



Board Meeting Minutes

Date: October 17, 2025

Location: CIB and Remote via Zoom

Chair: Pat Coluzzi

Attendees:

Board: Pat Coluzzi (Chair), Aimee Isaac (Vice Chair), Patty Drago (Secretary), David Baird (Treasurer), Jerry Esposito, Nicole Bailey Ashton, Justin Healey, Todd Lawson, Jamie Burke, Andrew Wozniak, Claire Simmers

Staff: Christophe Tulou (Executive Director), Bryan Ochs, Jaime Argo, Claire Magargle, Megan Noe Fellows, Taylor Hoffman, Nivette Perez- Perez, Bob Collins

Guests / Partners / Ex-officio: DNREC – Steve Williams, Dept. of Agriculture –Chris Brosch, Mike Harmer (County Engineer), EPA Region 3 – Amie Howell & Steve Hohman

Motions & Votes

1. **Called to order:** A quorum was confirmed and the meeting was called to order at 9:30AM (Pat C.)
2. **Approve prior meeting minutes (Secretary's report):**
 - **Motion:** J. Esposito.; **Second:** not recorded
 - **Vote:** Passed (ayes, none opposed).
3. **Adopt "Tree Canopy / Forests" Resolution (revised):**
 - **Motion:** P. Drago; **Second:** not recorded.
 - **Vote:** Passed (ayes, none opposed).
4. **Board Membership – Reappoint Jerry Esposito (board-elected seat):**
 - **Motion:** J. Burke.; **Second:** T. Lawson
 - **Vote:** Passed (ayes, none opposed).
5. **Elect Officers:**
 - **Chair:** Amy Isaac; **Vice Chair:** Pat Coluzzi; **Treasurer:** David Baird.
 - **Motion:** J. Esposito; **Second:** N. Bailey Ashton
 - **Vote:** Passed (ayes, none opposed).

- **Note:** Aimee Isaac assumes the Chair role at the December meeting.

6. **Adjourn:** Adjourned at 11:30AM. (P. Coluzzi)

Action Items

- **Staff (C. Tulou/J. Argo):** Continue daily cash-flow monitoring; brief on federal funding status as it evolves.
 - **Staff (C. Tulou):** Prepare FY26 IJA workplan for EPA review (target EOY/early '26); schedule 1:1s with board on vision/strategy.
 - **Staff**
 - Circulate Chris Brosch's Ag/Aquaculture fact sheet link to board.
 - <https://www.udel.edu/academics/colleges/canr/cooperative-extension/fact-sheets/on-farm-business-planning-existing-resources/>
 - Send Thompson Island photos to virtual attendees (tech issue during meeting).
 - Promote CAC Panel "Caring for Water," Oct 23 (6–8pm, hybrid).
 - **Development Committee (J. Esposito/B Ochs):** Confirm rescheduled November meeting date; share Horseshoe Crab Hustle (Nov 9) results post-event to Development Committee.
 - **Programs/Science (M. Noe Fellows/Team):**
 - Proceed with State of the Bays streamlining with STAC subgroup; STAC meeting Oct 24 (marshes focus).
 - Continue Southern DE Resilience open houses and community sessions.
 - **Policy/External (C. Tulou):** Track Army Corps/DNREC back-bay study coordination; engage towns on flood-mitigation concepts (e.g., "bladder dam") and watershed-scale implications.
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Discussion Topics & Reports

Finance & Federal Funding (C. Tulou)

- The Center is stable under CR; access to Section 320 core grant and FY25 IJA confirmed.
- Budget uncertainty persists (potential risk to FY26 IJA). Strong bipartisan support for NEP; House/Senate markups level-funded NEP; Admin proposed NEP funding this cycle.

