

MINUTES OF THE MERCER COUNTY AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT BOARD
MEETING HELD MONDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2026
IN THE EXTENSION SERVICE BUILDING
1440 PARKSIDE AVENUE, EWING, N.J.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman D'Amico called this meeting to order at 19:30.

II. COMPLIANCE STATEMENT WITH THE OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT

Chairman D'Amico announced that pursuant to the Sunshine Law, notice of all 2026 meetings was posted in the Trenton Times on December 18, 2025 and posted on the County Planning Department's website.

III. FLAG SALUTE

IV. REORGANIZATION

Ms. Kottas called for the 2026 Board nominations. Ms. Wang nominated Mr. D'Amico as Chair, Ms. Cirkus seconded. Ms. Wang nominated Mr. Evans as Vice-Chair, Ms. Cirkus seconded. Ms. Wang nominate Ms. Kottas as secretary, Mr. Evans seconded. Ms. Wang nominated Mr. Gluck as Board Attorney, Ms. Cirkus seconded. The vote was unanimously in favor of all nominations.

V. ROLL CALL

a. Voting Members:

Mr. Frank D'Amico, Chair – present
Ms. Theodora Wang – present
Ms. Christine Cirkus –present
Mr. James Evans, Vice-Chair – present
Mr. Greg McLaughlin –present

B. Non-voting Members:

Ms. Meredith Melendez/Rutgers Cooperative Research and Extension – present
Mr. William Agress, County Planning Board Liaison – present
Mr. Scott Ellis – present (non-voting until reappointment)

C. Others Present:

Ms. Cindy Taylor, Mercer County Land Preservation Coordinator
Ms. Diane Kottas, Mercer County CADB Administrator, Board Secretary
Mr. Alex Gluck, Board Counsel, Dilworth Paxon
Mr. Sean Pizzio, SADC
Mr. Kenneth Shives, Lawrence Township resident
Mr. Peter Brittain, Bent Iron Brewery owner
Mr. David Sass, Bent Iron Brewery owner
Mr. John Kanuck, Bent Iron Brewery owner

VI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

On a motion by Ms. Cirkus and seconded by Mr. Evans, the minutes of the December 1, 2025 meeting were approved unanimously.

VII. PUBLIC COMMENT (NON-AGENDA ITEMS)

VIII. CORRESPONDENCE: Horrocks email re Bent Iron SOE renewal was read to the Board.

IX. COMMITTEE AND STAFF REPORTS

- a. **SADC:** Mr. Pizzio provided an update on recent SADC business.
- b. **Land Development:** None
- c. **Farmland Preservation Updates:** Ms. Kottas reported on the following:
 - i. Wittenborn Farm – Board favorably discussed the possible addition of the Wittenborn farm in Robbinsville Township to the County ADA
 - ii. Three Little Birds Farm – SADC direct easement in progress

X. OLD BUSINESS: Ms. Kottas reported on the following:

- a. **Britton Farm:** The SADC visited the farm in December and will be issuing a notice of violation.
- b. **Chowdhury Farm:** On a motion by Ms. Wang and seconded by Mr. Evans, the Board unanimously approved the issuance of a formal violation letter.

XI. NEW BUSINESS

- a. **Niederer wildlife planting & solar application:** Board reviewed the NRCS wildlife planting plan for Chickadee Creek. On a motion by Mr. McLaughlin and seconded by Ms. Wang, the Board unanimously approved its implementation. Mr. Pizzio asked for the Board's comments on the farm's solar application. There were no objections to the application.
- b. **Right to Farm policy amendment:** On a motion by Mr. Evans and seconded by Ms. Cirkus, the Board unanimously approved a minor amendment to the Right to Farm policy.
- c. **Shives commercial farm determination:** The Board reviewed documents provided by Mr. Shives. On a motion by Mr. McLaughlin and seconded by Mr. Evans, the Board found that Willow Gate Farm is a commercial farm and that the use of livestock guardian dogs is a protected activity. A Right to Farm hearing will be held in March.
- d. **Needle Creek SOE 2025 review:** Ms. Kottas reviewed the 2025 SOEs held by Needle Creek/John Hart Farms. There were no compliance issues with the SOE law and the second year of the 2-year approval can proceed.
- e. **Bent Iron SOE 2026 application review:** Ms. Kottas reviewed the 2025 SOEs held by Bent Iron Brewery. The application to hold SOEs in 2026 was deemed to be incomplete until a review of the farm's compliance with its Deed of Easement can be conducted. Mr. Brittain and Mr. Sass asked for clarification on what constitutes compliance with the On-Farm-Direct-Marketing AMP.

XII. EXECUTIVE SESSION: On a motion by Ms. Cirkus and seconded by Mr. Evans, the Board unanimously agreed to enter Executive Session to discuss matters concerning Bent Iron

Brewery's compliance with its Deed of Easement. On a motion by Ms. Wang and seconded by Mr. Evans, the Board exited Executive Session.

a. Action as a Result of Executive Session: The brewery owners were asked to provide production documentation for Board review.

XIII. DISCUSSION: None

XIV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: None

XV. ADJOURNMENT: Chairman D'Amico adjourned the meeting at 22:03. The next scheduled meeting of the MCADB is March 2, 2026 at 7:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Kottas

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Secretary to the Board