

**Ocean County Agriculture Development Board  
Minutes of February 8, 2024  
Manchester Township Council Meeting Room/Courtroom**

**Attendance:** Doug Hallock, Chair; Kathleen Sucharski, Vice Chair; Glenn Riccardi (OCADB); Jeff Vogel (OCADB); Casey Hunter (OCADB); Martin Lynch (OCADB); Timothy Gleason (OCPLD); Thomas Thorsen (OCPLD); Larisa Paxton (OCPLD) Mat Thompson (County Counsel); Charles Roohr (SADC); Dr. Stephen Yergeau (OC Ag Ext); Jessica Pinto (OC Soil Conservation District).

Public Attendees: Diane Vogel, Robert Bowen, Mandy and Steve Kraemer

**I. Flag Salute**

**II. Call to order and Compliance with Open Public Meetings Act-** Mr. Hallock (Chair) called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm by stating the Open Public Meetings Act requirements had been met.

**III. Roll Call**

**IV. Oath of Office**

At 7:03 pm, Mr. Thompson administered the Oath of Office to Timothy Gleason.

**V. Approval of Minutes**

A **MOTION** was made by Mr. Hunter to approve the January 11, 2024 minutes. Ms. Sucharski seconded. Roll call. All in favor, motion carried. Mr. Lynch abstained.

**VI. Old Business**

- Lewis Farm, Plumsted Township – Staff updated the Board on the status of the acquisition of a development easement at 698 Route 539 in New Egypt. They explained that the application was brought in front of the Natural Lands Committee and a resolution was passed on January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2024 recommending the acquisition to the Ocean County Board of Commissioners. Staff informed the Board that the application is on the agenda for the February 21<sup>st</sup> Commissioners Board Meeting for approval. Upon approval, surveys will be ordered and the county council will begin to work on closing documents. This will be a sole County-owned easement and the owners will continue to live and farm the property. The Board asked if staff had received a resolution from Plumsted Township, and staff replied yes.

- Van Kirk (Canka/GreenCELL) Potential Deed of Easement Violation – Staff informed the Board that a site inspection with the DEP, SADC, Soil Conservation District, and staff was done on January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2024. The DEP wrote two violations regarding solid waste material and operating as a solid waste facility. The violation says that the solid waste material needs to be removed and the owner must provide a receipt of proper disposal and show they are making an effort to properly dispose of the material within 30 days.

Staff further informed the Board that on February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024 the Ocean County Soil Conservation District (OCSCD) wrote a violation for the failure to submit a Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Plan and failure to apply to the OCSCD for review and certification of the land disturbance. The OCSCD did not find that the soil importation is related to agricultural activity and is requesting documentation that the improvements conform to the NRCS standard for access lanes. Additionally, they are requesting the application for land disturbance and a Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Plan.

Staff informed the Board that the SADC ordered a soil report and should be receiving it soon. The SADC is going to have a meeting on February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2024, and this subject will go before the Committee for a possible determination. Staff anticipates receiving a copy of the soil report to have a public hearing for the CADB to make their own determination. Staff recommended that the Board wait to discuss this matter until they receive the soil report and can schedule a public hearing.

Mr. Hallock asked staff if they had reached out to the township about this matter. Staff replied that they did reach out to Plumsted before the first site inspection and they sent out a code official to the property and determined that there were no issues on the property. Staff also invited Plumsted staff to all site inspections thereafter, however, no one attended. Staff also informed the Board that Plumsted has a soil importation ordinance, however, there has not been much response from township staff upon their initial notice. Ms. Sucharski asked staff if they could reach out to the township again. Staff said they could reach back out to the township. Staff also mentioned that a public hearing can be scheduled upon receiving the soil report and more information from the SADC and DEP.

A **MOTION** was made by Mr. Hunter to move into closed session at 7:10 pm. Ms. Sucharski seconded. Roll call. All in favor, motion carried.

A **MOTION** was made by Mr. Lynch to move out of closed session into open session at 7:21 pm. Ms. Sucharski seconded. Roll call. All in favor, motion carried.

There will be no action taken on the single farm application that was discussed in closed session.

