

Governor Phil Murphy

Lt. Governor Tahesha Way, Esq.

TRUSTEES

Alex Rivera, Chair

Daniel Harris

Greg Romano, Esq.

Laurie Sobel

Elizabeth Maher Muoio, State Treasurer

Dept. of the Treasury

Shawn LaTourette, Commissioner

Dept. of Environmental Protection

Edward Wengryn, Secretary

Dept. of Agriculture

Jacquelyn Suárez, Commissioner

Dept. of Community Affairs

Garden State Preservation Trust



Saving New Jersey's Open Spaces, Historic Places and Farmland

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CERTIFICATION OF CHAIRMAN OF GARDEN STATE PRESERVATION TRUST

I, Alex Rivera, certify that the attached copy of the minutes of the Garden State Preservation Trust is a true and correct copy of the substantial minutes of the April 14, 2025, meeting of the Trust.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Alex Rivera'.

Alex Rivera

Chair

April 14, 2025, GSPT Meeting Minutes

- **Chairman Rivera called the meeting to order at 1:03 PM.**
- **Reading of the Open Public Meetings Act Notice**
- **Roll Call**

Alex Rivera - present
Dan Harris - present
Greg Romano - present
Laurie Sobel - present
Ryan Feeney - present
Martha Sapp - present
Charles Roohr - present
Glenn Ceponis - present

- **The minutes of the December 17, 2024, GSPT meeting were approved.**

Dan Harris made the motion to approve. Seconded by Greg Romano.

Roll call vote:

Laurie Sobel - yes
Ryan Feeney - abstain
Martha Sapp - yes
Charles Roohr - yes
Glenn Ceponis - yes
Alex Rivera - yes

Motion passes.

- **Chairman's Report**

Chairman Rivera spoke about all the preparation that went into the Executive Director's report concerning the capital budget. He spoke of the concerns in having appreciable balances (of unexpended carryover funds) but also of the tremendous opportunities that exist with this amount of funding. Specifically, this funding can help address a myriad of contemporary conservation issues such as stewardship on public lands and likewise increasing conservation on private lands to address issues like wildlife conservation, urban heat, and stormwater management. Many of the challenges and opportunities were addressed by Executive Director Everett in his presentation on the 25th anniversary of the GSPT (December 2024) such as utilizing Installment Purchase Agreements to stretch limited public dollars.

- **Executive Director's Report**

A. GSPT Seal/Logo Redesign

Executive Director Everett asked the Board to table this and stated he would come back later for approval since the draft was circulated to various partners and the feedback received was very similar. He emphasized that a lot of things going on right now but the logo redesign is still important as a way to rebrand the GSPT for the next 20 to 25 years; it can illustrate how the various funded agencies can holistically work together to effectuate conservation and preservation.

B. Operating Budget

Executive Director Everett pointed out that the GSPT has a very svelte operating budget compared to its capital budget and the GSPT's growth request to increase it was not approved by Treasury so it is necessary to delay until next fiscal year most of the special projects/studies with our partner agencies that the Trust previously voted to fund. That is because he had researched the statutory authority for GSPT and found that we are supposed to conduct an audit every year but that it had not been done in 10 years so it was going to be expensive (\$75,000 or more). Thus, he was looking for a vote from the GSPT to formalize this - both the conducting of the audit and the delay of funding special partner projects/studies.

Martha Sapp made the motion to approve. Seconded by Dan Harris.

Roll call vote:

Dan Harris - yes

Martha Sapp - yes

Charles Roohr - yes

Glenn Ceponis - yes

Laurie Sobel - yes

Greg Romano - yes

Ryan Feeney - yes

Chairman Rivera - yes

Motion passes.

C. Capital Budget

Executive Director Everett reviewed the capital budget as it currently stands. As Chairman Rivera noted earlier, Mr. Everett spoke to the fact that there are appreciable balances. He noted that he did not get into individual agency balances at the 25th anniversary meeting in December but that he has been repeatedly asked by constituents to detail those so he is showing the Board those today. He said he coordinated with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and unfortunately, noted that there is no singular place to glean these numbers so they have been assembled from multiple sources. In addition, he said he doesn't have access to the state's financial system for whatever reason so he is reliant on OMB and will continue working with them to present numbers regularly and with even more detail that the Board is seeing today.

