



New Jersey Community Forestry Council

Meeting Minutes

Hybrid Meeting, Virtual and FREC

July 14, 2022; 10:00 AM

The July bi-monthly meeting of the New Jersey Community Forestry Council (Council) was called to order by Chairperson Brash at 10:00 a.m. and the Open Public Meetings Act notice was read. The notice was also available in the meeting packet. The roll call was taken by Ms. Dudas.

Members Present: Bill Brash, Kristin Ace, Steve Chisholm, Matthew Simons, Dr. Jason Grabosky, Dr. Melanie McDermott, Pam Zipse, Mark Beamish and Carl Bowles.

Excused: Wayne Dubin, Donna Drewes, Lisa Simms, Barry Emens, and Neil Blitz.

Absent: Lori Janssen, Vinh Lang.

NJ Forest Service Staff Present: Technical & Operational Advisor Terri Slack, Assistant Regional Forester Michael Martini, Grants Administrator Patricia Shapella, Forestry Technician Emily Farschon and Forestry Assistant Sherry Dudas.

NJ Forest Service Staff Absent: State Forester John Sacco

Members of the Public: Julie Mawhorter, USDA Forest Service

Quorum was met upon completion of roll call.

Minutes:

The meeting minutes from May were reviewed and Matthew Simons motioned to approve; Kristin Ace seconded. Chairman Brash called for a vote on the minutes as amended to correct typos from the minutes that were sent in the packet. The vote was unanimous to approve the minutes apart from Steve Chisholm, who abstained since he was not at the May meeting.

State Forester's Report:

Michael Martini gave the report as State Forester John Sacco was attending a conference. A new forester will be onboarding UCF in August. The federal narrative for the 2022 Consolidated Payment Grant was submitted for UCF, to which Ms. Mawhorter attested. The Guidelines Subcommittee met and progress is being made. There is now a draft of a Guidelines outline.

A discussion ensued regarding the Forestry Task Force (FTF). Assistant Commissioner (AC) John Cecil is reaching out to Forestry as needed. Dr. McDermott inquired if Forestry is getting a report from within the DEP on the status of the FTF. Mr. Martini advised Mr. Sacco that Council would like regular updates as to the status of the FTF that may be provided by AC Cecil to be part of Mr. Sacco's State Forester's report. Council needs this in order to advise UCF staff appropriately.

New Business:

Fiscal Report

The fiscal report was provided in the packet. This year \$76,914.00 was received in the license plate account, which is an increase from last year. Uncommitted funds are \$923,793 for future projects. There are concerns that UCF is receiving grant applications for management plans that will need to be paid for next year, the uncommitted funds are not enough to support those requests and that a portion of the uncommitted funds are earmarked for other programs. A motion was made by Pam Zipse and seconded by Matt Simons to have Chairman Brash write a letter to John Sacco requesting that UCF funds not be used for other than UCF purposes, as funding needs to be made available to the fullest extent possible for community forest management plans for FY 2023-2024.

Program Report

UCF has 252 management plans; this number has the same for the last two months. Four green community grants have either been received or executed. Regarding accreditation, Ms. Farschon reported that 255 communities have accreditation status for 2021 and the missing AAR number is 25. The 2022 accreditation statuses have gone online, and communities have been notified so they can check their information. There are many educational opportunities available this summer and fall, so Ms. Farschon encouraged Council to advise any communities they are aware of that are seeking educational opportunities for CEUs to start planning early.

In 2023, UCF's first round of extended plans is expiring. It's the end of the "wobble room" period and program staff is getting questions from communities, but don't have any answers yet for them. The concerns have been expressed to Mr. Sacco and upward. Fifty plans are expiring each year, which means a lot of review time for the Subcommittee, staff and consultants and it's especially difficult as the revised Guidelines are not in place. The Guidelines subcommittee is tackling this problem and this subcommittee is meeting on July 15th. Chairman Brash pointed out that this is a significant problem. If UCF is planning for 100% retention rate, 51 communities would need to submit revised forest management plans to be approved in 2023. Ms. Farschon has compiled additional data that Mr. Martini will supply to Council via email.

