



DRAFT BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES

Center for the Inland Bays
Hybrid: CIB office and via Zoom
December 13, 2024

ATTENDANCE

<u>Board Members Present</u>	<u>Other Attendees</u>
Aimee Isaac (Senate Pro Tem Appt, Secretary)	Jen Pawloski
David Baird (SCD, Treasurer)	
Jerry Esposito (Board-Elected)	<u>Board Members Absent</u>
Nicole Bailey Ashton (Board-Elected)	Sec. Shawn Garvin (DNREC)
Claire Simmers (CAC)	Marlene Saunders (Board-Elected)
Justin Healy (Board-Elected)	Sec. Michael Scuse (DDA)
Patti Drago (Board-Elected)	Rony Baltazar-Lopez (Pro-Temp, Ex-Officio)
Jenn Volk (STAC)	Todd Lawson (Sussex County)
Amie Howell (EPA ex officio)	
Jamie Burk (SCAT)	<u>Center for the Inland Bays Staff Present</u>
	Christophe Tulou
<u>Board Alternates Present</u>	Meghan Noe Fellows
Chris Brosch (DDA)	Mary Hartnett
Mike Harmer (Sussex Co. Engineer)	Bob Collins
Stephen Williams (DNREC Alt. for Sec. Shawn Garvin)	Michelle Koenig
Steven Hohman (EPA)	Nivette Perez-Perez
	Taylor Hoffman

CALL TO ORDER/INTRODUCTION

Aimee Isaac called the meeting to order at 9:30 AM. A. Isaac led the Pledge of Allegiance. The meeting attendees introduced themselves.

MEETING AGENDA REVIEW

Patti Drago called for any changes to the meeting agenda. There were none.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Patti Drago confirmed that the Board members received the minutes from the previous meeting. P. Drago called for comments or changes, and none were heard. C. Brosch made a motion to approve the minutes. J. Burk seconded. The vote was unanimous.

TREASURER'S REPORT

David Baird stated that the finance committee met on November 20, and included a general discussion on the impact of Federal and State funding changes that could happen over the next 12 months. The finance committee will meet with Diamond State financial group next week about the services they could provide with financial management. The Center's year-end audit is now underway. The finance committee reviewed the board budget summary and found it in order. M. Harmer made a motion to approve the minutes. J. Burk seconded. The vote was unanimous.

OTHER REPORTS

Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC)

Claire Simmers presented the CAC's activities from the last meeting where a panel discussion with Michelle Koenig from the Center, Blake Moore from the University of Delaware, Mike Harmer with Sussex County and Burr Monroe from Tributaries. Forty people attended the meeting in person and virtually. The meeting theme was Caring for the Land, and the discussions were focused on proactive land stewardship, smart growth principles and workforce training.

Science and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC)

Jenn Volk shared updates on the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee's activities. The last meeting was on October 18 and was focused on living resources. USGS and DNREC presented on ospreys and herps. Meghan Noe Fellows at the Center is working on an RFP for hydrodynamic model development for the Inland Bays basin with proposals expected in January. The next meeting will be on February 7, 2025.

Development Committee

J. Esposito reviewed the Development Report from the last meeting on November 21 and highlighted total revenue of almost \$47,000, including the Royal Farms chicken palooza donation. The annual report and calendar have been mailed. New grants for the James Farm master plan have been awarded. Giving Tuesday raised \$15,500, which was over the goal. James Farm Ecological Reserve was recognized with the best attraction award.

DEIJA

Christophe Tulou reported on the committee's meeting on November 21. The theme was challenges of resilience due to climate change. The Center is focused on leading a coastal resilience project for Southern Delaware. The Center has been awarded a grant to reach out to communities and learn about their vulnerabilities and challenges, especially on the western side of the watershed.

Sussex County

Mike Harmer reported on two contractor awards that the County presented. The awards were for an emergency operations center at the airport and the Herring Creek septic elimination project. The EMS station in Millsboro is nearly complete and a paramedic station should be constructed at the new Dewey Beach Town Hall. Septic elimination projects are ongoing. At Wolfe's Neck

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solar panels will be installed on top of the lagoons to provide sustainable electricity. The Piney Neck wastewater plant will be eliminated, and the project is designed to be routed to the South Coastal wastewater plant. The County is working on rehabilitating pump stations and the project is ongoing.

Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC)

Steve Williams provided updates on the beach replenishment project at the Indian River Inlet. Dredging activity started the week of Thanksgiving. DNREC has issued the remaining permits for the offshore wind project. Regarding the back bay study, scheduling has been pushed back, and DNREC is awaiting the cost assessment for the feasibility study from the Army Corps of Engineers.

