



# County of Burlington

## Department of Resource Conservation

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Eve A. Cullinan, *County Administrator*

## Board of County Commissioners

Daniel O'Connell, Director  
Tom Pullion, Deputy  
Allison Eckel  
Felicia Hopson  
Balvir Singh

### Burlington County Agriculture Development Board

#### Minutes

January 12, 2023

**Meeting held in-person at Burlington County Lyceum, 307 High St., Mt. Holly, NJ**

**Members in Attendance:** Phillip Prickett, Paul Shinn, Randi Rothmel, John Hlubik, Pete Johnson, Stephen Specca, Kevin Sparkman, Ed Cohen, Jeff Tober

#### **(Quorum Established)**

**Members Absent:** Sherry Dudas, Ila Vassallo, Brian Lestini, Dan Kennedy, Thomas Stanuikynas, Bill Bamka, Tom Budd

**Staff in Attendance:** Brian Wilson, Bradley Hansen, Anthony Drollas (Legal Counsel)

**Public in Attendance:** Alison Stout (USDA Veterinary Services), Wes Johnson (Johnsons Locust Hall Farm), Don Knezick (Foggy Bottom Farm), Steve Knezick (Foggy Bottom Farm)

#### **I. Call to Order**

##### **A. Opening Statement and Sunshine Law Compliance**

Chairman Phillip Prickett (Chairman, PP) called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM. The Chairman read the Opening Statement and Sunshine Law Compliance statement in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act.

##### **B. Flag Salute**

a. PP called for the flag salute.

##### **C. Roll Call**

a. PP called for Roll Call and Brian Wilson (BW) read the roll call and indicated that a quorum was established.

## II. Minutes of

### A. November 17, 2022 (Open Session)

- a. **(Motion) Pete Johnson motioned for approval of the November 17, 2022 Open Session Minutes, Stephen Specca seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

### B. November 17, 2022 (Closed Session)

- a. **(Motion) John Hlubik motioned for approval of the November 17, 2022 Closed Session Minutes, Pete Johnson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

## III. Staff Update

### A. Administrative Update

#### a. General Items

- i. BW reported that the County Commissioners had not yet made Board re-appointments but that Board reorganization would likely occur at the March meeting.

#### b. FPP Applications

- i. BW reported that the County Commissioners have authorized the offers as recommended by the CADB for the 2022 round of applications and those offers have been sent out to the landowners (Brace Lane Holdings, Gatley, Carty, Black Walnut Farm).
- ii. BW reported that Staff has submitted a memo to the Commissioners recommending that they authorize the acceptance of a new batch of applications for 2023.
- iii. BW reported that the County just closed on the Zimmermann Farm from the 2021 round. That was the only farm preserved through the 2021 round.
- iv. BW reported that the Pepper farm (2019 round) which NJCF is taking the lead on, and the county is just providing funding towards, has still not closed. Still waiting on NJCF.

#### c. Stewardship/Monitoring

- i. BW reported that monitoring follow-up letters based on recommendations made by the Board at the November meeting have been sent out to the landowners.

- d. Right to Farm

- i. There was nothing to report on this matter.

- B. Relevant Legislation

- a. BW referenced the Special Occasions Event bill. After the bill had been conditionally vetoed by the Governor, the bill is still awaiting revisions/a vote in one of the houses.

- C. Communications, Press & Other Items of Interest

- a. There was nothing to report on this matter.

- D. Economic Development and Regional Planning

- a. There was nothing to report on this matter.

- E. SADC

- a. There was nothing to report on this matter.

- F. Commissioner Update

- a. There was nothing to report on this matter.

- G. USDA Veterinary Services

- a. Alison Stout, a Veterinarian with the USDA, was in attendance for the meeting. BW recognized her and she introduced herself and promoted the reporting of animal illness/pathogens and offered herself and the USDA as resources for on-farm assistance with these and other matters in the region/state.

#### IV. Old Business

- A. 2022 Farm Stewardship Award – Foggy Bottom Farm (**Presentation of Award**)

- a. Brad Hansen (BH) announced that Don and Steve Knezick of Foggy Bottom Farm were in attendance to receive the award being presented to them. He gave a recap of the practices being implemented on the farm that earned them the

award this year. BW reminded the Board that Staff informs the Commissioners of who wins the award each year so that they may choose to recognize the farm owners as well. BW then introduced Don and Steve and gave them the floor to say a few words.

