

**SENECA COUNTY CORNELL COOPERATIVE EXTENSION  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
CCE Office Conference Room, 369 East Main St. Waterloo  
Minutes  
March 16, 2026 6 PM**

1. Call to order *The meeting was called to order by President Jolene Steele at 6:04 pm. Present: President Jolene Steele, Vice President Brad Ellis, Treasurer Marty Rotz, Secretary Kathy Chase, Members Jeff Trout, Phil Plummer, Karen Wilson, Frank Catalano, Doug Haith, Executive Director Ave Bauder, 4-H Youth Development Issue Leader Rachel Williams. Excused: Mark James and Mike Ruiz, SES Tim Davis.*
2. Welcome Executive Director Elect, Rachel Williams, *Jolene welcomed Rachel and expressed how happy everyone is that Rachel is going to be the new Executive Director.*
3. Approve agenda (with any additions or deletions) *Ave noted the addition of a bullet to the Finance Report and that there is a written SES report from the agenda that had been sent out earlier. Motion to approve the agenda by Frank Catalano and seconded by Marty Rotz. Carried.*
4. Approve January 12, 2026 Meeting Minutes *Ave noted that he left out the “r” in Brad’s name and will correct the minutes. Motion to approve the January minutes including the Yearly Approval minutes by Brad Ellis and seconded by Phil Plummer. Carried.*
  - Approve March 4, 2026 Special Board Meeting Minutes. *Motion by Kathy Chase and second by Frank to approve the Minutes of the Special Board Meeting. Carried.*
5. Finance Report:
  - Review December 2025/Year End Financial Statement.
    - Approval of November and December 2025 Designated Fund transfers *Ave reviewed the November and December transfers. Motion by Jeff Trout and second by Karen Wilson to approve the transfers. Carried.*  
*Ave then reviewed the Balance Sheet, Cash Accounts, and Statement of Operations for December 2025, noting that we are still trying to get a printout that eliminates the lines that do not have any budget or transactions and that is readable. He also noted that 2026 printouts will likely have a budget figure for NYS Fringe Benefits, which we have historically not done, as this is a flowthrough number from campus that is dependent on staff salaries and benefits and not easy to calculate at the start of a year. Ave then turned to the recommendations for Year End balance transfers.*
    - Recommendations for 2025 Year End balance transfers to designated funds. *Ave noted that he made the recommendations in consultation with Rachel. Ave reviewed the recommendations to distribute the \$54,655 of revenues over expenses. Much of this amount can be attributed to various staff vacancies. Funds receiving major increases were: Staff Compensation Fund: \$13,000, which is the amount for COLAs that the County allocation was not able to provide this year. Ave is having Nancy take \$1,083 a month from the fund and into the general budget to cover salary expenses. Staff Retreat Fund: \$16,000. This line covers all staff development, conference expenses, etc. With many new staff anticipated who will need PD and Rachel’s intention to hold an off-site staff retreat, this amount was felt appropriate. Vehicle Replacement Fund: \$5,114.90 as this fund was depleted with the purchase of the Rav4 and the van will eventually need to be replaced. Rachel outlined the SPARK programming we are doing in 4-H to bring youth into 4-H outside of traditional clubs or school activities. Brad asked if there was a*

*fund to support the Climate Stewards program and Ave noted that was the Climate/Natural Resources fund which was brought up to \$10,000. Motion by Jeff and second by Marty to approve. Carried.*

- Acceptance of the December 2025 Financial Report as amended by transfer recommendations. *Motion by Marty and second by Karen to Approve. Carried.*
- Any Other Necessary Year End Financial approvals
  - Appointment of Judy Wright as check signer to replace Rachel Williams. (April 1) *Motion by Jeff and second by Brad to appoint. Approved Check signers will now be: Brad Ellis, Marty Rotz, Tricia Carvalho, and Judy Wright.*
  - Appointment of Rachel Williams and Judy Wright to sign off on Acumatica transactions (April 1) *Ave explained that Acumatica is the CCE System's finance software. Motion by Marty and seconded by Jeff to appoint. Approved.*
  - Appointment of Rachel Williams and Judy Wright and removal of Ave Bauder and Patti Paine to pay the Cornell Bill on line through ACH (April 1) *Motion by Jeff and second by Karen to appoint. Approved.*
  - Approve On-line access to ESL accounts for Nancy Lamberson *Question on CDs. ESL bought Generations Banks, which held our CDs. As the CDs matured the money was moved to a Money Market Fund at Generations/ESL and are now in CDs at Wayne Bank. Motion by Brad and second by Kathy to approve. Carried.*