Delaware Department of Agriculture

Chris Brosch reviewed updates from the Delaware Department of Agriculture, including celebrating five new family farms with continuous operation of more than 100 years. Farm profitability is at a record low, and national interest is focused on a new farm bill. The Nutrient Management Commission is proposing regulations in response to the recently passed turf nutrient-management law, to require lawn care companies that operate on more than ¼ acre to receive nutrient management education. Public hearings are coming up, with the first being December 30 during University of Delaware's Ag Week. Outreach will also occur at the Delaware Nursery and Landscape Association.

EPA

Amie Howell reported on updates at the EPA. A. Howell announced that the EPA preparing for leadership changes. Adam Ortiz, the administrator for Region 3, will step down in January, and Cathy Liebertz, the deputy regional administrator, will be acting in that role until a new regional administrator is named. Cate McManus will fill the deputy administrator role in the interim. The habitat plan is with EPA headquarters for consultation. New NEP guidance was recently released on Nov 12, and the key changes are climate vulnerability and resiliency requirements. The new guidance is asking for a climate vulnerability assessment every 5 years. The new guidance also no longer requires a five-year CCMP revision requiring instead one review every ten years.

House & Senate

Aimee Isaac reported on the Delaware State House & Senate. A. Isaac reported no updates.

OLD BUSINESS

James Farm Master Plan Implementation Update

Bob Collins shared a slideshow of the construction phases for the education building to date. Construction re-started on November 3 after a building pause due to supply chain issues. The building should be completed by the end of the year. The James Farm Preserve saw 22,500 individual visits from April to September, with little disturbance due to construction. C. Tulou reported that the development team had procured about \$100,000 of grant funding for the project.

Deputy Director Hiring Update

C. Tulou reported that the application period closed Nov 15 with 18 candidates (three internal staff). Center staff have reviewed cover letters and resumes and ranked candidates. The invited selected candidates will give 15-minute presentations to the entire staff. Finalists from the presentations will be invited to sit for an interview with the board and CIB staff. It is hoped that an offer will be extended by February.

NEW BUSINESS

STAC Leadership Nominations

Jen Volk announced two candidates were nominated for STAC leadership: Chair and Vice Chair. The nominees' CVs have been included in the board meeting packet.

Andrew Wozniak - application for Chair

Ashley Norton - application for Vice Chair

P. Drago made a motion to approve the applications. C. Brosch seconded. The vote was unanimous.

STAC Operating Guidelines Amendment

J. Volk discussed a STAC amendment to the STAC guidelines to create a Past Chair role to advise new leaders of the STAC. The motion would be to create the designation of the Past Chair position. C. Brosch made a motion to approve the changes to the guidelines. P. Drago seconded. The vote was unanimous.

FY 2025 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) Workplan- Approval

The board previously voted via email to approve the BIL work plan. The official vote was confirmed in the meeting. M. Harmer made a motion to approve the BIL workplan. J. Healy seconded. The vote was unanimous.

Advocacy Policy

Christophe Tulou reviewed creating an advocacy policy for the Center to provide guidance regarding commenting on outside policy. The guidance will include writing letters, board engagement, and giving testimony. C. Brosch added an amendment to the advocacy policy before it was adopted to cover the conflict of interest statement for the Board. J. Burk motioned to approve the advocacy policy with the added amendment. C. Brosch seconded. The vote was unanimous.

Executive Director's Report

Christophe Tulou commented that the Center is planning for potential implications of the new Presidential administration. Coming into office is an administration that could advocate for limited federal government and greater State empowerment. An upcoming federal budget could eliminate funding for the NEP program. BIL funds could also end early and only one fiscal year could remain. The Center is working on a refocusing effort, determining the strategic priorities and the focus, reflecting what is in the future. The Center will know more information after the new administration takes office in January. The Pasture Point Oyster Reef is complete, and the Center has ambitions for more oyster reef projects to create a sustainable population of oysters in the Bays. The Center submitted a grant-in-aid application to the state for \$300,000. The Bureau of Ocean Energy and Management has approved the construction plan for the US wind offshore wind project. DNREC issued permits for the project, but the County Council has not yet voted to allow use of the substation property to accept offshore power.

Open Forum

An online participant, J. Pawloski, commented and requested links for the public to access board budget summaries from previous years. C. Tulou mentioned that J. Pawloski has requested

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information from the Center through a FOIA request.

Adjournment

Pat Coluzzi made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:22 am.