

Monmouth County Agriculture Development Board
Division of Planning



Minutes for a Regular Meeting of the
MONMOUTH COUNTY AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

April 6, 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 7:30 PM.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

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

ATTENDANCE:

Present: Bullock, Buscaglia (7:59 PM), Clayton, DeFelice, Errickson, Giambrone, Holmes
Incatasciato, Licitra, Mosley, Pettyjohn, Van Mater
Staff: Barris, Beekman, Bezahler, Honigfeld, Kiley, Schmetterer
Representatives: Pat Butch, Anthony Garaguso (Virtual), Chris Helmlinger, Jack McNaboe, Sean
Pizzio (Virtual)
Public: Ms. Buscaglia, Tim Thomas (Freehold SCD), Carmine Spinella, Carol Van Mater

ADOPTION OF MINUTES

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

CORRESPONDENCE AND OTHER DOCUMENTS

Ms. Kiley noted that the correspondence packet included the SADC’s monthly summary report, a couple of “area of concern” letters and a response, and the Upper Freehold resolution that Mr. Helmlinger had shared at the March meeting.

REGULAR REPORTS

- A. *Chairman:* The Chairman indicated that he did not have a report but would like to revisit the purchase of the AASEUF/Stein property by the Park System, which was the topic of the Upper Freehold Resolution 75-26 included in the correspondence. Mr. Bullock expressed concern. Commissioner Licitra explained the county’s position, citing the voters’ overwhelming support, by way of approving an increase in the Open Space Trust Fund. Commissioner Licitra questioned the figures included in the resolution. Mr. Holmes expressed his concerns and disapproval of the transaction. Commissioner Licitra spoke to the Board of County Commissioners’ obligation to all residents of Monmouth County.
- B. *State:* Ms. Mazzella stated that the SADC is holding a public auction on April 17th for a farm in Titusville. The SVF continues to be very popular with landowners, leading to offers +/- 23% over traditional offers. There are 229 applications in progress. The state has begun drafting ideas for

the Woodland Easement Purchase Program. This year's appropriation request of \$78 million includes almost \$12 million in reallocation of existing funds. A new law was signed in January allowing private energy generation companies to install electric distribution lines on preserved farmland. Previously, only public bodies had the authority to do so.

- C. *Staff*: Ms. Kiley shared that feedback on the Farm Summit has been positive. By her count, 51% of the attendees were farmers.
- D. *Municipal Representatives*: Chris Helmlinger expressed concerns about overpayment for the above-mentioned Upper Freehold parcel and conveyed that the township is getting hammered by property being taken off the tax rolls.
- E. *County Board of Agriculture*: Mr. DeFelice noted that 130 people attended the successful annual dinner in March. The Board of Ag has been having productive talks with our legislators.
- F. *Rutgers Cooperative Extension*: Dr. Errickson shared that the new 4H agent, Amelia Valente, started on April 1. There's a newly published annual report available. Spring Garden Days are coming up on May 15th and 16th.

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Bezahler introduced the 43 Hill Road stewardship matter identifying the issues of the polo field grading, riding arena construction resulting in slope cutting and imported fill, short-term rentals of the single-family house, and the presence of campers for agricultural labor housing. Mr. Beekman advised that the board members should tackle one issue at a time, starting with the polo field grading and the associated soil removal and exposure of highly acidic and glauconitic soil. He read aloud some of the staff's March 20th memo to the board. Mr. DeFelice shared his professional experience with similar cases. Discussion ensued about a remediation plan of action, the need for the landowner to hire a soil consultant, timing, how much soil may have been removed, and periodic communication with the landowner & consultant.

Tim Thomas of Freehold Soil Conservation District provided guidance to the Board. For example, he explained that the amount of topsoil to be replaced would be tied to the end use/purpose (such as a return to a pasture field). The Board noted that the landowner should obtain a consultant to prepare and implement a plan to be submitted to Freehold Soil Conservation District. Upon approving the restoration plan, the Board discussed how often progress updates should be shared. Members agreed that the landowner should submit quarterly progress reports to help guide the restoration efforts.

The Board next discussed the riding arena, with Mr. Beekman reading aloud from the staff memo regarding the slope cutting and imported fill. The Board took a similar approach in addressing the riding arena remediation as it did with the polo field remediation. The landowner should be guided to hire a professional consultant to address slope stabilization and removal of contaminated fill. The plan should be submitted and approved by Freehold Soil Conservation District. Additionally, periodic communication/check-ins with the consultant and landowner will be required. The landowner would also be directed to remove remnants of the riding arena, chairs, stairs, and fences which are in disrepair.

The Board then discussed the single-family home short term rentals. It was discussed that any listings on platforms such as Airbnb and VRBO should be removed until all the terms of the deed of easement are complied with and an approved Rural Micro Enterprise permit has been obtained from the Board.

The fourth issue that the Board discussed was the presence of campers on the property that had been used for agricultural labor housing. The Board stated that the landowner must discontinue using the campers for this purpose and not reconnect the utilities to the campers.

Mr. DeFelice motioned to proceed with the drafting of a resolution as outlined by Mr. Beekman and Mr. Giambrone seconded the motion, which was approved by a roll call vote. Mr. Buscaglia was marked as an abstention.

RIGHT-TO-FARM AND STEWARDSHIP ISSUES

Status Reports

Mr. Beekman shared that plans for Samrock Stables are forthcoming. He has a call on Thursday with municipal and landowner's counsel for the Maple Leaf matter. He added that there was a new conflict resolution filing for a parcel on 184 Kent Road in Howell Township.

REGULAR REPORTS (Continued)

Anthony Garaguso, Upper Freehold Committeeman and liaison to the MCADB, elaborated on the township's resolution regarding Block 26 Lots 1, 2, and 3. He expressed an eagerness to better understand the county's vision and noted that the township had requested copies of the property appraisals.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Ms. Mazzella, speaking as member of Class 13 of the Ag Leadership Development Program, promoted the May 17th fundraiser to be held at the Burlington County Fairgrounds.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on **Tuesday, May 5, 2026, at 7:30 PM.**

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion from Mr. Pettyjohn, seconded by Mr. Van Mater, the meeting adjourned at 8:50 PM, which was approved by voice vote.