Committees & Partner Reports



- **CAC (C. Simmers):** August program “Oysters at Work.” Oct 23 panel “Caring for Water” (Sussex CD, DNREC, Story Hill Farm, CIB). Rare Earth working group active (invasives, council watching, outreach).
- **STAC (A. Wozniak):** State of the Bays format to be streamlined; ongoing expert subgroup meetings. Upcoming Oct 24 session on marshes/shorelines. Discussion: avoid simple letter-grade framing.
- **DEIJA Committee (C. Tulou):** Reconvened; planning Nov meeting on mission refresh and potential name change (to reduce federal algorithm flagging) with bylaws amendment likely Dec 12. Mission focus remains unchanged (vulnerable communities & resilience).
- **Development (J. Esposito):** August revenue ~\$46k (y/y ↑); \$50k match met; recent events: Volunteer Appreciation (9/25), Bay Banter (10/8), Susie K. Ball Education Facility dedication (10/12). Horseshoe Crab Hustle 10K/5K – Nov 9.
- **Sussex County (T. Lawson):** Land-Use Reform Working Group delivered 20 recommendations; Council work session held; plan to start ordinances now while Comprehensive Plan redo proceeds (longer runway). Property acquisition in Angola for public access—announcement coming soon.
- **County Utilities (M. Harmer):**
 - Septic eliminations continue (7 completed regional projects ≈1,225 systems; 5 in flight ≈372 more; 10 in design ≈1,078).
 - South Coastal expansion to 10 MGD (punch list).
 - Piney Neck plant elimination via design-build targeted to start Jan (permits/GMP pending); flow to South Coastal.
 - Exploring asset/work-order system; electronic plan review to reduce GHG/paper.
 - Discussed advanced onsite treatment models (Suffolk Co., NY) incl. funding/maintenance agreements.
- **DNREC (S. Williams.):** Post-Nor’easter assessments: Bowers & Broadkill impacted on Bayside; South Bethany/Bethany, and north side of IR Inlet on ocean side. USACE dredge (GLDD) resumes; 2 weeks left on contract (quantity-based). Sand bypass conversion to electric tested; state RFP to privatize bypass operations (crane ops). Assessing “qualifying storm” status for most recent storm.
- **EPA (A. Howell):** Operating under CR; travel limited. FY25 base funds to Center; proceed with FY26 IJIA workplans; national NEP meeting Mar 17–19 (DC).
- **Dept. of Agriculture (C. Brosch)** 30% of eligible ag land permanently preserved; increased cover crop investment; UD Ag/Aquaculture fact sheet published; Gov’s Ag Council reconstituted (more diverse); Ag Week Jan 13–17; LEAD Delaware updates.
- **Sussex Conservation District (D. Baird)** Cover crop demand > \$10M/yr statewide; funding ↑ to >\$6M but per-acre rates reduced by \$8/ac due to oversubscription.

Program Highlights (C. Tolou)

- **James Farm:** Certificate of Occupancy; two successful events validated capacity & operations.



- **Thompson Island:** Phase 1 wave-attenuation devices (~400 units) installed—visible wave energy reduction; phases 2–3 still needed for canal/east sides; strong media coverage.
- **Strategic Direction:** draft Vision and 2026–2028 Strategic Plan for Dec 12 board: shift emphasis from Water Quality → Resilience (while still delivering WQ co-benefits). Priorities include ecosystem-based flood protection, community preparedness, insurance/valuation dialogues, and watershed-scale planning.

Other Notes

- **C. Simmers:** “Bladder dam” concepts raised by towns (e.g., Bethany): need system-wide modeling and integration with Back-Bay/USACE-DNREC studies to avoid unintended consequences.
- **Recognitions:** Thanks to Pat Coluzzi for steady board leadership through a challenging period; welcome Claire Magargle, (Communications).

Upcoming Dates (from discussion)

- **CAC Panel:** Oct 23, 6–8pm (Center office / hybrid).
- **STAC Meeting:** Oct 24, 9am (901 Pilottown Rd, Lewes).
- **Horseshoe Crab Hustle:** Nov 9. Bethany Brewing, Ocean View, DE.
- **DEIJA special meeting:** November 18 (Center office / hybrid)
- **Next Board Meeting:** Dec 12 (officer transition; potential bylaws amendment; strategic plan vote).
- **NEP National Mtg (DC):** Mar 17–19.

Public Comment

- None submitted via CAC page; none voiced at close (per transcript).

