

MINUTES
ORANGE COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
April 21st, 2025

The **MEETING** was **CALLED TO ORDER** by the Chairman at 9:03 AM. Directors J. Wright, G. Constable, B. Cheney, P. Ruskiewicz, and P. DeBlock were present along with K. Sumner (SWCD), E. King (SWCD), E. Schellenberg (CCE), and O. Vélez-Juarbe (NRCS.)

2025-4-1 DeBlock made the Motion, Cheney seconded, to approve March’s Board Meeting Minutes as written. All in favor.

ACTIONS TAKEN BETWEEN MEETINGS – Some bills were paid and are indicated on the Bills for Board Approval.

CORRESPONDENCE

- Bank Statements
- Collateral Agreements
- Region 5 Monthly SWCC Report from Ben Luskin
 - Luskin’s report mentioned that NYS DEC is mandating that all State agencies fill out cleanliness reports of their work vehicles.
- M&T Bank Account Analyses: February & March ‘25
- Sign Up Sheet & Invoice RE: 2025 NYS Fair

2025-4-2 DeBlock made the Motion, Ruskiewicz seconded, to approve making the \$100 donation to the 2025 NYS Fair. All in favor.

- NYS Envirothon Team: ‘25 County Team Registration
- CCE Save the Date: Various Events for 2025
- Membership Renewal: National Association of Conservation Districts
 - Sumner mentioned that the Board has not made a membership donation in quite some time, but noted that the District will provide NYACD with an updated contact list.
- Invitation to Attend Zoom Meeting RE: Taylor Biomass Title V Air Permit Application
- Letter from County HR RE: NY Hiring Emergency Limited Placement Local Program
- Nuggets & Nibbles: Spring 2025 Edition

FINANCIAL REPORTS

Sumner reported that the District received the 1st & 2nd Quarter Appropriation payments from the County. Additionally, the District received the current year Part C funding from 2024, which contributes to the District's good financial standing. Per Sumner, the District has an unobligated balance of \$83,000, which already accounts for all the Part C funds from our cash balance. Some of the Part C money is already dedicated to various projects, but there are still funds available. In reality, the District's balance is more than \$83,000. Given the District's financial standing, Sumner proposed that the Board increase the District's retirement liability from \$5,000 to \$10,000. Sumner's justification stems from the retirement payout of ~\$15,000 he is expected to receive upon retirement. Cheney recommended that the District include an additional \$5,000 be added to the District's proposed 2026 budget.

2025-4-3 Cheney made the Motion, Ruskiewicz seconded, to increase the District's retirement liability by \$5,000. All in favor.

2025-4-4 Ruskiewicz made the Motion, Cheney seconded, to file March's Financial Reports for audit review. All in favor.

BILLS FOR BOARD APPROVAL

Sumner indicated that the rental payment for the land taken out of agricultural production for use in P4N construction was determined at \$300 an acre.

2025-4-5 Ruskiewicz made the Motion, Cheney seconded, to pay the bills as presented. All in favor.

CONTRACT REPORT UPDATE

Any updates to the contracts report for the month of March are highlighted in red ink. Sumner listed the balance for each grant contracts, as well as updates on interactions with the contract participants. Overall, the District is in fair standing, but was unable to submit the funding request for Crist Bros. Orchards contract before the State's "blackout" period. Sumner predicts that the District will receive those funds in either May or June. Sumner noted that a lot of activity has taken place in the AEM Round 18 implementation projects. Sumner will discuss these updates in further detail in his oral report to the Board.

Sumner reminded the Board of the potential cover crop signoff liability the District may incur if they do not qualify for State reimbursement for past cover crop payments. Following March's meeting, Held & Martire met to discuss the necessary steps for the sign-off procedures, but Sumner does not know of any further updates. Sumner suggested that it would be wise for the District to allocate money into a fund for both the 2025 and previous year payments. Sumner is skeptical as to how much of the current ~\$58,000 the District will receive of the sign off reimbursement.

INTERAGENCY REPORTS

CCE: Schellenberg reported that CCE received the signed contract for the Conservation Innovation Grant, CIG. This means that CCE can request money up front for certain significant purchases. Schellenberg is aware that the awardee must spend the funding within a specific timeframe, otherwise the federal funding can be taken back. CCE will be attending a cover crop field day in Freeville, NY on 4/24, where topics such as Cornell's development of cover crop genetics & systems will be discussed. CCE's stormwater training series is ongoing for 2025.

