

MINUTES
ORANGE COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
October 20, 2014

The Meeting was **CALLED TO ORDER** by the Chairman at 9:52 AM. Directors J. Wright, G. Keeton, S. Wong, P. Ruskiewicz and P. DeBlock were present, along with K. Sumner, C. DeGrootd and K. Brown (OCSWCD) and R. Baglia (CCE).

There was a brief discussion regarding the Ag NPS grant procedures and how producers participating in these grants sign a contract. A Motion was made by Wright, seconded by DeBlock, to have all new Ag NPS grant landowner contracts include a payment schedule. All in favor.

Keeton made the Motion, seconded by DeBlock, to approve September's Final Board Meeting **MINUTES** as amended. All in favor.

CORRESPONDENCE

The National Association of Conservation Districts 2015 Membership Payment was passed out to the Board for review. A Motion was made by DeBlock to Table this payment, seconded by Keeton. All in favor.

The District received a memo from Neil Blair, Orange County Budget Director. The District's 2105 Executive Budget Hearing will be on Monday, October 27th at 2:00 PM.

Sumner received a note from Jim Delaune, Executive Director at Orange County Land Trust, that cc'd Bob Bernstein, Managing Director at Northeast Farm Access regarding someone interested in purchasing land around the Chester muck. Bob is working with the Ogden Foundation on the acquisition of the Zangrillo Farm in Chester. If they buy it and want to farm there, they'll need to maintain the pumping plant. Sumner had heard they are trying to purchase the entire area, not just Zangrillo property. They want to make it available to new farmers. Sumner said the cost to repair the plant is approximately \$750,000.00, according to information Tom Zangrillo shared with him.

FINANCIAL REPORTS

Two bills from a training K. Brown attended were added to the list of bills to be paid. A Motion was made by DeBlock to pay October's bills, seconded by Keeton. All in favor.

A brief discussion followed regarding the possibility of offering a per diem food reimbursement to employees for trainings providing employees show receipts. Sumner suggested that if an employee is going on an overnight training that is before the next scheduled Board Meeting, to provide a cost estimate to the Board.

Sumner requested that a bill from STRATA, the cultural resource company that did the work on the flood plain bench, dated August 28th in the amount of \$7,830.00 be paid. Wright made the Motion, seconded by DeBlock to pay the bill after we receive reimbursement from our grant agency. All in favor.

Our unobligated fund balance is higher than usual. Sumner suggested we take a look at this balance in January 2015 and discuss equipment purchases and/or replenishing our Ag Grant Contingency Fund.

Wright made the Motion to approve September's Financial Report, seconded by Keeton. All in favor.

STAFF REPORTS

C. DeGrootd (SWCD) – DeGrootd completed and submitted the NYS NPS Ag Interim Reports to the State Office.

She assisted with the rain garden planting at the Warwick High School on October 17th.

DeGroot has been working on Soil Group Worksheets as they come in.

Quarterly income tax reports were completed and submitted.

DeGroot will be attending the 2014 NYACD Administrative Managers Conference which is being held in Utica, NY on October 22 and 23.

K. Brown (SWCD) – Brown attended the Conservation Skills Workshop on September 30 and October 1. Classes included RUSLE and Cropware.

Brown attended the Conservation District Employees Association (CDEA) Meeting held on October 7-8th at the Inn on the Lake. All expenses were picked up by the CDEA.

The seeders have been moving well this year. The District has been working on a cropland erosion control at Russell Smiley's farm.

Brown has been working on the 2014 Performance Measures.

The Wallkill Flood Control Meeting is on October 30th at the Pine Island Firehouse at 9:00 AM.

The Wallkill Maintenance Meeting is scheduled for November 3rd at the District Office.

There are issues with the District's old seeder. It has approx. 4,000 acres on it and has issues with picking up. One side raises from the operating position. Phil Johnson, who is a dealer, ran it through a diagnostic and it was determined to be the valve for the depth control. This was fixed but she's still hearing from producers that it's still not working properly. Sumner is debating on whether or not to put money towards repairing this seeder or put a bid out for a new one. A new one will cost approximately \$25,000.00. Brown was getting farmer feedback that a wider seeder would be nicer in the fields. Sumner asked the Board if we should put together a package for a new seeder. The old one may sell for approx. \$5,000.00. He added that he was told that the Orange County Farm Bureau has a substantial fund balance and asked if anyone would be willing to bring this up to them and ask for a contribution. Sumner said that it would cost around \$1,000.00 to put new cylinders on the old seeder in addition to other maintenance items. Wright requested that the District obtain an estimate of what the old seeder is worth. Brown offered to get a price for a rebuild and a price for a new one.

Brown added that she is resigning from her position on the Farm Bureau Board.

K. Sumner (SWCD) – Sumner gave an update on the Grass Pelletizer Project. Bob Thomas, Project Coordinator, resigned from his position and Sumner picked up the slack. Two jobs have since been completed. The project currently has a fund balance of \$170.00 and is on hold. He is hoping to still do some production on the Brown Farm and also to earn the last \$10,000.00 of the NYSERDA grant but the final report has not been submitted yet. He has not heard an answer yet on whether or not the Gill Farm will become the new residence for the machine. There was a brief discussion regarding the cost of wood pellets.