UCF does not currently have a dedicated fund from RGGI. Forest management plans and the inventories are being budgeted at about \$15,000 per community. This figure is considered low. Mr. Martini suggested that perhaps funds can be saved by accepting less stringent standards for other-than-full inventories, thus stretching available funds out to cover more communities. Ms. Zipse stated that the math that we have isn't necessarily representative of the need we have and the assumption that all fifty communities UCF serves now will continue to remain accredited is probably overly optimistic. UCF feels a plan needs to be developed to address this issue. Mr. Martini offered potential scenarios where UCF can continue accepting and reviewing inventories and forestry management funds in the case where funding may be tight. Mr. Brash favors this potential policy because it's giving communities an incentive to continue with the program even though it may be a little imposing, due to the unfamiliarity with the new Guidelines. It may be a way to ease this transition period. Ms. Farschon further reported that in 2023 there are only 18 plans which were extended, moving forward there will be more each year.

Mr. Martini reported that the newest Stewardship Program RFP round closed with 23 applicants, 11 for tree planting and 12 for resiliency, which amounts to \$1.2 million in requests.

Council Vacancies/Subcommittees

There is one vacancy each on the No Net Loss and Grants Subcommittees and the Awards Subcommittee only has one person. In addition, there are three vacancies on Council. Mr. Martini encouraged Council to volunteer for open Subcommittee seats and Mr. Simons volunteered for the Grants Subcommittee. Mr. Martini further encouraged Council to submit names for the three vacancies. Potential candidates need to be from Industry (1) and Local Government and Community (2). Mr. Martini will be emailing Council Subcommittee descriptions.

Legislative Issues

Ms. Slack reported that there was a legislative update in the Council packets. Council member Wayne Dubin sent an update to Council stating he believes the bill for the Vegetative Management Response Act, which was reintroduced this legislative session, is going to become active. In fact, he thought it would have already started to move. It hasn't been in a committee meeting yet and now the legislature is out for the summer.

Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI)/Strategic Funding Plan.

Ms. Slack reported that initial preliminary voting via a public comment platform on ideas for the next RGGI Strategic Funding Plan ended on Monday, July 11th and the actions which UCF has under its purview (funding for tree planting, etc.) didn't turn out so bad. Ms. Slack thinks UCF has a good argument for trying to get urban-related RGGI funds. Another round of public comment voting will take place in September.

Ms. Ace offered to write a letter to the unit responsible for the public voting to explain that any program encouraging the planting of trees via this method has to recognize that trees that are planted have to be maintained and cared for. Mr. Martini suggested she write to Helaine Barr, Bureau Chief, Bureau of Climate Change & Clean Energy (BCCCE) at NJ DEP.

A discussion ensued regarding aspects of the RGGI funding and Chairman Brash suggested the conversation continue at the September 8th meeting.

No Net Loss Program Report.

Mr. Martini reported that plans are being received.

Council Subcommittee Reports:

Community Forestry Management Plan Review Subcommittee

Nothing to report.

Community Forestry Management Plan Guidelines Subcommittee

Ms. Zipse reported they had their first meeting in a long time (Mr. Simmons and Chair Brash may not have been invited). Some Council members received the draft Guidelines with appended documents. This Subcommittee's next meeting is July 15th and they have talked about the Sustainable Forestry Initiatives (SFI) that have now come out with an international standard for urban and community forestry which she feels is an excellent resource that will align with what Council and staff have

envisioned for years. A SFI speaker will talk about that at the Shade Tree Federation Conference. The last meeting of the Guidelines Subcommittee was a reconvening meeting. Chairperson Brash said that the January 1st deadline to communities means Council has to get a lot of work done in a short period of time and the Guideline redraft process will need to be streamlined. This Subcommittee will be meeting every other week.

No Net Loss Subcommittee Report.

Reported under NNL Program Report earlier in meeting.

Council Business

Mr. Martini reported that the NJNLA Plant Symposium is August 17th at the Grounds for Sculpture and is open for online registration. ISA pesticide and UCF credits will be offered. The Shade Tree Federation conference is October 13th and 14th and Core will be in-person this year.

Unfinished Business:

None.

Public Comment:

Chairperson Brash then opened the floor to members of the public. No comments from the public were received.

The next meeting was announced to be on September 8, 2022 and will be virtual. Chairperson Brash then adjourned the meeting.