

MINUTES OF THE MERCER COUNTY AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT BOARD
MEETING HELD MONDAY AUGUST 6, 2018
IN THE EXTENSION SERVICE BUILDING
930 SPRUCE STREET, TRENTON, N.J.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Steve Jany called this meeting to order at 7:30 PM.

II. COMPLIANCE STATEMENT

Pursuant to the Open Public Meetings Act, notice of this meeting was given to the Trenton Times, Trentonian, Mercer County Clerk, and posted in the Mercer County Administration Building.

III. ROLL CALL

A. Voting Members:

Steve Jany, Chairman – Present	Scott Ellis – Absent
Frank D’Amico, Vice-Chairman – Present	Kelly Mooij – Absent
Kristine Walsh – Absent	Gary Mount – Present
Laurie Emde – Present	

B. Non-Voting Members:

Bill Agress/County Planning Board Liaison – Present
Meredith Melendez/Rutgers Cooperative Research and Extension – Present

C. Others Present:

Emily Blackman, CADB Secretary	Amy Mandelbaum, SADC
Leslie Floyd, County Planning Director	Public: Ashley and Sam Kerr

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

On a motion by Mr. D’Amico and seconded by Ms. Emde, the minutes of the May 7, 2018 regular meeting were unanimously approved. Mr. Mount also made a motion to make Emily Blackman of the County Planning Department staff the CADB Secretary. Mr. D’Amico seconded the motion. Ms. Blackman was unanimously approved as the CADB Secretary.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT: None

VI. CORRESPONDENCE

Ms. Blackman reported that the annual legislative breakfast is taking place at Terhune Orchards on September 17th. It is an opportunity for legislators to hear from the agricultural community about current issues.

VII. COMMITTEE AND STAFF REPORTS

A. SADC:

- Ms. Blackman introduced Ms. Mandelbaum, who is the new SADC regional coordinator for Mercer County following Dan Knox’s retirement. Ms. Mandelbaum provided the following updates:
 - The SADC is soliciting comments until September 5th about amendments to their Municipal PIG rules (this topic was covered in more detail later in the agenda).
 - The SADC has four active preservation projects in the County – two state direct acquisitions, one non-profit and one municipal project.
 - The SADC has a new Partner Update publication that will be distributed

periodically to let municipal, county and non-profit partners know about current issues, updates and workshops.

B. Land Development Activity: None

C. Farmland Preservation Status:

- *Chowdhury Hamilton*: Application at SADC for cost-share is complete.
- *Chowdhury Hopewell*: Appraisals are complete for the fee purchase of ~ 29 acres. Ms. Blackman showed slides of the property and reported that the County is in negotiations with the landowner. The County hopes to buy the whole property in fee and then place an agricultural easement on the property and sell it at auction. The County also plans to retain a trail corridor along the southern boundary to connect to adjacent open space. The Board noted that they would like to discuss the location of the exception area if the project moves forward. Ms. Blackman asked the Board to vote on a preliminary resolution for this project, authorizing the County to apply for SADC funding for the easement in the event that an agreement is reached with the landowner. Ms. Emde made a motion to adopt the resolution. Mr. D'Amico seconded. The resolution was unanimously approved.
- *Kerr (Hopewell)*: Ms. Floyd provided an update on the negotiations with the Kerr family to preserve their farm on Bear Tavern Road in Hopewell. Ashley and Sam Kerr were in attendance and Ms. Floyd provided clarification about the County's offer to the family.

IX. OLD BUSINESS

- *PennEast pipeline*: There are no updates to the status from the last meeting.
- *Monitoring*: The Dakota Nursery property on Perrineville Road has not been maintained in a number of years and no B&B trees have been removed. The property is growing into forest, which is a violation of the agricultural easement. The County has sent multiple letters over the years requesting that the property be maintained. In July 2018, County Counsel sent the owners another letter giving them until August 21st, 2018 to bring the farm into compliance with the easement. Staff will inspect the property on the 21st and the County will begin legal proceedings if there is no evidence of maintenance on the property.
- *Auction*: The County's May 24th auction was successful and all four properties are scheduled to close in August or September.

X. NEW BUSINESS

- *Wert Farm – Hopewell East Project Area*: Ms. Blackman and Ms. Floyd met with the Wert family and Hopewell Township staff to explain the County's farmland preservation process. The family owns a farm that is targeted for preservation by the County and they may be interested in preserving it.
- *Melicharek Farm – Robbinsville/East Windsor*: Ms. Blackman received an inquiry from the Melicharek family through Ms. Mandelbaum of the SADC about farmland preservation for their ~15 acre property. The farm is not in the County ADA, so cannot be considered for the County's program at this time. It was noted that the farm also has a small amount of tillable acreage (<50% of the property).
- *Comments on SADC Municipal PIG rule amendment*: Ms. Blackman received a memo from the SADC requesting CADB comments on the SADC's Municipal PIG rule amendments by September 5, 2018. The Board discussed a number of issues. Two

specific comments on the rules were that 1) the SADC should not remove the option for landowners to request that their land be removed from consideration as a targeted farm and that 2) the rules should specifically reference viable commercial agriculture in #5 in 2:76-17A.4 Municipal farmland preservation plan. In addition, the Board discussed the SADC's minimum criteria and how they impact urban communities. The criteria penalize urban counties because small farms that may be critical to urban communities cannot compete with larger farms for funding under the SADC's criteria. The Board believes that there should be geographic distribution across the state in where farmland preservation funds are spent because the funds are collected from the entire state. Ms. Blackman will draft a letter for the Board's review for submission to the SADC.

XII. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: None

XIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION: None was required.

XIV. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45PM. The next scheduled meeting of the MCADB is October 1, 2018.

Respectfully submitted,
Emily Blackman
MCADB Secretary

Date adopted: October 1st, 2018

Attachments, if any, are made a part of the permanent record and are filed in the Minute Book, and are located in the Mercer County Planning Division Office. All copies are available upon request.