- **Open Session**

A. Resolution #25-001: Green Acres Local and Nonprofit Open Space Acquisition, Park Development, and Stewardship Project Funding and Planning Grants for FY 2025

Cecile Murphy, Chief of Local and Nonprofit Assistance for Green Acres, gave a comprehensive presentation of their FY 2025 funding request of GSPT, with both an overview of how their programs work and some highlights of specific projects. The total Green Acres funding request is for \$118 million broken down as follows:

- \$22.4 million for 24 local (municipal and county government) land acquisition projects,
- \$47.7 million for 44 local developments of parks and recreational facilities,
- \$28.2 million for 40 local developments of Completely Inclusive Playgrounds,
- \$4.2 million for 7 local stewardship projects,
- \$8.3 million for 8 acquisition projects by nonprofit organizations,
- \$2.1 million for 2 nonprofit recreational development, and
- \$1.5 million for 4 nonprofit stewardship projects.
- \$3.0 million for local planning grants
- \$1.0 million for nonprofit planning grants

Charles Roohr made the motion to approve. Seconded by Greg Romano.

Roll call vote:

Dan Harris - yes

Charles Roohr - yes

Martha Sapp - yes

Glenn Ceponis - yes

Laurie Sobel - recused

Greg Romano - yes

Ryan Feeney - yes

Chairman Rivera - yes

Motion passes.

B. Resolution #25-002: State Agriculture Development Committee State Direct Easement and Fee Simple Acquisition Funding for FY 2025

Matt DiStaulo, SADC Fiscal Manager, gave a detailed overview of their funding request to the GSPT, which touches on multiple programs from multiple funding sources.

Chuck Roohr went into detail on the new statewide formula value and how its goal is to increase easement values and by extension, more offers. He also touched upon farmland stewardship grants - rolling that program out in full (not just for deer fencing) to pay for precision agriculture equipment and practices - and Mr. Everett noted how Mr. Romano was forward-thinking and wrote rules on this 25 years ago (when he was SADC Executive Director), which CBT can fund today (the previous USDA specialty crop block grant only funded the program for one year).

For this particular request, the SADC is looking for \$21,046,028 in state acquisition funding approval from the GSPT.

Martha Sapp made the motion to approve. Seconded by Glenn Ceponis.

Roll call vote:

Dan Harris - yes

Martha Sapp - yes

Charles Roohr - yes

Glenn Ceponis - yes

Laurie Sobel - abstain

Greg Romano - yes

Ryan Feeney – yes

Chairman Rivera - yes

Motion passes.

C. Resolution #25-003: State Agriculture Development Committee County and Municipal Planning Incentive Grant Funding for FY 2025

The SADC is looking for \$34,500,000 for this request, broken down as follows:

County PIG Base Grants \$4,000,000

County PIG Competitive Grants \$30,000,000

Municipal PIG Base Grants \$500,000

Greg Romano made the motion to approve. Seconded by Dan Harris.

Roll call vote:

Dan Harris - yes

Martha Sapp - yes

Charles Roohr - yes

Glenn Ceponis - yes

Laurie Sobel - abstain

Greg Romano - yes

Ryan Feeney - yes

Chairman Rivera - yes

Motion passes.

D. Resolution #25-004: State Agriculture Development Committee Nonprofit Grant Funding for FY 2025

The SADC is seeking approval for \$3,750,990 for nonprofit grants.

Glenn Ceponis made the motion to approve. Seconded by Chairman Rivera.

Roll call vote:

Dan Harris - yes

Martha Sapp - yes

Charles Roohr - yes

Glenn Ceponis - yes

Laurie Sobel - abstain

Greg Romano - yes

Ryan Feeney - yes

Chairman Rivera - yes

Motion passes.

E. Resolution #25-005: State Agriculture Development Committee Farmland Stewardship Grants for FY 2025

The SADC is seeking approval to fund farmland stewardship grants in the amount of \$3,452,240.

Dan Harris made the motion. Seconded by Martha Sapp.

Roll call vote:

Dan Harris - yes

Martha Sapp - yes

Charles Roohr - yes

Glenn Ceponis - yes

Laurie Sobel - abstain

Greg Romano - yes

Ryan Feeney - yes

Chairman Rivera - yes

Motion passes.

- **Board Member Comment**

There were no board members comments

- **Public Comment**

There were no public comments

- **Closed Session**

There were no closed session items

- **Adjournment**

Dan Harris made the motion. Seconded by Chairman Rivera. All in favor - motion passes.
Meeting adjourned at 2:55 PM.