

Cornell Cooperative Extension | Schoharie and Otsego Counties

Board of Directors Organizational Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, September 24, 2024, 6:30 p.m.

Cobleskill Extension Center, Cooperstown Education Center & Virtual Meeting

I. Call to order – President Tina Douglas called the Association Board of Directors to order at 6:40 PM. The president directed members to review the agenda and asked for additional agenda items. No additions were requested.

II. Roll call –Secretary Leslie Judd did roll call and the board members present were Tina Douglas, Lynn Dunn, Deborah Gansinger Hall, Danielle Hautanami, Betsy Jensen, Leslie Judd, Shelby MacLeish, Andrew Marietta, Carol Phelps, Tom Pullyblank, Steve Sinniger, Alicia Terry (via Zoom), and Mahla Zare (via Zoom). Also in attendance were Intern Board Member Kris Liburd, and staff Liz Callahan, Mayra Richter and Nicole Thompson. Absent were James Bryant and Christine Edwards. A quorum was present.

Liz introduced our Executive Leadership intern, Kris Liburd who is a senior at SUNY Oneonta and will be with us for the fall and spring semesters. Kris introduced himself; the Board and staff reciprocally made introductions.

III. Secretary's Report – Leslie Judd asked for any corrections or additions to the July 23,2024 meeting minutes. With no corrections voiced, Steve Sinniger moved to approve the minutes as distributed, Deborah Gansinger Hall seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

IV. Nominating Committee Report – The committee has not met. Have distributed the door prize sign-up sheets for the annual meeting on October 16. Liz requested the names of those interested in joining the committee. We need 1 new 4-H Program Advisory Committee member from Otsego County. We also need 2 new Ag/Hort Program Advisory Committee members from Otsego County.

V. Standing Committee Reports (*Committee meeting minutes previously provided for review*):

- **Finance & HR Committee** – The committee met on September 17, 2024.

Tom Pullyblank noted the highlights of the meeting reporting that there was nothing unusual regarding finances, there were a few lines that are over budget due to money being recouped from balance transfers and are now on the positive side for revenue.

Mayra reported that an additional deposit was made for Otsego County in September of approximately \$5,200 from August revenue from 4-H Otsego Livestock Auction and county fair store, that had not been presented in time for inclusion in the August report.

Tom reported that there was a follow-up discussion regarding staff communication barriers and all is proceeding well. Liz reported that the staff are working on it and addressing things as constructively as possible to move staff communications and concerns forward in the most productive way.

Liz reported that there were a few personnel matters addressed, one being an employee's comment against another employee that has been addressed both verbally and in writing with a corrective action notice and an administrative referral for anger management through the Employee Assistance Program.

Liz also mentioned that the Finance & HR committee members all had great suggestions during their meeting.

With no further questions voiced, Carol Phelps moved to approve the Otsego County Financial Reports through August 2024 subject to audit; Betsy Jensen seconded the motion. Shelby MacLeish moved to approve the Schoharie County Financial Reports through August 2024 subject to audit; and Deborah Gansinger Hall seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

- **Fund Development Committee** – The committee met on August 30, 2024.

Andrew Marietta highlighted the Board Survey was sent to all board members to clarify how/how often each member is willing to participate in fund development activities.

Mohawk Valley Gives Day was Friday September 20th. Overall, we raised \$1,300 for Otsego County Cornell Cooperative Extension which is more than prior year effort. Liz agreed that it was a good fundraiser, and we will continue to do it as long as it's available. Carol noted that the MVG road signs might work better for us if they were more specific to our area.

The Year End Annual Appeal letter was mailed on September 12th and has raised about \$1,200 so far. Staff will send out a reminder again before the end of the year. General discussion regarding fund development ensued.

- **Buildings & Grounds Committee** – The committee met on September 17, 2024.

Tom Pullyblank reported that all is status quo at the Cooperstown office and looking into funding for rehabilitation; same for the Cobleskill office. Steve Sinniger asked if the driveway has been sealed at the Cobleskill office, Mayra said it has not but will get quotes in the spring. Mayra also reported that the cement work on the sidewalks is complete and she is gathering quotes for carpet cleaning.

- **Annual Meeting Committee** – The committee has not formally met.

Deb Gansinger Hall reported that the annual meeting preparations are going well and wanted to thank everyone who is on the committee and the board members for donating items for door prizes. Working with the staff at the college is going very well and a tour of the Human Ecology Building will be offered after the meeting.

IV. Program Advisory Committee Reports: (Committee meeting notes previously provided for review)

- **Agriculture/Horticulture** – The committee met on September 4, 2024.

Betsy reported that the committee talked again about the purpose of the Program Advisory Committee and the connection between the staff and committee members. The committee also discussed activities and events going on within the Agriculture and Horticulture programs. At the time of the PAC meeting, Family Farm Day statistics were still being gathered and will be reported on at the next meeting.