NRCS: Vélez-Juarbe noted that Evarts & Mason took the Deferred Resignation Program, DRP, offered by the USDA and their last day will be 4/30/25. Additionally, the contractors who worked with NRCS in the Highland & Riverhead had their positions terminated. Between the two DRP rounds, fifty-eight New York NRCS employees are no longer employed. There are 33 participants in the first round of NRCS's Act Now program, which pertains to high tunnels & conservation plans. Per Vélez-Juarbe, 29 out of 33 applications are already contracts. Due to staffing limitations of other teams, contract ranking for the standard EQIP program are not finished. Vélez-Juarbe does not imagine round

two of EQIP will progress anytime soon because funding for that program is sourced from the Inflation Reduction Act, IRA, which the White House halted funding for. NRCS is able to make payments with previous year funding.

Comments from Director: DeBlock had no updates for the Board at this time.

There were no representatives from NYSC or WCC present at the meeting.

STAFF REPORTS

*Sumner, King, and Held emailed their written staff reports to the Board prior to the meeting for review.

M. Held (SWCD)- Held was not in attendance, but provided her written staff report to the Board on 4/18/25.

E. King (SWCD)- King mentioned that the sustainability coordinator at SUNY Orange contacted the District and asked whether the District wants to attend an Earth Day Fair at SUNY Orange’s Middletown campus on 4/24. King received approval from Sumner for she and Held to attend and represent the District. Held and King will highlight the District’s projects such as the Monhagen Brook & the Wallkill Floodplain Bench phases. King reported that the District’s yearly audit will be done the week of 5/5 by PFK O’Connor Davies. King learned about the New York Cooperative Liquid Assets Securities System, NYCLASS, from fellow office managers who have a portion of their District funds in an account with NYCLASS. King learned that some Districts keep a portion of their funds in NYCLASS which is a short-term, highly liquid investment fund, created specifically for the public sector. Sumner will discuss this topic with the Board at greater length in his oral report.

K. Sumner (SWCD)- Sumner provided the following reports and discussions to augment and add to his written staff report. Review “Old and New Business” for further information.

OLD & NEW BUSINESS

Conservation Easements- Sumner informed the Board that the District carried \$112,000 in leftover funds last year’s Part C funding & the Part C for this year totaled \$230,000. This means that the District that has \$343,000 of largely unobligated funds. Sumner estimates that the conservation easement purchases for Phase 4 South (2023) will total around \$45,000. The timeframe for the other P4N conservation easements, such as the Bastek property, is unclear at this time, but progress should take effect. The estimated cost for the Bastek property is \$75,000, but LO wants the payment spread over five years. The Green Farmland property easements, which are undetermined, would also cost around \$75,000.

Ag NPS Round 27- Sumner reminded the Board of the time extension to March ’26 of the Ag NPS Rnd 27 grant projects. Sumner noted that it is preferable that construction on these projects be completed within the current calendar year, rather than risk working in the winter months. The District commissioned B&L to develop a fuel storage secondary containment plan, that can serve as a template for future projects. Weiboldt, who has the secondary fuel containment project, is unable to complete the project given the current budget because the original estimated cost was \$10,000. However, the current estimated budget cost is \$22,000. Sumner asked Weiboldt if his original local match promise was kept the same, if he would do the project, which he said he would. For this to happen, the District would have to account for Weiboldt’s contribution, \$14,000. Additionally, for Jason Soudant’s project, whose initial project budget was \$10,000, the District would need to provide \$12,000 to his contract in order to keep him at his original land owner contribution. Both fuel storage projects, would require a \$12,000 increase to their budgets from the District. Each project would have two 275-gallon tanks installed.

Furthermore, Weiboldt intends on building a compost facility, of which the estimated cost is \$35,000. The original cost of the compost facility was around \$30,000. There would be a \$5,000 increase for the compost facility. For Jason Soudant’s barnyard project, it would need an additional contribution of \$14,000. Since the State cannot provide

more funding to Rnd 27 projects, Sumner is asking the Board for a total increase of District funds in the amount of \$43,000. Sumner acknowledged that this is a significant request, but pointed out that the District does not have to make a large cash contribution to the Walkkill Flood project this year. The District could instead use that money for some of these smaller farm projects. This aligns well with Sumner's idea that the District shift their focus from flood projects which require a large financial commitment. Sumner feels that it is beneficial for the District to support farm fuel storage projects that will comply to all the relevant codes and safety measures. Given that these projects are under the 1,100-gallon limit, it is not necessary for them to have a spill prevention plan.

