

Monmouth County Agriculture Development Board
Division of Planning



Minutes for a Regular Meeting of the
MONMOUTH COUNTY AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
December 2, 2025, 7:00 PM

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

CALL TO ORDER:

Mr. Matthews called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

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

ATTENDANCE:

Present: Bullock, Buscaglia, Clayton, DeFelice, Errickson (online), Giambrone, Holmes
Matthews, Pettyjohn, Van Mater

Staff: Barris (online), Beekman, Bezahler, DeGroot, Emmerich (online), Honigfeld
(online), Kiley, McBride, Neary (online), Robinson, Scanziani, Schmetterer

Representatives: Pat Butch (online), Chris Helmlinger, Jack McNaboe (online), Katie Mazzella
(online), Sean Pizzio (online), Elaine Taylor

Public: John Aguiar, Angel Angelov Andrew Ball, John C., Julia Callano, Amy Carter,
___ Carter, Sheela Chattopadhyay, Eddie Cole, Patty Conenna, Vito Conenna,
Bill Fox, Al G., Charles Gimbel, Gabrielle Gluck, Stephanie Gluck, Mike Heard,
Raluca Herbert, Barry Johnston, Dana Juenemann, Rubina Kelley, Gretchen
Kelly, Elaine McKane, Damian Majewski, Melanie Morris, Juliana Oreluna,
Christoph P., Marc Parisi, Linda Picard, Sheri Reavis, Alex Sauickie, Magdalena
Stankiewicz, Jamie Saults, Jean Verrier, Dale VanSant, Betty Velez-Gimbel,
Karin Verrier, John V., David Wallis, Evelyn Wallis, Lawrence White, Dan ____,
2 unknown callers online, 4 other sign-ins with illegible handwriting

NEW BUSINESS

ADOPTION MINUTES

Mr. DeFelice motioned to adopt the November 2025 regular session minutes. Mr. Bullock seconded the motion which passed by voice vote. Mr. Holmes abstained.

CORRESPONDENCE AND OTHER DOCUMENTS

REGULAR REPORTS

- A. *Chairman:* Mr. Matthews mentioned a Farm Summit planning meeting December 4th.
- B. *State:* Katie Mazzella reported that the SADC meeting is December 4th; therefore, there is no report to share at this time.

- C. Staff: Ms. Kiley reported that there is one deal that may close by year end. If not, it will likely be early January. The property is referred to as Sage and is in Millstone. Ms. Kiley also added that the 2026 Farm Summit will include two webinars on March 11th and March 18th. One webinar will be on farm preservation and the other on farm succession and transition. Ms. Kiley also mentioned that the Right to Farm forms that staff have been working on will be available soon.
- D. *Municipal Representatives*: No reports.
- E. *County Board of Agriculture*: Mr. DeFelice reported that the County Board of Agriculture will hold its annual dinner on March 4th. Mr. DeFelice reported that NJ Farm Bureau held its annual meeting to discuss and vote on 2026 policies.
- F. *Rutgers Cooperative Extension*: Dr. Errickson reported that the search committee for the 4-H director is scheduled to meet with three people for the in-person interviews on December 11th with committee recommendations to follow. Bill Hlubik from Middlesex County retired on December 1st; Michele Bakacs will be taking on his role.

OLD BUSINESS

Memorialization of Resolution 2025-11-1 (Section 19 Review Block 42 Lot 22, Howell Township).

Mr. Bullock motioned to memorialize the resolution, and Mr. Pettyjohn seconded. The vote passed unanimously with Mr. Matthews abstaining [corrected post meeting].

RIGHT-TO-FARM AND STEWARDSHIP ISSUES

Status Reports

Mr. Beekman reported on a few matters. There was no change on *Basselini v. Crawford*; further updates are expected in January. *Samrock Stables* will be heard tonight.