## **VII. Public Comment**

- Mr. Roohr updated the Board on the Canka Farms issue. He reiterated that staff from different departments including the SADC and CADB performed a site visit and had soil experts and scientists come out to the farm to collect samples for testing. The SADC expects to get the soil report back the following week. The SADC will review the report before their next meeting and will send the report to the CADB when they receive it. Mr. Roohr informed the Board that this issue is tentatively an agenda item at the February 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting. SADC staff will be presenting the facts and photos as well as the soil report to the Committee to see what their determination is and what will take place moving forward. The owner and tenant have been notified that this issue will be discussed at the meeting and are encouraged to attend and speak. Ms. Sucharski asked if the soil report will be on tests done on the soil that was always on the property or the soil that was brought in. Mr. Roohr responded that the tests will be done on samples taken from both types of soil (existing and imported).

Mr. Roohr updated the Board on three new positions opening up in the SADC and new programs being established. Mr. Hallock mentioned that other States are beginning to financially and programmatically support farmers such as assisting in the purchasing of their cover crops or seeds. He made additional suggestions to assist new and existing farmers in New Jersey. Mr. Roohr also mentioned that the SADC is thinking about starting up a farmer mentor program to partner new farmers with existing farmers to learn from. The SADC is planning on altering the cost-share programs to allow for higher cost-share agreements using some of the money in the preservation pool. He explains that once the Soil Protection Standards are passed, all of these programs will begin implementation.

Ms. Pinto updated the Board on their side of the Canka Farm issue. She also informed the Board that she attended an NRCS working group meeting and that the NRCS mentioned that more funding is allocated for the program. They want farmers to attend the meetings to assist them in deciding which programs the money should be put towards based on their needs.

Mr. Bowen introduced two Plumsted residents who had questions about the Canka farm issues. Mr. and Mrs. Kraemer stated their names to the Board and informed the Board that they are neighbors of the farm. The Kraemers explained that they have various concerns as to what activities are happening on the farm. She asked the Board about the Special Occasion Event (SOE) application that was submitted to the Board and County Council informed her that the owner

has withdrawn the application. Mr. and Mrs. Kraemer expressed their concerns about the farm and asked for clarification on the regulations of the farmland preservation program and the permitted activities on a preserved farm. The Board and staff gave the Kraemers basic information about the program and permitted activities and directed them to various sources for more information. Ms. Kraemer also asked if the Board has a timeline as to what is going to be done with this issue. Staff replied that the timeline is unknown at this time because there are many agencies involved in different parts of this issue.

Mr. Bowen informed the Board that Plumsted Township is monitoring the situation and that he is in contact with municipal staff regarding the soil importation ordinance. Mr. Bowen asked for clarification on the DEP violation and staff responded that the DEP investigation is separate from the SADC investigation.

The Kraemers asked who to report their concerns to as they arise and staff directed them to call the municipality, County, or State depending on the type of concern.

Mr. Riccardi stepped out of the room at 8:09 pm.

#### **VIII. Riccardi Farm, Plumsted Township**

- Staff informed the Board that this property is about 15 acres located on Highbridge Rd. in New Egypt. The application has 1 non-severable exception area for an existing residence and the property is zoned R-40. Staff reported that they discussed this application with the Natural Lands Committee as it is fully wooded, so the SADC would not preserve the farm with the County. The Natural Lands Committee approved the County moving forward with the application. Staff asked if the Board wants to order appraisals on the property.

A **MOTION** was made by Ms. Sucharski to order appraisals on the Riccardi Farm in Plumsted Township. Mr. Vogel seconded. Roll call. All in favor, motion carried. Mr. Riccardi recused himself.

The Board discussed vacancies and staff informed them of which seats need to be filled.

**IX. Adjournment**

A **MOTION** to adjourn at 8:18 pm was made by Mr. Lynch and Ms. Sucharski seconded. All in favor, motion passed.

**Next Meeting: March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024 at 7:00pm**

**Manchester Township Council Meeting Room/Courtroom**

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Larisa Paxton".

Larisa Paxton

Planner Trainee