- b. Steve Knezick gave a brief history of the family business and of the Foggy Bottom Farm property. Steve also gave a more detailed explanation of some of the conservation practices and farming activities highlighted in the presentation. Don expressed their gratitude for the award to the Board and explained some of the many things they had to do to bring the farm back to a state of working agriculture after purchasing the farm. BW presented the Knezicks with the award/sign and read the award statement.

## V. **New Business**

### A. Monitoring - Outreach – **(Presentation)**

- a. BW called the Board’s attention to the USDA Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) flyer in their meeting packets. BW explained that per the Board’s direction through the Comprehensive Plan update, Staff is focusing on stewardship during the 2023 monitoring season. He explained that they are tweaking the annual outreach letter to landowners to encourage more in-person visits during the monitoring season to promote EQIP practices. He further explained that the EQIP program can be used to implement practices to help with climate change mitigation and improvements to soil fertility, both things that the Board called for action on in the Comp Plan update. BW mentioned that Staff had already spoken with the local NRCS office to let them know they would be promoting these programs more this year.

### B. Hall (Wilkinson) Farm – North Hanover Twp. – Ag. Labor Housing Unit Request – **(Resolution)**

- a. BH gave an overview of the preserved Hall farm and the history including the purchase and sub-division of the farm by the Wilkinson family. BH presented the landowners’ justification/need for an agricultural labor housing unit for 1-2 workers and showed the proposed location and approximate size for the unit on an aerial image. BW asked for a motion to approve the Staff-prepared resolution. **(Motion) Pete Johnson motioned to approve the ag labor unit request via resolution. Paul Shinn seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

### C. Haines (Russo) Farm – Tabernacle Twp. – Term Easement Enrollment – **(Resolution)**

a. BW explained that although this farm is already permanently preserved by the county, it was not enrolled with the SADC and, therefore, not eligible for State Soil & Water Cost Sharing funds for projects on the farm. Enrolling with the State in an 8 Year Term Preservation Easement would make them eligible for those funds. BW gave an overview of the farm and stated that it met the very basic criteria to be enrolled in the Term Easement program. Staff recommended the enrollment be approved. A short discussion between board members ensued. **(Motion) Stephen Specca motioned to approve the enrollment of the farm in the 8 year Term Preservation Program. Randi Rothmel seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

D. Bowker (Gray Eagle) Farm – Pemberton Twp. – Term Easement – **(Resolution)**

a. BW explained that the county has also previously preserved this farm but through a different type of easement, a Conservation Easement. The farm was a former cranberry operation but has gone out of production over the years. That is not a violation of this type of easement. This type of easement is also not eligible for State Soil & Water Cost Share. The current owners are going to renovate the property and put it back into cranberry production and would like to enroll in an 8 year Term Preservation Program in order to become eligible for that state funding. **(Motion) Ed Cohen motioned to approve the enrollment of the farm in the 8 year Term Preservation Program. Stephen Specca seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

E. Proposed Legislation – Minimum Eligibility Criteria – **(Motion)**

a. BW reported that a legislator’s office contacted him to let him know that there is likely going to be a bill introduced that would lower the state’s minimum eligibility requirement for preservation from 10 to 5 acre farms. BW explained that the Burlington CADB’s criteria has always been a minimum of 20 acres. He further explained that if the 5 acre farms became eligible for preservation Staff is concerned that they may not be directing their efforts in efficient ways, there will be more violation issues as 5 acre farms will likely struggle more to maintain profitability over time, and that more money could be being spent in administration costs than in easement costs to preserve these small farms. Staff recommended that the Board make a motion to send a letter from Staff to the legislator’s office indicating the CADB’s wishes to keep minimum criteria determination up to each county but that it could be set no lower than SADC minimum criteria. A discussion ensued. **(Motion) John Hlubik motioned to authorize Staffs’ recommended comments be conveyed to the legislator’s office. Stephen Specca seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

VI. Public Comment

A. None

**VII. Closed Session**

A. **(Motion) John Hlubik Motioned to move into closed session. Stephen Specca seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

Closed Session was held.

**(Motion) John Hlubik motioned to leave closed session. Ed Cohen seconded. The motion passed unanimously.**

**VIII. Next Meeting**

A. The next CADB meeting will be held on March 9, 2023, at 7:30 pm. The meeting is to be held in-person at the Burlington County Lyceum again.

**IX. Adjournment**

A. Chairman Prickett adjourned the meeting at 8:28 pm.