Mr. Matthews referenced the passage of S3226/A4603, and Mr. Beekman briefly explained the purpose of the statute. As indicated in the Senate synopsis, it allows commercial farmer to be awarded reasonable costs and attorney fees for defending against bad faith complaints under “Right to Farm Act.” Mr. Matthews shared he felt it was unnecessary given existing law, and Mr. DeFelice stated that the Farm Bureau was pleased the Governor signed it into law.

Commercial Farm Certification Hearing for a Conflict Resolution Request (Block 154 Lot 6 Howell Twp)

Mr. Matthews opened the public hearing portion of the meeting. Mr. Matthews gave a brief description of the role of the board in Right to Farm cases. Mr. Matthews explained that the first step would be the determination of commercial farm eligibility. A commercial farm determination would result in this board taking jurisdiction on the matter. Mr. Matthews stressed that this portion of the hearing would only address the commercial farm determination and not evaluate the activities taking place on the farm. Mr. Matthews listed the seven items (criteria) or questions that would be asked to determine commercial farm status (see agenda page 2).

Mr. Beekman reiterated that this portion of the hearing is only the commercial farm determination to conclude whether this board would retain jurisdiction. Mr. Beekman insisted that public comments be relevant to commercial farm eligibility as comments on other matters, including other aspects of *Samrock Stables* complaint, will not be heard at this time. Mr. Beekman opened the floor to Andrew Ball for opening comments.

Mr. Ball, from Davison Eastman Muñoz Paone, P. A. and representing Samrock Stables, gave opening remarks giving a brief description of owners, acreage, zoning, farmland assessment, and activities and how the aforementioned support a commercial farm determination. Mr. Ball explained that Samrock Stables and Not So Ordinary Farm, a nonprofit, act as a single entity and are controlled by Julia F Callano and Angel Anelov. Mr. Ball also spoke about the activities on the farm and how they relate to the documentation provided to support the income threshold. Mr. Ball suggested the board focus on the breed shares and the raising income, as they alone would meet the threshold; however, the counsel indicated that documentation of all income has been provided. Mr. Ball proceeded to point out each of the exhibits that speak to the 2024 and the 2025 breed share and raising income figures.

Mr. Christopher Dasti of Dasti & Staiger introduced himself as Howell's representative. Mr. Dasti noted that Howell has had ongoing concerns with the farm.

Mr. Ball confirmed for the Board the statutory criteria his client is operating under. Mr. Ball indicated that the farm practices primarily fall under N.J.S.A. 4:1C-9 subsection (a); however, the farm classes fall under subsection (j) of this same section and are specifically called out in N.J.A.C. 2:76-2A.13. Mr. Ball directed the Board to the exhibits that pertain to the breed share and raising income.

Mr. Beekman swore Ms. Callano in, and Mr. Ball asked Ms. Callano to explain her history and her business. Ms. Callano explained that she has a family history in horse racing and farming and came into breeding more recently. Ms. Callano noted that she takes extreme time and care to breed her horses and like most in the industry owns horses with partners. Ms. Callano confirmed that she does sell shares of horses and it is "the primary focus of our business". Mr. Ball asked her to elaborate on the nonprofit. Ms. Callano said, "that is just part of the passion for others to learn about the horses and [my desire] to carry on something that I feel is so incredible."

Ms. Callano reported that she sells shares but maintains control of the horses to protect them once she has raised them. Ms. Callano confirmed she currently has three partners she has carefully vetted. Ms. Callano indicated that her desire to protect the animals' ties to the nonprofit mentioned earlier. Under the nonprofit, Ms. Callano has rescued several animals such as cattle and goats. The nonprofit also provides a structure for retired, or those otherwise unable to be successful, racing Thoroughbreds. Ms. Callano testified to the concept of fractional ownership and how it is the only way she is able to participate in the racing business. Mr. Ball interjected and clarified that breed shares, as indicated in the documentation; fractional ownership; and percentage ownership are one and the same for purposes of Ms. Callano's testimony. Ms. Callano spoke to the history of fractional ownership. Ms. Callano testified that both Samrock Stables and the nonprofit are equally owned by her and her husband, Angel Angelov, and confirmed the nonprofit doesn't make money but is just the charitable arm of the farm. Mr. Ball asked Ms. Callano to testify that the amounts indicated in the exhibits were correct, to which Ms. Callano confirmed.

