



State of New Jersey

Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council
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Executive Director

MEMORANDUM

To: Agricultural Advisory Committee
From: Benjamin L. Spinelli, Esq., Executive Director
Subject: Committee Meeting Minutes – March 13, 2024
Date: March 25, 2024

An Agricultural Advisory Committee meeting was held on Wednesday, March 13, 2024, at 2:00pm in person and via Zoom.

The following were present:

Committee: Highlands Council Vice Chair/Committee Chair Alstede, Jamie Bourgeois (Riamede Farm), Dr. Brendan Furlong (B.W. Furlong & Associates), and Adam Furlong (B.W. Furlong & Associates).

Highlands Staff: Ben Spinelli, Gabrielle Gallagher, Neda Hartman, James Humphries, Maryjude Haddock-Weiler, Corey Piasecki, Carole Diction, Kelley Curran, and Karen Castanhas.

Governor's Authority Unit (GAU): Alexis Franklin, Associate Counsel.

Also present was Kathy Hale (New Jersey Water Supply Authority), Laura Scatena (New Jersey Board of Public Utilities), Richard Cotton (Asbury Farms), Frank Pinto (Pinto Consulting), Aaron Bush (Hexapoint), and Frank Minch (New Jersey Department of Agriculture).

Committee Chair Alstede opened the meeting at 2:15pm.

Following introductions, Committee Chair Alstede introduced Mr. Cotton from Asbury Farms to provide an update on the Northwest Jersey Food Processing and Innovation Center.

Northwest Jersey Food Processing and Innovation Center

At this time Mr. Cotton provided a project update. Please see the link below for the presentation.
https://www.canva.com/design/DAF_NnGdYT0/qP1a92TkT6pJKokTOIGfCg/edit

Committee Chair Alstede thanked Mr. Cotton for his presentation and there was a discussion regarding the project.

Mr. Cotton, Mr. Bush and Mr. Pinto left the meeting at 3:05pm.

Committee Chair Alstede introduced Ms. Scatena of the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities.

New Jersey Board of Public Utilities

At this time Ms. Scatena gave a presentation about the New Jersey's Clean Energy Program™.

Committee Chair Alstede asked if the Dual-Use Solar Energy Act could be used in the Highlands Preservation area.

Ms. Scatena stated the Solar Act of 2012 gave New Jersey Board of Public Utilities discretion to approve some solar projects on farmland and an applicant can apply for a waiver.

Mr. Minch of the New Jersey Department of Agriculture stated depending on the size of farmland, the farm would need large enough areas for the solar panels and they are still working on the pilot program.

Mr. Humphries also added solar is allowed in the Highlands Planning Area.

During this time, there was additional discussion about the placement of solar panels.

New Jersey Water Supply Authority

At this time Ms. Hale from the New Jersey Water Supply Authority gave a presentation on the services supplied by the New Jersey Water Supply Authority as well as an upcoming USDA-NRCS grant opportunity. The Highlands Council intends to be a listed partner on the application.

During this time, there was a discussion about stormwater runoff solutions on agricultural lands utilizing green infrastructure practices.

Committee Chair Alstede asked if there were any other questions at this time.

Mr. Minch of the New Jersey Department of Agriculture added information about the wildlife fencing program for the region. See below link for additional information:

<https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/anr/agriassist/deerfencing.html>

Mr. Minch also gave additional information about Compost/Manure Generators and Users Matching Program. See link below for additional information:

<https://njmanurelink.rutgers.edu/>

Mr. Spinelli added that Highlands staff will help share information about the fencing program with all in the Highlands Region.

Mr. Bourgeois asked if the funding is for new or existing fence.

Mr. Minch stated the fencing program includes maintenance on existing fences.

Next Steps

Committee Chair Alstede requested the next Agricultural Committee meeting be held in either June or July.

The meeting adjourned at 3:56pm.