



# County of Burlington

49 Rancocas Road, Mount Holly, NJ 08060  
P.O. Box 6000, Mount Holly, NJ 08060  
(609) 265-5020 • Fax: (609) 702-7000  
Eve A. Cullinan, *County Administrator*

## Board of Commissioners

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

---

### Burlington County Agriculture Development Board Minutes July 13, 2023

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

**Members in Attendance:** Phillip Prickett, John Hlubik, Paul Shinn, Wes Johnson, Sherry Dudas, Stephen Specca (7:39), Brian Lestini (7:34), Ila Vassallo, Randi Rothmel, Bill Bamka

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

**Members Absent:** Dan Kennedy, Ed Cohen, Kevin Sparkman, Jeff Tober, Tom Budd, Thomas Stanuikynas,

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

**Public in Attendance:** Vera Amari (A legacy Ranch, LLC), Pietro Amari (A Legacy Ranch, LLC), Dave Frank (Attorney), Cindy Roberts (SADC), Michael Wilk (Preserved Farm Owner)

## **I. Call to Order**

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

Chairman Phillip Prickett (Chairman, PP) called the meeting to order at 7:31 pm. He read the Opening Statement and Sunshine Law Compliance statement in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act.

### **B. Roll Call**

a. The Chairman called for the Roll Call. Brian Wilson (BW) completed the Roll Call and indicated that a quorum was established.

### **C. Flag Salute**

a. PP called for the flag salute.

## **II. Minutes of**

A. May 11, 2023 (Open Session)

- a. **(Motion) Randi Rothmel motioned for approval of the May 11, 2023 Open Session Minutes. John Hlubik seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

III. **Staff Update**

A. Administrative Update

a. General Items

- i. BW announced a minor change to the circulated agenda for the evening. 'The Katona RME permit comments' item was pulled from the agenda as that item was a request for comment from the SADC for a RME permit application that was no longer going to be on their July meeting. He explained that it may be re-added for comments at a future CADB meeting.
- ii. BW reminded Board members that the Board bylaws had been previously circulated to all members and asked members to sign the annual Membership Oath forms in their meeting packets.
- iii. BW announced that former NJ Secretary of Agriculture Douglas Fisher had resigned effective 7/1/23 and that until the Governor appoints a new secretary the Assistant Sec. of Ag., Joe Atchinson, will be filling in as the Acting Sec. of Ag.
- iv. BW reported that after about 10 years of consideration, the SADC has formally endorsed new Soil Protection Standards rules and that this now triggers the beginning of the formal rule writing process starting with the proposed rules being published in the NJ Register for a formal public comment period. He further noted that if there are any major substantive changes to the proposed rules as a result of that process, Staff will bring that back to the Board for an update.
- v. BW reported that Burlington County has adopted a deer hunting policy for certain county-owned lands. Many county parks will now be open to bow hunting during regular seasons. There is a lottery system for the distribution of a limited number of permits for each park that will be open to hunting.

b. FPP Applications

- i. BW reported that the 3 farms which were granted preliminary approval for preservation by the Board at the May CADB meeting were now in the appraisal stage of the application process and that appraisal reports would be completed by the September meeting.

- ii. BW reported that Staff is continuing to work through processing of the 2022 application round of farms, and that they are hoping to close on the preservation of the Brace Lane Holdings, LLC and Gatley farms this summer and on Black Walnut Farm, LLC this fall.
    - iii. BW reported that the Pepper farm status (2019 round, NJCF effort) has not changed.
  - c. Stewardship/Monitoring
    - i. BW reported that Staff had completed monitoring farms for the 2023 season. Staff will have the annual monitoring report to bring to the Board in September.
  - d. Right to Farm
    - i. BW reported that although there are currently no formal RTF items to discuss at the Board level, Staff continues to field calls regarding potential RTF issues and deals with them informally, as applicable. Many of these potential issues are resolved informally before any formal complaints or requests are filed.

## B. Relevant Legislation

- a. BW made specific reference to a couple of the bills listed on the legislature tracking form included in the Board members' meeting packets.
  - i. BW noted that there is currently a bill that would move the Division of Food and Nutrition out of the Department of Agriculture and into the Department of Human Services. He reported that this division is one of the largest divisions within the Dept. of Ag. and that its relocation would have a major impact on the department. He also noted that Farm Bureau opposes that move.
  - ii. BW also addressed the Statewide Formula Value bill that has been previously discussed. It has made it out of the Senate committee that it was previously with but it did not get a full Senate vote before the summer recess began. Staff will continue to track.