6. Liaison Reports:

- Cornell- Written report. Ave will highlight. *SES Tim Davis was unable to attend but sent a written report. Ave pointed out that we are well on our way with year-end requirements and that we should appoint a Nominating Committee, which is one of our accreditation requirements. Many Associations scramble for Board members as we do, with Board members doing the work of the Nominating Committee and asking prospective members to join, so we are not the only ones, but Jolene will appoint a committee, utilizing some former Board members along with 2 sitting Board members.*
- Board of Supervisors *Jeff noted that the Chairman changed up the committee set up and there is now a Contract & Negotiations Committee, of which he is the Chair, and a Special Budget Committee being chaired by Beth Partee. He noted that next year's budget may be tough one with less federal money coming in and the tax reserve fund dwindling. Holding steady with no increase may be the best we can hope for. Jeff also noted the presentation by the County LDC of which Ave is Vice-Chair was a good one, as was one by Deputy Director of County Planning Joe McGrath on the Land Bank and Housing Study. Discussion of Willard and economic development in southern Seneca County. Because of the delay/refusal of NYS to give control of the property to the County, the \$500,000 in County ARPA funds earmarked for Willard will likely go to the County Water/Sewer Authority as they need to be spent.*

7. President's Remarks *Jolene commented on the intensity of the process to select an new Executive Director, noting that she was sorry to see Ave leave but that she was so happy that Rachel will be filling his shoes and had great ideas on leading the Association forward.*

8. Executive Director Report

Questions on written report *There were no questions on the written report. Brad noted the success of the Winter Market, especially when CCE is there with its local products table every other week and thanked us for our participation.*

9. Old Business

- FL Shared Business Network *Nothing major to report. With Ave's retirement, Tess McKinley, the SBN Lead Ed from Steuben will become the longest serving ED in the SBN at 6 years.*
- Grants update *No great changes or things to note other than the Creating Healthy Schools and Communities grant which we are a subcontractor for with the County Health Department for \$10,000 will be coming to an end in June. The County is not re-applying for the grant which has been difficult to staff for them.*
- Willard Task Force/County & Ovid LDC *Much of this was covered by the previous discussion during the Jeff's report. Ave did note that he is working with a group of Design Connect students from Cornell on Ovid re-development, but asking them to focus on areas that will not overlap/interfere with upcoming redevelopment studies being done by the county and an Ovid Comprehensive Plan being funded by the IDA. These areas include possible funding sources, feasibility of a grocery store, and ways to connect the development of the previous fire site to the latest site.*
- Nutrition Educator Search *Ave reported that Chris Ehlers is being offered the regular Nutrition/Human Ecology Educator position which she has held since last March. There were three other candidates, two who have not yet graduated and one who failed to provide a required cover letter and did not have the experience we are looking for.*
- Sick Bank Policy *Ave suggested the development of this policy be postponed until Rachel has time to fully explore it. Initial reaction from two SBN HR Leads was that it could not be done based on previous conversations the HR people had held. However, the conversations Ave had with them indicated they may not have had a clear grasp of how a sick bank does or could work. Ave and Rachel both think it might, but it is an effort that is down the road.*