We received our Ag NPS Grant Round 15 final payment and farmer payments were sent out.

Tomorrow is Sumner's deposition on the flood lawsuit.

Troy Vellenga Project Update – It's on the Agenda for the State Committee monthly meeting which is on October 28th.

County Ag Plan Update – Brown and Sumner are on the committee. The goal is to get the plan approved and accepted by the County and Legislature by the end of this year or at the latest January. One of the issues is that there is not a lot of support to hire a staff person to implement this plan. The latest version of the plan came about when the County ag agencies (Soil and Water, CCE and Planning Dept.) were asked to form an implementation committee, which would include representatives from all three agencies. DeBlock said the Plan gives ideas of what to do, just not who will

carry out the plans. Wright said that this Plan has the potential for positive impact. It's been over a year since work started on this Plan.

Ruszkiewicz left the Meeting at 11:10 AM.

Sumner said that there was a meeting last week that Cornell Cooperative Extension organized to bring Assessors and farmers together to discuss Agricultural Assessments. One of the issues is that this program is applied inconsistently across town lines even though it's a state law that sets it up. Wright said that Town government bodies dictate what the Assessor does. Sumner said that the biggest issues are with rented parcels where the Assessors want to limit the ag assessment to land that is actually used.

INTERAGENCY REPORTS

R. Baglia (CCE) - A Streams 101 class will be held at SUNY Orange this week. It's similar to the one they did last year.

The Cornell Local Roads Program will be doing a stormwater program on November 19th and is geared towards Highway Personnel.

The CCE Annual Meeting will be December 8th.

The Duck Derby was held this past Saturday to raise money for the 4-H park.

Brown asked Baglia about a corn field day class that was supposed to be taught locally in October by Jenn Simpson in which Brown can claim CCA credits. Baglia said she would look into this.

DeBlock asked Baglia for the financial breakdown for Open House on the Farm. Baglia stated she has not seen any of the financials yet. DeBlock wanted to formally request a financial breakdown from Cornell Cooperative Extension.

P. DeBlock (FSA) – The Farm Service Agency is doing an event with Cornell Cooperative Extension on Farm Bill Education to explain the programs that FSA and NRCS offer. This will be on October 28th at the New Hampton Fire Training Center from 10 AM – Noon.

OLD BUSINESS

The SEQR paperwork and permit package for the two ledge projects have been in the DEC's possession for two weeks. We don't have the permit package for the flood plain bench project yet. Wendall, B&L's engineer, has been saying he will have something ready for the Flood Committee Meeting on the 30th. We are continuing to get calls from Goshen. The Town of Goshen Supervisor suggested to Sumner that we followed improper procedures for SEQR. B&L's SEQR specialist said they disagree. Goshen takes issue with our findings of no significant impact. Sumner asked Wendall to prepare an engineering report that specifically states what these ledge projects are going to do to the hydraulics of the river. Also to address Goshen's concern which is the Celery Avenue Road stability issue which is a little downstream from the ledge projects. Celery Avenue is subsiding and Goshen wants to make sure the ledge projects will not make the situation worse.

Neal Halloran, Goshen Building Inspector, sent Sumner a link to Army Corp's "Request For Proposals for Water Resources Projects" which includes flood control projects. Proposals are due December 23rd. Sumner copied Dave Church, Planning Dept., our engineer and Robert Schreibeis to see if anyone knows anything about this. So far he has not heard back from anyone.

The District is looking at the proposed expansion of the Wallkill Maintenance Agreement area as something that we are supporting with the flood project efforts. We did get Orange County Planning Department (OCPD) to agree to fill out the SEQR paperwork, which is the next step. OCPD filled it out and sent it to the Orange County Law Department for

review and as far as we know it's still at the Law Dept. Schreibeis was briefed about this last week and he said he'd look into it. Wong said she would also look into moving it along.

Keeton made a Motion to authorize Sumner to negotiate and sign the RSR contract with some amendments to the language, seconded by DeBlock. All in favor. Proposed changes are as follows: 1. make a provision for the Town to advance funds to Soil and Water for equipment purchases 2. Clarify that reimbursement requests may only be disapproved by the Town Board if they are not in substantial compliance with the Project Description and Budget 3. Specify that a Borrowing Agreement will be developed jointly by the Town and Soil and Water before Soil and Water lends the equipment to the Town 4. Remove language that Soil and Water will deliver equipment for free and 5. Made the 5/2014 Project Description and Budget part of the Agreement in the form of an attachment.

NEW BUSINESS

Draft Director Training Plans were passed out for review.

There will be a District Law Training for the Directors at the November Board Meeting.

Baglia left the meeting at 12:05 PM.

After the first of the year we may put out another vacancy ad for a Technician. There was a brief discussion regarding hiring a part time employee to move field equipment.

Sumner would like to discuss updating the District's insurance policies at the next Board Meeting.

The **NEXT MEETING** is scheduled for Monday, November 17, 2014 at 9:00 AM.

The **MEETING** was adjourned at 12:15 PM on a Motion by Keeton, seconded by DeBlock. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine DeGroodt
Secretary to the Board