



NEWS FROM
ULSTER COUNTY
County Executive Jen Metzger

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Ulster County Executive Jen Metzger Appoints Deborah DeWan as County's First Agricultural Services Administrator

KINGSTON, NY - Ulster County Executive Jen Metzger today announced the appointment of Deborah DeWan as the County's Agricultural Services Program Administrator, a new position in the Economic Development Department. DeWan will develop and implement new agricultural programs in close coordination with the farming community.

In her State of the County Address, County Executive Metzger outlined a number of agricultural initiatives for 2024, including updating the County's Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan for the first time in 27 years, rolling out a new grant program to support farm investments in soil health, workforce housing, and other key areas of need, and creating a program to expand participation by low-income households in Community-Supported Agriculture (CSAs). Metzger previously chaired the State Senate Agriculture Committee when she served in the State Senate.

"We want to see the County take a more active role in supporting the long-term viability and sustainability of farming in our county, and help our farmers meet the challenges they face and take advantage of new opportunities," said **Ulster County Executive Jen Metzger**. "Deborah's deep knowledge of agriculture and her experience working directly with Ulster County farmers make her the ideal person for this important position, and I look forward to our work together."

Deborah Dewan brings a wealth of experience and a proven track record of dedication to Ulster County's farms. She led the Rondout Valley Growers Association for six years as the organization's Executive Director, where she successfully built community connections among

farmers, neighbors, and schools. DeWan later served as Agriculture Policy Advisor and Agricultural Liaison for the State Senate Agriculture Committee, helping develop state policy when the committee was chaired by then-State Senator Jen Metzger. The Senate Agriculture Committee is currently chaired by Senator Michelle Hinchey.

County Economic Development Director Kevin Lynch expressed confidence in DeWan's appointment, stating, "We are very excited about Deborah joining the team. Deborah brings a wealth of experience after years of working in the County's agriculture sector as a policy advocate, project manager, and a strong supporter of initiatives that address the challenges faced by our farming community. Helping our local farmers is at the core of her being, and we look forward to all she will bring into this role."

DeWan outlined her vision for the program, stating, "I am thrilled to be joining the Ulster County team in the newly-created position of Agricultural Services Administrator to continue doing what I love and helping farmers do what they do best— stewarding the land, feeding our communities, and contributing to the local economy. I look forward to working with County Executive Jen Metzger, the Economic Development Department, and all the agricultural stakeholders to put the County's resources to good use. By applying and leveraging the ARPA funds allocated by the County Legislature, we can address real challenges facing our farmers, weathering the effects of climate change, strengthening their economic viability, and protecting irreplaceable agricultural land throughout Ulster County."

The Ulster County Agricultural Services Administrator position is part of the Ulster County Agricultural Crisis Relief Program, created by the Ulster County Legislature to provide support to farmers facing economic and climate-related challenges. Legislator Kathy Nolan spearheaded the effort in the Legislature, and Herb Litts, a farmer himself, co-sponsored the resolution.

"Under the able leadership of Deborah DeWan, Ulster County's new agricultural program stands ready to gear up both to protect and preserve valuable agricultural lands and also to help farmers and farms in Ulster County respond to new economic opportunities as well as to climate change and other emerging challenges," said Legislator Kathy Nolan (D-22, Towns of Denning, Hardenburgh, Olive, Shandaken). "Most of our farms in Ulster County are small farms, and we have a unique opportunity to show how valuable smaller scale farms are to our economy and how they can play an increasingly important role in enhancing the vitality and health of our entire community."

“This is a long time coming and I’m glad it’s here,” said Legislator Herb Litts (D-9, Town of Lloyd), a farmer himself. “Farmers in the Hudson Valley need all the help they can get.”

Deborah DeWan has worked for over 25 years in the fields of agriculture, climate change, food and housing security, and environmental, community, and economic sustainability. She has worked with non-profits and government agencies throughout the Catskills and Hudson Valley with policy development, environmental planning, affordable housing planning, and land preservation projects. In addition to her work at the RVGA and State Senate, she has held senior positions at The Catskill Center and Scenic Hudson, leading and developing environmental and community programs. DeWan holds a Master of Science, Environmental Studies, from Bard College and a Bachelor of Arts, Political Science, from the State University of New York at Stony Brook.

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