as the new Secretary of the Ocean County Board of Agriculture. She thanked Lisa Specca and Ashley Kerr from Farm Bureau for their support with getting Ocean County Board online and is excited to get to work. She is the Director of the New Jersey Food Democracy Collaborative. She hopes to have Secretary Wengryn at an upcoming meeting. She talked about the importance of Jersey Fresh for all and using SNAP at Farmers Markets.

Lori Jennsen, NJNLA, reported that they would be happy to participate in any legislative tours around the state, noting that nursery is the leading commodity in the state. She noted that the SCBG rating system that was mentioned, perhaps if the applicant had that information, they could better complete their application.

MEETINGS

The next regular meeting of the State Board of Agriculture will be held on Wednesday, May 22, 2024 beginning at 1:00 pm at 200 Riverview Plaza, Trenton.

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 employee's role in implementing hiring procedures for 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.

ADJOURNMENT

ON the MOTION of David DeFrance, seconded by Bob Blew, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the regular meeting at 5:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Edward D. Wengryn", followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Edward D. Wengryn