

Monmouth County Board of Agriculture  
December 17, 2013 Minutes

In attendance were: George Asprocolas, Rieks and Robin Bruins, Billy Carney, Dale Cruzan, Patrick DePalma, Stuart Faunce, Gabi Grunotein, David Holmes, Wickie Hom, Randy Peck, Bill Sciarappa, Anna and Angelo Trapani, Bill Walker, and Ed Wengryn.

The meeting was called to order by President Angelo Trapani at 7:40 PM after holiday refreshments. Anna Trapani moved to approve the November minutes. The motion was seconded by Bill Carney and passed. A current balance of our treasury was not available due to the absence of our treasurer, but Angelo Trapani reported that money has been withdrawn from our account and will be deposited tomorrow as a Farm Bureau promissory note. Gary DeFelice is also creating a budget.

State Board of Agriculture – Bill Walker

Sec. Fisher cut down the first Christmas tree of the season Dec. 2 at the Wyckoff Farm in White Township. This farm won the National Christmas Tree Association contest. Farmers Against Hunger received a \$100,000 Gleaning Support grant for their efforts gleaning 430,000 pounds for food for 70 organizations. NJDA's Jets Play 60 "Eat Right, Move More" program is working with the Dairy Council to incorporate activity and nutrition in our schools. The Department aided farmers in selling sweet potatoes and apples to hunters to be used as bait.

FFA – Stuart Faunce, Bill Carney, Dale Cruzan

180 members recently attended a leadership conference. Monmouth University will be the new site of the State FFA Convention, which had been held at Rutgers in past years. Results of the FFA Career Development Events are available in the Winter Changing Times newsletter. As usual, our county FFA members are knowledgeable and competitive. Allentown will host an Illinois FFA chapter during Martin Luther King weekend.

Freehold HS Animal and Botanical Science Academy received the Exemplary Program Award from the NJ School Boards.

Young Farmers and Ranchers – Stuart Faunce

Meetings are scheduled for January 19, 2014 at 1:30 and at the Ag Convention. Officers have been elected.

Extension – Bill Sciarappa

4-H agent will begin work in January. The \$430,000 salary should be signed by the Freeholders soon, bringing money back to Monmouth County for part time employees and equipment. This money represents salary earned from hours Bill spent teaching for Rutgers without pay. A landscape architect and Fruit Specialist should be hired soon.

Bill and the RCE staff received the Governor's Environmental Excellence Award for outreach programs such as rain garden construction and fertilizer reduction education.

STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) program at Neptune's Green Grove Elementary features our horticulturalist Diane Larson's expertise in planting two acres of fruit vines and trees including the first ever disease resistant hazelnuts.

Concern was expressed over the longevity of the Cream Ridge Research Center. Angelo will contact Tom Freiberger to promote the center.

USDA Farm Service Agency – Gabi Grunotein

Since some ballots were misprinted, new ones will be mailed by the 20<sup>th</sup> and are due back in the office by Jan. 17<sup>th</sup>. The ballots will be counted in the office on Jan. 23<sup>rd</sup> if you wish to attend. The late fee is waived. Conservation stewardship applications are due Jan. 17<sup>th</sup>.

Farm Bureau – Ed Wengryn

The Ag Committee has moved several bills from farm protection to commercial bee regulations. Open Space Funding is still up in the air. The gestation crate bill was pulled from the board. The new Farm Bill is back to the table with dairy policy being the sticking point. A 45 minute workshop will be offered at the Vegetable Growers meeting on the Food Safety Modernization Act Feb. 21, 2014.

Farm Bureau Women's Committee – Anna Trapani

Thank you for the contribution.

Coop – Randy Peck

The Coop is closed, but they will have a booth at the Ag Convention and will meet Feb. 15<sup>th</sup> at the Mason Lodge. Thanks to the new director, profits are up nearly 25%.

NJ Board of Ag – Marty Bullock

The Ag Convention will be held at the Taj Mahal in Atlantic City, NJ Feb. 4-6. Discount room reservations (\$67) can be made by Jan. 18<sup>th</sup> by calling 800-825-8888. Listening sessions will be Locally Grown, Microenterprises on preserved ground, crisis management and a panel discussion on GMO crops.

Board of Managers – Pat Butch

A letter from Gloucester County was mentioned which requested a tree fruit/ grape specialist. This letter had been presented to Dr. Katz. The job description had been rewritten requesting a small fruit specialist. Better communication is required between North and South and vigilance in maintaining production ag support. 50 to 75% of the money from the county is not being spent in the way that the county wishes.

The Annual ARMA Report was sent out. Email Pat any questions that you have about the information in the report. A special meeting is planned for Jan. 6 at Rutgers Food and Science. A light supper is scheduled for 5:00 and the meeting will follow at 5:30. Information is available on the Board of Manager's and County websites. Contact Pat Butch if you wish to attend so that food can be planned and a parking pass can be obtained for you.

A discussion followed on the Cream Ridge Research Facility. One issue that might be presented at the Jan. 6<sup>th</sup> session is that since we have lost our second ag agent, our county's research farm should receive a specialist to assist our county's farmers, rather than an agent being sent to South Jersey.

New Business

Ed Wengryn presented ideas on successfully contacting your legislators. Emails are best especially for DC correspondence because mailed letters go to an evaluation center prior to delivery. Keep it formal, give your name and address with zipcode for follow up. Include the bill number and whether you support or oppose the issue and a statement of how it affects you personally. If you wish to know how a legislator voted, ask the legislative aide. Office visits can create a relationship which can pay off later. A follow up thank you note is usually appreciated. The Farm Bureau website has current bills information. Congressional offices are in state not DC. Inform the office that you are from NJ.

Suggestions for our board include a once a year meeting with congressional members. Mention five issues that you feel are vital. Thank you notes should be sent to legislators attending our dinner or other events.

Ag Convention dinner payment is due Jan. 20<sup>th</sup>. Let Gary DeFelice know. George Asprocolas plus one, Pat Butch and Randy Peck will attend.

The NJ Green Energy Council requested dues which are \$125. Pat Butch moved to table. Rieks Bruins seconded the motion.

#### Old Business

We thanked Anna Trapani for refreshments.

Our Annual dinner will begin at 6:00 with cocktails, dinner to follow at 7:00.

Anna Trapani moved to adjourn, Marty Bullock seconded the motion which passed at 9:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin Bruins