Cheney asked Sumner what caused the significant cost increases to the Round 27 projects. Sumner explained that the rising cost of building materials such as concrete, pipe, lumber, as well as hiring contractors contributed to the increase. The District aims to adhere not only to the NYS fire code standards, but also the NRCS specifications which accounted for the enhancements. Sumner explained, that a fuel storage project can be a double wall tank or single wall tank in a vault. Sumner thought that if a tank is in a vault, then it is not necessary to have bollards around the tank. According to B&L, bollards are still required even if the tank is in a vault. If a farmer were to purchase a used fuel tank, they are required to do a leak test which can cost half the amount of a new tank. Per Sumner, it is more economically sound to opt for a double wall tank with bollards surrounding it.

Sumner confirmed that the District cannot apply for additional State funding for any projects already funded by the State. The proposals were initially ranked based on how much of the project will be covered with State funds. Even if both projects cannot have their budgets increased, Sumner feels that one of the projects will be completed. The District has not received any bids from contractors yet for these projects. Despite going off estimates, Sumner feels confident in the figures he presented since both farmers want to do the project themselves. If the project is over \$20,000, then three bids, including the LO's, must be submitted to the District. If the farmer is doing it himself, then in theory he can do it for less given his time & cost of labor. The contractor would not have to pay prevailing wages since a private farmer is hiring them. The District solicits the bids, but the farmer handles construction, then the District reimburses the farmer based on eligible costs.

2025-4-6 Ruskiewicz made the Motion, Constable seconded, to increase the funding for the projects in Ag NPS Round 27 by \$43,000. All in favor.

2025-4-7 DeBlock made the Motion, Ruskiewicz seconded, to allocate \$50,000 to the District's 2025 Local Cost Share Program to cover new projects or fall cover crop fees. All in favor.

Phase 4 South Walkkill- Sumner reported that the conservation easements for Phase 4 South Bench Project will be finalized the week of 5/12. The District will need to provide the full easement payment at the time of the closing & related title company fees.

Phase 4 North Walkkill- There are a few minor tasks the contractor for Phase 4 North needs to complete. These include lowering the area between the four existing 4-foot diameter culverts under County Route 1 to connect to the Bench. This hopefully would become a minor overflow valve for the project. Additionally, the contractor needs to repair a section by the new access road near where he installed a culvert pipe since water is pooling by the inlet area.

Celery Avenue Ledge Lowering Project- Sumner noted that he and Cheney met with the County's grants coordinator and the DPW to discuss the grant offered by the NYS Department of State. The grants coordinator agreed to help the District apply for one of the two DOS grants. Sumner explained that the application is very time consuming and redundant at times, especially when addressing the DOS's seven resiliency principles. The grants coordinator will assist the District with setting up the online account, but it is the District's responsibility to fill out the application. The application is due 6/2/25. The County's grants division is preoccupied with other work until 5/2, but the District will work diligently to have the application completed in May. There is \$20 million available in funding for the State and there is no maximum funding request. However, there is a minimum grant request of \$300,000. The District

received an informal project estimate from a trusted contractor of \$225,000, which is contingent on a multitude of things. This accounts for the cost of the vibration monitoring test as well. The District proposes a total project cost of \$500,000, with \$450,000 requested from the State and a total of \$50,000 local match. Sumner asked the Board how much of a local match the District wants to provide, i.e. the minimum. Cheney asked Sumner if he knows what the ranking criteria are for the application. There is evaluation criteria listed, but Sumner did not see anything pertaining to cost efficiency. Cheney feels it is important for the District to determine how much local match they want to contribute. Cheney recommends that the District seek the County grants coordinator's guidance on this application and process. Sumner spoke with Jody regarding the seven principles, and she provided him with an example of a response. Sumner clarified that the resolution he prepared does not specify the District's local match amount, but gives Sumner the authorization to submit the application. The amount does not need to be determined today, but Sumner will be in communication with the Board regarding that. Sumner does not think the District will submit the application before the May BOD meeting. Cheney recommended that Rob Schreiber should be aware of what the District is doing and the potential County contribution, since he has been a long-standing supporter of this project.

2025-4-8 Cheney made the Motion, Constable seconded, to authorize the District to sign the related paperwork and submit the application to the Department of State for the Celery Avenue project. All in favor.