Carol mentioned that the Seed to Supper training should start late fall or early winter for implementation next year, but nothing is finalized yet with the program.

Liz reported that there is a conversation among executive directors invested in the CNYDLFC Team about possibly merging Capital Region Ag Specialists into the Team expanding the counties covered under the one group. It was decided that each association will do some research within their respective agricultural communities on what types of

resources they might want to see in a larger Team. Andrew expressed concerns that the board has requested data over the years to quantify the use and success of the Teams in our counties but have not received sufficient data. Alicia spoke to the knowledge, skills and abilities of those on the Teams and what they bring to the farmers in the respective counties is a tremendous resource even if specific numbers are hard to quantify. Liz iterated that telling their story is the difficult challenge so that the community understands how their resources have benefited the Ag communities.

- **FCS** – The committee met on September 17, 2024.

Deborah Gansinger-Hall reported that Nelta Miller was hired for the Healthy Connections Nutrition Educator position. On October 1st, Maegan Freeman will join our staff from CCE Delaware as our SNAP-Ed Nutrition Educator for Otsego and Delaware Counties. Michelle has also created new brochures to fit new branding “Healthy Habits”, which now includes her being able to work with young adults ages 18-25. Having discussions about Seed to Supper, community gardens, and Farm to School.

- **4-H** – The committee did not meet. Both fairs were successful. Teresa is on medical leave of absence for a few weeks.

VI. Executive Director’s Report:

Liz Callahan reported that we found out late last week that we were awarded the Farm to School grant through NYS Ag & Markets for \$100,000, through August of 2026. We can’t formally announce until NYS Ag & Markets makes their press release. The grant is to formally expand the program to 10 schools in Otsego County and to continue to maintain the relationships with schools in Schoharie County. We also have the opportunity to work with the Harvest NY program, and we are lucky to have a former Otsego County 4-H youth, Kate Preston to develop the Farm to School curriculum for Harvest NY.

Liz met Caroline Myran, Schoharie County Ag Development Specialist last week during Assemblyman Tague’s farm tour. In addition to participating on the farm tours, Our association did attend the reception before the assemblyman’s dinner; 4-H youth from both counties and their skills were on display.

Liz reported that two new staff have been hired in September. Nelta Miller is our new FCS Nutrition Educator for our Healthy Connections program. Michaela Fisher is our Community Energy Educator for our subcontract with the NYSERDA energy hub out of CCE Oneida County. On October 1 Maegan Freeman, SNAP-Ed Nutrition Educator, will be joining our association coming from CCE Delaware. Maegan will continue to do SNAP-Ed Nutrition Education for both Otsego and Delaware Counties.

The executive committee met on August 28 to discuss the SNAP-Ed grant. CCE Onondaga has informed us that the new budget has been approved by NYS but that the actual grant is not yet formally qualified. There is a very small chance that the grant may not be qualified and if that is the case, we may assume some fiscal liability by hiring Maegan on October 1, prior to the finalization of the grant which make take up to 90 days. The Executive Committee approved the potential fiscal liability of up to \$15K.

Liz reported that staff is still working on the USDA NIFA grant transfer and budget details and will start to brainstorm soon for the Food Security through Gardening grant. She also mentioned that strategic planning will continue to move forward through the fall and will be the focus in future PAC meetings.

VII. Otsego Board of Representatives Report – Andrew Marietta reported that the Otsego County Board of Representatives is beginning the process of the 2025 budget. Last year, there was some deferred capital improvement issues so the county has created a multi-year capital infrastructure plan. The new strategic plan will be focused more on the county itself including employee compensation and governmental capacity versus external goals as done in the past, like improving broadband which is beyond the scope of Otsego County. The strategic plan will be very much about improving the county government to better serve constituents and partners.

VIII. Schoharie Board of Supervisors Report – Alicia Terry announced that the county is excited to have Caroline Myran on board as the new Schoharie County Agricultural Development Specialist. Alica reported that the county budget process is underway, and the tentative budget will be announced at the Board of Supervisors meeting on October 18. Alicia let Liz know that the county department meetings are set for the week of October 21. Alicia also reported that it is highly probable that Schoharie County will be receiving grant funding to bring fiber optic connectivity to over 4,000 homes in the county and could potentially mean 100% broadband coverage throughout the county.

IX. New Business: No new business to present.

X. Old Business: No old business discussed.

XI. Executive Session – Carol Phelps made a motion to go into executive session to discuss personnel matters. Tom Pullyblank seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

The board reconvened at 8:45 PM and the board meeting resumed. Tom Pullyblank motioned to confer the full title of Executive Director to Liz Callahan for 4 years. Lesley Judd seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Adjournment: Meeting Adjourned at 8:48 PM on a motion by Shelby MacLeish, seconded by Tom Pullyblank. Our next meeting is on November 26, 2024.

Minutes submitted by: Mayra Richter

Reviewed by: Liz Callahan