#### 10. New Business-

- Accept resignation of Board Member Mike Ruiz *Jolene had a conversation with Mike concerning his absence from Board meetings and with other commitments he does not have the time to devote to the board and he verbally resigned his seat. His resignation was accepted.*
- Open seats *Mike's resignation creates two open seats on the board. Discussion of possible candidates, including Erin Peruzzini and Theresa Lahr who served on the Search Committee and Marti Macinski who recently ended her commitments on another Board. Ave will look at when terms end for Mike's and the open position so that people can be approached for appointments. Jolene also received an email from Jeremy Elliott-Engel, who recently moved to Seneca Falls and works at Hobart and William Smith. He is a former 4-H State Director in Arizona and State Extension Director in Hawaii. Ave suggested that Jolene and Rachel meet with him over lunch to tell him about Seneca and ways we can get him involved.*
- Outline upcoming searches *Ave outlined the upcoming searches:*
  - *Environmental/Natural Resources Educator. This is Ryan's former position and currently funded by Cayuga CCE, Schuyler CCE and us. The PD should be approved any time now. Schuyler may have trouble remaining in the mix due to other cuts affecting their overall budget. We are exploring the possibility of Seneca County Soil and Water becoming the 3<sup>rd</sup> partner as they have asked us about sharing an educator previously. We will have a better understanding after the Schuyler County BOD meets on March 19<sup>th</sup>.*
  - *4-H Resource Educator. This position will backfill Rachel's position in leading the 4-H program and requires a Master's degree. Our recently hired 4-H Educator, Karen Brucroff, actually meets the qualifications for this position and has been doing a great job thus far for us, so we are hoping that she will be the successful candidate when we do the search. We are tracking down a PD example for this position so we can move forward.*

- *Anticipated Opening for a 4-H Educator. To backfill Karen's position if she is successful in the 4-H Resource Educator search. We would run this close to concurrently with the Resource Educator search so that it would not go unfilled long.*
- *Temporary Nutrition and Farm to School Assistant. This is someone to support the educators in the schools, at Farmers' Markets, tabling public events and school open houses where we need an extra set of hands. This could be someone who is a high school graduate or college student and a temporary position so would not have to go through the Cornell application system, other than getting the PD approved at the SBN level. We can look for someone as soon as this is done.*
- *Farm to School Coordinator. With Candace now on Long Term Disability, we can begin to see how we want to define this position and its relationship to the Nutrition/Human Ecology educator. Because of our MOAs with the school districts we need to have a person on board whose primary responsibility is school programming.*
- *Other Ave a Rachel updated the Board on a situation with the Farm to School division of CCE's Harvest NY, a statewide Ag team. When originally begun they were going to concentrate on procurement of local food for the schools, which was/is greatly needed. The short version of the discussion is this: For various reasons we were looking for someone to provide training for the Food Service staff from Waterloo, Romulus and Seneca Falls on March 13<sup>th</sup>. Chris reached out to a former colleague who told her to contact Brigaid, a company who provides those types of training. The VP at Brigaid said they would be happy to do that but to contact Harvest NY as they had a contract with Brigaid to provide that type of training through a program called Regional Roots and they might be able to pay for it. Chris contacted HNY and Chris, Rachel and Ave met on March 4<sup>th</sup> with the HNY staff person in charge of Regional Roots, the person in charge of procurement for our northern 3 districts and the person in charge of procurement that covers South Seneca. We learned that Regional Roots is only able to cover 50 schools in the state a year (schools, not districts), that the model they use individual school buildings and not multiple districts on a conference day, they were all booked up anyway and they could not guarantee that a district that applied would be selected because their staff and resources were limited to 50. So, it was not going to work for us and amiably said we would contact Brigaid directly to do the training for us on the 10<sup>th</sup> and one of the HNY staff asked to confirm that toward the end of the meeting.  
When Chris called Brigaid the next day (March 5<sup>th</sup>) she left a message for her contact and received a text from him at the end of the day saying sorry but that after extensive internal discussions that day, they would only be providing training through HNY or if an individual school contacted them. When Chris spoke with him on the 6<sup>th</sup>, he said that it had been prompted by a call from Harvest NY and that they had been back and forth with them. We were unable to provide the training on the 13<sup>th</sup>. Ave set up a meeting with Jud Reid, who heads up the HNY team. Jud knows Seneca County well but is overseeing a number of programs and we suspected is unaware of any of this. Ave and Rachel met with Jud on March 16<sup>th</sup> and filled him in. He was appropriately concerned and responsive, said he would look into things on his end and then set up a meeting with Rachel, Chris, the person overseeing the Farm to School component of HNY and him to discuss.*
- *Adjourn Motion by Frank and second by Kathy to adjourn. Carried. The meeting adjourned at 7:39 pm.*

**Next meeting May 11, 2026**