## C. Communications, Press & Other Items of Interest

- a. BW clarified that the County press release from the previous week regarding the preservation of 3 more farms was referencing the CADB's and Commissioner's preliminary approval for the preservation of the 2023 round farms, NOT for final approval. Staff received a number of phone calls after the that statement was

published from confused members of the public thinking those farms were definitely going to be preserved. That process is just beginning and offers to owners for the preservation of those farms have not been made yet.

D. Economic Development and Regional Planning

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

E. SADC

- a. Cindy Roberts (CR) let the Board know that the Brace Lane Holdings and Gatley farms were currently under review at the SADC as well and that those projects are moving forward as the County seeks partial reimbursement from the State for the preservation of those farms. She mentioned that the SADC is in the beginning stages of processing the County's 2023 round of farm projects as well.
- b. CR also gave a brief update on the status of the SADC direct application farms that are located in Burlington County. The Choi Farm (Springfield Twp.) project (that the SADC previously requested CADB support on) is a fee simple application made directly to the SADC. Appraisals are currently being commissioned on that one. The Bruno and Arzt (SADC direct easement applications) farm projects are also in the appraisal stage, with reports completed and offers to landowners expected to go out soon.
- c. CR also announced that the SADC has picked up 2 more direct applications for farms in Southampton Twp. Neither of these farms meet the County's criteria for preservation but they may meet the SADC's.
- d. CR reported that County has ~\$9.5 million in SADC cost-share available that can be used in the form of partial easement purchase reimbursement.

**IV. Old Business**

- A. None

**V. New Business**

A. McDaniel (A Legacy Ranch, LLC) Request to Construct RDSO Unit – Springfield Twp.  
**(Motion)**

- a. BW prefaced the presentation of the Residual Dwelling Site Opportunity (RDSO) application by explaining to the Board that the County has not received many of these applications over the years and that part of the presentation would be explaining the process for the Board. He also announced that the members of 'A Legacy Ranch, LLC,' Vera & Pietro Amari, and their legal representation, Dave Frank were in attendance to answer any questions the Board had regarding the application.

- a. Brad Hansen (BH) began the presentation by describing the definition and restrictions associated with a RDSO housing opportunity. He further explained that the CADB's responsibilities for processing the application were 2-fold:
  - I. Review the proposed location of the residential dwelling site and submit comments to the landowner and the municipal planning review body regarding the impact of the proposed location of the residential dwelling site on the continued viability of the agricultural operation
  - II. Certify that the use and construction of the residential unit is for agricultural purposes

BH further explained that in addition to needing CADB/County approval to exercise the RDSO, the owners would also need the approval of the SADC and township before constructing the associated dwelling unit.

- b. BH then laid out the details surrounding the farm in its past, current, and proposed future states. He summarized the details of the of the RDSO application, as well as the details in the business development plan for the property provided by the Amaris.
- c. After presenting all of the details surrounding the application, BH reported that Staff found the following:
  - I. Based on the information provided by Mr. Amari, the Amaris' proposed involvement in the day-to-day operation of the farm satisfies the 'Agricultural Purpose' requirement as required by the RDSO regulations & policy
  - II. The location of the proposed RDSO site and dwelling unit is acceptable and would have minimal impact on farm production activities

BH then reported that the Staff recommendation to the Board was as follows:

Recommend that the Board of County Commissioners certify that the construction and use of the residence as proposed are for an agricultural purpose conditioned upon the following:

- No substantive changes arising from municipal and/or SADC 35 day comment period

- d. Chairman Prickett recognized the Amaris and their representation and gave them the opportunity to add/clarify details of the application. Mr. Frank spoke on behalf of the Amaris and provided some additional testimony in support of the application.
- e. A discussion between Board members, Staff, and the Amaris ensued with Board members asking questions to the Amaris/their representation as well as to Staff for further clarification of the RDSO approval procedure. Randi Rothmel questioned the need for tree removal.
- f. **(Motion) Paul Shinn motioned to approve the RDSO request as presented and recommended by Staff and to memorialize the motion via staff-prepared resolution at the regular September CADB meeting. Wes Jonson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with the exception of one abstention (Randi Rothmel).**

**VI. Public Comment**

- A. None.

**VII. Closed Session**

- A. Closed session was not held.

**VIII. Next Meeting**

- A. The next CADB meeting will be held on September 14, 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 8:30 pm.