

# West Windsor Township Agricultural Advisory Committee

## Minutes

February 17, 2026

Land Use Manager Samuel Surtees called the special meeting of the West Windsor Township Agriculture Advisory Committee to order at 3:15 p.m. on Tuesday, February 17, 2026.

### **STATEMENT OF ADEQUATE NOTICE**

Pursuant to the Sunshine Law, a notice of this meeting's date, time, location and agenda was mailed to the news media, posted on the Township bulletin board and filed with the Municipal Clerk as required by law on February 11, 2026.

### **ROLL CALL AND DECLARATION OF QUORUM**

Present: Charles Appelget                      Absent: Doug Tindall  
Rodger Jany

Samuel Surtees, Land Use Manager and Zoning Officer  
Hemant Marathe, Mayor of West Windsor Township

**ELECTION OF A CHAIRMAN:** A nomination was made for Rodger Jany to serve as Chair for 2026. No other nominations were made. Mr. Jany officially appointed to Chairman (2-0).

**ELECTION OF A VICE-CHAIR:** A nomination was made for Charles Appelget to serve as Chair for 2026. No other nominations were made. Mr. Appelget is officially appointed Vice-Chairman (2-0).

**MOTION TO SCHEDULE REGULAR BUSINESS MEETINGS FOR 2026:** The following regular meeting dates were proposed for the remainder of 2026:

- April 27, 2026
- July 27, 2026
- October 26, 2026

No changes were requested. Minutes Approved 2-0

**Motion to approve meeting schedule:** Approved unanimously.

**MINUTES:** October 24, 2022 minutes were approved unanimously with no corrections.

**CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS:** No comments.

**CORRESPONDENCE:** None

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** No members of the public were present. Public comment portion closed.

**SANDERS FARM PRESERVATION BY SADC:** Discussion was held regarding the proposed preservation of the Sanders Farm on Cranbury Road.

- The family previously met with the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) to discuss selling development rights.
- Mercer County declined participation in funding, since the farm wasn't in the ADA (Agricultural Development Area).
- The State completed an appraisal approximately two years ago.
- The family was dissatisfied with the appraisal amount.
- SADC rules have since changed, potentially allowing a revised appraisal process.
- Chairman Rodger Jany suggested that Township representatives reach back out to both the Sanders family and SADC to explore renewed negotiations.
- The Mr. Surtees and the Mayor indicated the Township may consider contributing Open Space funds to help bridge any valuation gap.

**Action Item:** Township staff to follow up with SADC and the Sanders family regarding updated appraisal procedures and potential funding options.

**SCHENCK FARM SANITARY SEWER PROJECT:** Discussion was held regarding field conditions following prior disturbance and soil restoration.

- Compaction and drainage issues remain.
- Subsoiling has been performed, but productivity is uncertain.
- Wet conditions persist in lower portions of the field.
- The farmer indicated uncertainty regarding crop yield for the upcoming season.
- Due to ongoing field limitations and acreage reduction behind the schoolhouse, consideration will be given to reduced or waive rent for this parcel until further notice.

**Action Item:** Lease language to reflect potential rent adjustments for Schenck Farm due to field conditions.

**PROPOSED 2027-2031 FARM LEASES ON TOWNSHIP PROPERTY:** Extensive discussion was held regarding upcoming lease renewals.

Key points:

- Leases expire at the end of 2026.
- Properties highlighted in green may be reassigned to current lessees.
- Properties highlighted in orange must be bid out in accordance with State Statutes.
- Two potential bidding methods discussed:
  1. Sealed bid process with right of first refusal for current lessee
  2. Open auction format

Additional considerations:

- Whether parcels should be bid individually or as one combined block.
- Maintaining agricultural continuity and preventing underutilization.
- Ensuring fair rental value while supporting local farming operations.
- Current rent averages approximately \$100 per tillable acre with 2% annual escalation.
- Members expressed hesitation about additional rent increases beyond current levels.

**Action Items:**

- Members to review and mark up existing lease agreements and submit to the Township Liaison for review with Township administration by **March 17, 2026**.
- Provide parcel-by-parcel rent recommendations.
- Township to research bidding procedures used by neighboring municipalities (East Windsor, Cranbury, Middlesex County).
- Further discussion at next meeting before finalizing bid structure.

**ADDITIONAL DISUCSSION:**

**Depredation Permits**

The Chair requests that an updated letter from the Township Administration be provided for each farmer leasing Township property for a state-issued deer depredation permit.

No changes to lease language regarding hunting provisions, consistent with prior policy relying on State Right-to-Farm protections.

**Future Sales of Preserved Township-Owned Farms**

The Mayor raised a conceptual discussion regarding potential future sale of certain Township-owned preserved farmland parcels to young farmers.

No formal proposal was introduced. Matter tabled for future consideration.

**SPECIAL OCCASION EVENTS:** Brief reference was made to previously submitted materials. No action required at this time.

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting and seconded (2-0). The meeting was adjourned at 4:21 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kerielle Sollecito  
Secretary