

Monmouth County Agriculture Development Board
Division of Planning



Minutes for a Regular Meeting of the
MONMOUTH COUNTY AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
March 3, 2026, 7:30 PM

Hybrid Meeting at One East Main Street, Freehold, NJ or Audio and Video Conference via WebEx

CALL TO ORDER:

Mr. Bullock called the meeting to order at 7:31 PM.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

Mr. Bullock read the “Open Public Meetings Act” Compliance Statement.

ATTENDANCE:

Present: Bullock, Clayton, DeFelice, Errickson (7:36), Giambrone, Incatasciato, Licitra, Mosley, Pettyjohn, Van Mater
Staff: Barris, Beekman, Bezahler, Fitzgerald, Honigfeld, Kiley
Representatives: Pat Butch, Chris Helmlinger, Jack McNaboe, Sean Pizzio, Betty Velez-Gimbel
Public: Alan Grippaldi, Joann O’Neill

ADOPTION OF MINUTES

Mr. Pettyjohn motioned to adopt the March 2026 Regular Session minutes. Commissioner Licitra seconded the motion which passed by voice vote.

CORRESPONDENCE AND OTHER DOCUMENTS

Ms. Honigfeld noted an area of concern letter in the packet regarding a farm on Hill Road. There will be a site visit on March 17th to which the subcommittee members are invited. The packet also included information related to the new Woodland Easement Purchase Program.

RIGHT TO FARM AND STEWARDSHIP ISSUES (reordered)

Proposed Amendment to County Commissioners Resolution 2023-0778

Michael Fitzgerald, County Counsel, discussed the conversations he and Assistant County Counsel, Hillary Spadaccini, have been having with county staff regarding the board’s RTF Policy 6 and the County Commissioners’ related resolution. He is aware of the MCADB’s concerns and wishes to dovetail them with those of the commissioners. He wants to ensure that a town has the opportunity to weigh in on right to farm applications and believes that the county professionals have proposed a fair procedure. He noted some of the specifics of the draft resolution amendment and suggested asking a municipality if an activity under review would be considered a permitted use. Mr. Fitzgerald will share any input from the MCADB members on the proposed draft resolution with the Commissioners.

REGULAR REPORTS

- A. *Chairman*: No report.
- B. *State*: Sean Pizzio reported that he is awaiting the SADC monthly summary but did mention that the new forestry preservation program would need at least a year before it was ready for implementation.
- C. *Staff*: Staff shared the Farm Summit events will take place this month, with the first webinar scheduled for March 11th. The live event will be on the 25th. The Sage farm in Millstone is now preserved.
- D. *Municipal Representatives*: Chris Helmlinger passed out resolution 75-26 from Upper Freehold Township objecting to the purchase of the AASEUF property. Staff will include a copy in the April packet. Pat Butch shared that Millstone Township has another potential application in the works. The township is planning its annual clam bake in June.
- E. *County Board of Agriculture*: Mr. DeFelice communicated that Liz Thompson from the Farm Bureau visited the County Board of Agriculture as part of her listening tour.
- F. *Rutgers Cooperative Extension*: Dr. Errickson shared that Amelia Minervini will be the county's new 4H Agent. The Central Jersey Vegetable Growers meeting and Central Jersey Turf and Ornamental Institute just concluded. A Farm & Fishers Wellness Program will be offered in April in Bordentown. Rachel Tansey is collaborating on that event.

OLD BUSINESS

Memorialization of Resolution 2026-2-1

Mr. Van Mater made a motion to memorialize the resolution. Mr. Pettyjohn seconded. The motion passed by roll call vote.

SFV Unique Importance Examples

Ms. Honigfeld explained that she had consulted with Katie Mazzella to assemble a list of factors that could be considered as "unique" when evaluating a farm's potential to receive a bonus in the SFV calculations. She will place a copy in the staff folder to be available at the monthly MCADB meetings.

Cost Share Policies

Mr. Bullock acknowledged that he had requested a review of the MCADB cost share policies about a month or two prior. Ms. Honigfeld briefly explained the state and county policies that were included in the packet. If the board is inclined to amend its policies, then the request would go up to the administration and County Commissioners for consideration. Members had a brief discussion and, given that the municipal cost share has the potential to drop to 4% under the new SFV, chose not to take further action at this time.

Ms. Honigfeld took the opportunity to bring up a different policy that may need to be amended. The MCADB requires a minimum soils score of 55 (on a scale of 0 to 100) to process a County PIG application. However, because the Farmland Program's database has been deprecated, and because county staff, the USDA-NRCS, and SADC lost the institutional knowledge of how to calculate this score by hand, an alternate – but similar – criteria would be beneficial.

NEW BUSINESS

No items

RIGHT-TO-FARM AND STEWARDSHIP ISSUES

Memorialization of Resolution 2025-12-1

Mr. Giambone made the motion to memorialize the commercial farm eligibility resolution for Samrock Stables. Mr. DeFelice seconded, and the motion passed by roll call vote.

Memorialization of Resolution 2026-2-2 Mr. DeFelice made the motion to memorialize the conflict resolution compliant (review of activities) for Samrock Stables. Mr. Giambrone seconded. A member recommended capping the number of guests at 30 per event rather than 30 per day. With the change, the motion passed by roll call vote. Ms. Honigfeld indicated that she will amend the minutes to reflect the change to the resolution.

Some discussion ensued about the review of site plan elements, the SADC model SSAMP checklist, and how to proceed with the next steps to bring the matter to conclusion. Mr. Beekman suggested he could initially discuss the elements [of a site plan] with the respondent's and township's counsels and with County professionals, come to a consensus and present it to the Board. The Chairman agreed with Chris' recommendation.

Status Reports

Mr. Beekman shared that the Basselini v. Crawford appeal has been withdrawn.

Ms. Honigfeld provided updates on a few pending and closed stewardship matters.

Proposed Amendment to County Commissioners Resolution 2023-0778 (Continued)

Discussion resumed for this agenda item.

Mr. DeFelice made several specific recommendations regarding edits and clarifications to the language in the draft.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Ms. Butch asked questions about when the resolution amendment would be placed on the Board of County Commissioners agenda, as she wanted to ensure that there was an opportunity to make comments before the commissioners voted.

Ms. Honigfeld asked counsel if she could share the draft with the municipal liaisons. Mr. Beekman responded that it would be premature.

Ms. Velez-Gimbel acknowledged that she was not privy to the draft but is extremely concerned. She also suggested that all applicants be given the opportunity for pre-submission guidance directly with the CADB members which should be a first step.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on **Tuesday, April 7, 2026, at 7:30 PM.**

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion from Mr. DeFelice, seconded by Mr. Pettyjohn, the meeting adjourned at 8:40 PM, which was approved by voice vote.