Cornell Cooperative Extension Orange County
Board of Directors Meeting
Minutes
October 26, 2026 5:30PM
CCE Office, 18 Seward Ave. Middletown, NY 10940

In Attendance: Andrea Nilon, Paul Ruszkiewicz, Paul Wiley, Nancy Proyect Rider, Amy Minutolo, Tom Manza, Kathi Nywening, Patricia Claiborne, Dave Goggins, Rachel Carr, Diane Aboushi Saleh.

Absent: Ed Estrada, Jacky Guan

Staff In Attendance: Caitlin O'Brien, Jill Van Aken, Eli Bloom, Maire Ullrich, Cindy Blomquist, Suzy McCormack, Shayna Russo, Amanda Sostre

Call to Order: Meeting was called to order at 5:34PM by Board President, Amy Minutolo; followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call: Kathi Nywening, Board Secretary

Review and Approval of Minutes for September 28, 2026

- Minutes amended to remove the line about having to bring names to next meeting.

Motion by Andrea Nilon, seconded by Nancy Proyect Rider to approve the minutes from September 28, 2026. Vote taken – unanimous. Motion approved.

Impact Statement Program Presentation:

Caitlin O'Brien, Relatives as Parents Program (RAPP) Program Manager – **RAPP**

- RAPP is specifically focused on supporting kinship families and has been operating for the past 26 years.
- Program services include:
    - Peer Mentoring
    - Support Groups
    - Youth Programming
    - Respite Care
    - Legal Assistance
    - Resources and Referrals
    - Parenting Education

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- Intergenerational Events

❖ Program Impacts
- Creates a greater sense of community and support among kinship families.
- Increase in outreach calls from families seeking assistance and resources.
- Increase program visibility and outreach through new branding materials, social media campaigns, and peer mentor involvement.

❖ Many kinship families do not qualify for other available benefits and financial assistance.
- Kinship caregivers may be eligible for a $400/month grant
  - Majority of families are not receiving this assistance
- In comparison, foster parents receive approximately $1000/month in financial support.
- RAPP helps fill this gap by providing kinship families with support, resources, and connections to available services.

Program Updates

❖ Agriculture – *Eli Bloom, Agriculture Program Leader*
- Beef Quality Assurance – November 5th
  - Training for beef producers focused on herd management, animal care, food safety, and beef quality.
- Big Glean – November 11th at Lawrence Farms
  - Volunteers will harvest and pack apples for distribution to local food pantries, soup kitchens, and community organizations.
  - Both morning and afternoon volunteer opportunities are available.
  - The gleaning program helps connect local farm produce with community members experiencing food insecurity.
- Beekeeping Basics – November 21st
  - Target attendance is 40 participants, with registration nearly full.
  - Program will be offered in both English and Spanish
  - An apiary and fencing are planned for installation next year, with the goal of beginning hands-on beekeeping instruction in 2027
- Kissing Ball & Tabletop Tree Workshops – December 4th
  - Participants will create seasonal decorations using fresh greens.
- Greenhouse Growers – January 27th
  - Upcoming educational program for greenhouse growers

❖ Food, Nutrition, & Movement (FNM) – *Shayna Russo, Regional Project Manager*
- SNAP-Ed officially ended on September 30, 2026. Program has now transitioned to FNM.
- Creating Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC Grant)
  - Current focus areas include:

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- School wellness
- Early childhood
- Active communities
- Fruit & Vegetable Rx program

  - Social Media was fully transitioned as of 10/19/26
  - Rescued EATS
    - Another round of the program in partnership with Orange-Ulster BOCES (OUBOCES)
    - OUBOCES is interested in continuing the program on a monthly basis.

❖ Family & Community Development & 4-H – *Suzy McCormack, Issue Leader*

  - RAPP Holiday Party – December 5th
  - Program Advisory Committee (PAC)
    - Discussed increasing public accessibility to programs and ensuring the community is aware of available programming.
    - A board liaison is needed for PAC.

President's Report – *Amy Minutolo, Board President*

❖ Attended the Executive Leader's Conference (ELC) and found the conference informative and gained valuable knowledge from the experience.