Ms. Callano confirmed that she would be considered the manager of the horse; however, once a share of a horse is sold to a partner "the agricultural output stops and the racing career takes over".

Ms. Callano testified to the breeding and raising process. Ms. Callano explained that the process started by using the TrueNicks program to match the farm's mares with stallions. The mare then must travel to the location of the stallion as artificial insemination is not permitted if you wish to register the horse as a Thoroughbred. Ms. Callano explained what takes place during the gestation periods including nutrition and ultrasounds. Ms. Callano spoke about the birthing process and eventually the raising of the foal such that the foal is ready to go to its purpose, which is racing. Once the foal reaches the age of two it is sent to the racetrack to compete.

Mr. Dasti began his cross-examination of Ms. Callano by asking how many horses there are on the farm. Ms. Callano said currently there are 15 horses are on the farm. Mr. Dasti asked how many of those have been sold as breed shares. Ms. Callano replied, “This year we sold Lady Nicole, Ego’s King Warrior, Princes Riley Rose, and 10% of one foal.” Mr. Dasti asked about the other property mentioned in some of the documentation. Ms. Callano confirmed that the Ocean County property was used more for boarding and currently the horses are at Gulfstream.

Mr. Dasti asked when the breed share contracts were signed because none of them were dated. Ms. Callano responded that Princess Riley Rose, Lady Nicole and Ego’s [King] Warrior contracts were executed in 2024. Ms. Callano indicated that after more training more shares were sold of each of Princess Riley Rose, Lady Nicole and Ego’s King Warrior was picked up in 2025. Ms. Callano confirmed she does not maintain control of Lady Nicole and believes she owns 26% of that horse. Ms. Callano confirmed she bred all the horses on her property; however, she did not breed Jersey Perfection. Mr. Dasti asked if all the horses bred by Ms. Callano are racing right now. Ms. Callano said that Lady Nicole is home, back at the farm, and resting and the others are at Gulfstream. Mr. Dasti asked Ms. Callano to confirm that all the horses are racehorses. Ms. Callano confirmed that all her horses being discussed here are racehorses and not ride share horses.

Mr. Matthews opened the Board questions by confirming that the other parcel mentioned in the documentation and in the testimony should not be included in the analysis. Ms. Callano confirmed that it should not be considered. There was a question about the seller’s residency certificate which Mr. Beekman spoke to, and it was not deemed to be relevant.

Mr. Bullock had questioned whether the income from the sales of the horse qualified as production income for Ms. Callano but was now satisfied that it does. Mr. DeFelice asked Ms. Callano to explain how income can be generated from the same horse in two different years. Ms. Callano responded that the first partner came in before the horses had been to the racetrack and the second came in after the horses had been successfully training and racing which is evidenced by the price differential (increase) in the two partners. Ms. Callano indicated that shares can be open at any point in time. For example, Ego’s King Warrior has available shares.

Mr. DeFelice asked for an explanation of the breeding and raising income and how it relates to shares. Ms. Callano explained that breeding and raising income is a service she provides and which doesn’t result in an exchange of ownership. Ms. Callano indicated that the breeding and raising payments were meant to be an investment in the breeding of a horse. Ms. Callano mentioned that PJ’s Hooker was sent out to Sea Wizard to be bred. She may or may not deliver a foal and the foal isn’t guaranteed to become a racehorse, so the payments are more of an investment in hopes of breeding that one incredible horse.

Mr. Matthews asked about the contracts – more specifically the terms of the contract – and whether the horse would ever be sold for a profit, citing the definition of raising and training in N.J.A.C. 2:76-2B.3. Mr. Matthews stated that it seemed more like a management contract in which the horse is racing in exchange for racing proceeds. Ms. Callano responded that the fractional share arrangement exists only during the time a horse is racing. Ms. Callano stated that once a horse is done racing it would retire or be repurposed. This would likely be on her property but could be on the property of the majority fractional owner, as in the case of Lady Nicole, which is the only horse with a majority partner.