Executive Director's Report – *Maire Ullrich, Executive Director*

❖ Giving Thanks – November 2nd
  - Amy will read the book Fry Bread

❖ Annual Meeting – December 14th

❖ Education & Economic Committee met about county budget and passed 4.36% ask

❖ Next ELC will be held May 25-27, 2027 at West Point.

Report of Liaisons/Representatives

❖ Orange County Executive's Office – *Paul Wiley*

  - Budget season underway and has been challenging
  - Camp Laguardia
    - Almost all buildings are down
  - Schunnemunk Trail has been connected to the Heritage Trail
    - Paving anticipated in 2027
    - Orange County now own a trail head associated with the trail
  - Sugar Loaf Performing Arts Center
    - Lots of shows, highly recommend!

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- ❖ Orange County Legislators – *Paul Ruszkiewicz*
    - Budget season underway
- ❖ CCE State Specialist – *Patricia Claiborne*
    - Pleased to see how well RAPP program has evolved
    - Board officers will need to be elected at Reorganizational meeting
    - Executive Director Annual Performance Review due
        - Conferral of Title takes place after two years
            - Information regarding the process can be found in the Tool Box
                - Maire will send Toolbox to board members for reference
    - Extension Program Outcomes (EPOs) due at the end of November

Committee Reports

- ❖ Finance Committee – *Nancy Proyect Rider, Board Treasurer and Committee Chair*
    - August financials were unremarkable

Motion by Dave Goggins, seconded by Kathi Nywening to accept the August financials as presented. Vote taken – unanimous. Motion accepted.

Motion by Dave Goggins, seconded by Paul Ruszkiewicz to authorize credit cards for Elias Bloom and Chloé Vital. Vote taken – unanimous. Motion approved.

Motion by Kathi Nywening, seconded by Andrea Nilon to adopt the Gift Acceptance Policy. Vote taken – unanimous. Motion adopted.

- ❖ Fund Development – *Jill Van Aken, Community Liaison*
    - Bountiful Harvest
        - $24K profit
        - ≈ $13K outstanding pledges
        - Attendance was great
- ❖ Nominating Committee – *Andrea Nilon, Board Committee Member*
    - Incumbent Members
        - Rachel Carr
        - Diane Aboushi Saleh
        - David Goggins
    - Possible New Members
        - Andrew Nunez
        - Danielle Diana-Smith
        - Neirouz Watad
    - Committee should consist of primarily external members.

Motion by Kathi Nywening, seconded by Amy Minutolo to accept the slate as presented. Vote taken – unanimous. Motion accepted.

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- ❖ Constitution Committee
    - Will be presented at the Annual Meeting

Motion by Nancy Proyect Rider, seconded by Tom Manza to accept the Constitution as presented. Vote taken – unanimous. Motion accepted.

- Resolution Authorizing Videoconferencing Under Extraordinary Circumstances
    - Discussed implementing a virtual attendance policy to allow Board members to participate remotely during extraordinary circumstances or emergencies.
    - Under the proposed policy, Board members would be permitted to participate and vote remotely; however, an in-person quorum would still be required.
    - Will also be presented at the Annual Meeting for a public vote.

Motion by Dave Goggins, seconded by Paul Ruszkiewicz to accept the resolution authorizing videoconferencing under extraordinary circumstances. Vote taken – unanimous. Motion accepted.

- ❖ Park & Facilities Committee – *Tom Manza, Board Vice President and Committee Chair*
    - Park staff are prepping for winter at the park
    - Plan for Gleaning Hub
        - Install the door to prevent the birds form entering the building.
        - Assemble the cooler
    - Planning Board Meeting
        - Received approval to move forward with the lighting
    - Priority projects survey will be sent out to help identify and establish project priorities.
    - Next meeting 11/5/26
- ❖ 4-H Farm & Family Fair Committee Update – *Jill Van Aken*
    - Ride company may be visiting the park on 11/3/26
    - Next committee meeting 11/4/26
        - Committee will begin determining what the 2027 fair will look like for the Association

Adjournment:

Motion by Dave Goggins, seconded by Paul Ruszkiewicz to adjourn the meeting at 7:13PM. Vote taken – unanimous Motion approved.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathi Nywening, Board Secretary
Amanda Sostre, Recording Secretary

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