Ms. Callano compared her financial arrangement to Kneeland, a well-known leader in Thoroughbred sales, “I am the Kneeland sale.” Mr. Ball added clarification that if any of Ms. Callano’s partners

wished to own a majority portion of any of the horses being discussed it would require an additional payment to Ms. Callano effectively diluting her share of the ownership. Mr. Ball added that the statute also provides for the income requirement to be met by substantiating the worth of a horse. Mr. Ball and Mr. Matthews had an exchange agreeing that presenting the worth of the horse would be a reasonable approach given the statute, however, that was not presented in the submission.

Mr. Van Mater asked Ms. Callano to speak to the other production on the farm. Mr. Callano and Mr. Ball spoke briefly and described the other items but explained that to make the process easier, they had focused on the larger income items.

Mr. Matthews asked about the ownership of the horses and referred to the screenshots from Samrock Stables' Jockey Club online account. Ms. Callano replied that the Jockey Club registration should not be referred to because the registration would not be updated until the horse takes its first race. Ms. Callano stated the certificate holder indicated on the documentation provided would represent where the horse is residing, for example, at Monmouth Park or Gulfstream. Mr. Matthews asked who Jet' M Stable was and Ms. Callano indicated that prior to setting up Samrock Stables they were Jet M which has since been dissolved.

Mr. Matthews addressed the single enterprise, another criteria in the commercial farm eligibility determination, by asking Ms. Callano to explain the relationship between the nonprofit and Samrock Stables. Mr. Matthews asked for clarification on why Samrock Stables' raising income was deposited into the nonprofit. Ms. Callano indicated that the arrangement was temporary and due to the closure of the Samrock Stables account.

Mr. DeFelice asked Ms. Callano how she sustains her farm to which she replied with the income from the breed shares.

Mr. Matthews asked again about the ownership of the horses. Ms. Callano walked through the percentage ownership of each horse. Mr. Ball added clarification as to the difference in ownership of the horses versus the entities.

Mr. Dasti began his cross examination by asking who makes decisions on horses when Samrock Stables doesn't own the majority of the horse. Ms. Callano responded and said the partnership to which Mr. Dasti asked if there was a partnership agreement. Ms. Callano referred to the contract and explained what happens in practice regarding decision making on horse strategy.

Mr. Ball made his closing remarks and summary by reviewing the criteria once again. Mr. Beekman opened it to the public. The following person spoke: William Fox and Jamie Saults. Ms. Saults explained her extensive background in the equine industry and her support for Samrock Stables and suggested contacting the Jockey Club or the Racing Commission if the Board had further questions. Assemblyman Alex Sauickie, who primarily represents Western Monmouth, expressed his support for Samrock Stables and shared his own and professional experience with the equine industry.

Mr. Beekman closed public comments and opened deliberations. Mr. Matthews went through the criteria:

- Size of the property (acreage)
- Zoning
- Farmland assessment
- Compliance with State laws
- Permissible activities

- Farm management unit operating as single enterprise
- Production income.

The board deliberations focused on the single enterprise aspect of the criteria. Mr. Pettyjohn motioned to determine Samrock Stables to be a commercial farm. Mr. Bullock seconded the motion and the vote passed unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Mr. Beekman opened the floor for general public comment. The following individuals spoke: William Fox spoke to former policies; Sheri Reavis, from Howell, requested that the Board educate the municipalities on Right to Farm; Assemblymen Alex Sauickie thanked the Board for acknowledging Assembly Bill No. 4603; and Elaine Taylor thanked the Board for the way they voted.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on **Tuesday, January 13, 2026, at 7:30 PM.**

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion from Mr. Holmes and seconded by Mr. Buscaglia, the meeting adjourned at 9:07 PM, which was approved by voice vote.