Sumner contacted Skoufis office to see if they could reach out to the NYS DEC to find out about any updates to the District's permit application. Sumner was instructed to resend the information again to the engineer in the flood bureau, despite it being sent three months ago.

AEM Round 18- Sumner reminded the Board that NYS Ag & Markets awards the District \$200,000 every two years for AEM projects that the Boards decide which to fund. No time extensions are offered for these AEM projects. Round 18 began on 1/1/24 and ends on 12/31/25. Letters were sent to the Round 18 participants in December '24 that indicated that if no progress was made by 4/1/25, the Board would consider reallocating their money. Sumner mentioned at March's meeting that two projects started working without notifying the District and did not follow the project plans. Sumner reported that Joe Minkus verbally relinquished his money. Sumner offered to meet with Rick Minkus, and determine what aspects of the construction could qualify for reimbursement. Truthfully, Sumner felt this action could potentially put Sumner in a tricky situation with the State. Rick has not been in contact with Sumner since his initial offer. Sumner recommends that the Board cancel both projects, which each totaled \$29,000 in state funds. Sumner proposed that if the Board is comfortable cancelling the two projects, then the District has three projects the money could be reallocated to.

One such project includes a barnyard manure management for Alex Ronne, which Sumner estimates the District could fund for \$29,000. Rick Vreeland is interested in a manure collection management project, which Sumner proposes assigning \$11,250 in state money for it. The remaining balance, \$17,750, would be allotted to Greg DeBuck to assist with the purchase of a hose reel mounted boom irrigation system. DeBuck will have to cover the remaining balance with his own funds, but the LO is not upset since he intended on making this purchase even before the District offered him funding. Sumner noted that the two Hoyt & Ewanciw projects in Round 18 are progressing well. The District is still waiting on action from Devon Simpson's project, the trench silo leachate collection system, which he wants to do himself. Sumner received three proposals, including one from Simpson, who had the lowest bid. Sumner expressed concern since they have received proposals, but construction has not begun. For now, Sumner does not have another project in mind, but recommends setting a hard construction deadline for Simpson. If Simpson were not to meet the deadline, then the District could potentially reassign the funding to another project.

2025-4-9 DeBlock made the Motion, Constable seconded, to cancel Joe & Rick Minkus' projects in AEM Round 18. All in favor.

2025-4-10 Cheney made the Motion, Cheney seconded, to pass the updated AEM Round 18 resolution that Sumner prepared. All in favor.

Wallkill Maintenance Agreement- The District still does not know when to expect the money from the four towns to help with the Wallkill River Maintenance. Sumner does not know if the funds will be deposited in the District's main checking account or if they must submit a reimbursement request. The District prepared a reimbursement request in the previously used process for expenses associated with the project contractor & staff time. Cheney stated that he will speak with the County Commissioner of Finance & Rick Golden later today to request an update.

Roller Crimper Project Update - Sumner reported that Phil Johnson, who delivered the District's recently purchased roller crimper, has been using it as an alternative to brush hogging on unharvested hay ground and corn stalks. Johnson noted that if the soil is tacky, then it can build up between the ribs, but for the most part it is working well.

Equipment Planning- Sumner learned from a John Deere salesman that they no longer make the 1755 model anymore, which is the model the District has been using. Instead, the company is offering a redesign model, but Sumner has been cautioned against purchasing newly designed equipment. Sumner does not have a quote on the redesign model and it is unclear whether it offers the finger pickup feature. The vacuum feature is not a good fit for the District's farmers. The O'Dells suggested the District explore purchasing a six row Kinze planter that pivots, but unfortunately those are still 11 feet wide, taller, and heavier. Ideally, the District would like to purchase a planter that is shorter than the District's current one which is 13 feet wide. Sumner was given a quote of \$60,000 on a four row Kinze planter. Sumner clarified that the Kinze planter is not a Sourcewell bid, but Sumner thinks that District could justify buying it based on the unique features that the District is looking for. The Kinze four row planter needs to be built, which means it would not be available for the spring '25 planting.

Cheney asked whether there would be a market to buy a used planter given the release of the new one. Sumner does not think so since farmers very rarely update their equipment upon the release of a new model. Sumner feels confident that if the District can justify the District's need for the special features found in the Kinze planter, then they're okay to make the purchase. Sumner feels conflicted requesting quotes from another Kinze dealer in PA since the current Salem Farm Equipment associate has done a lot of leg work. However, Sumner can do so if the Board wants him to.

Sumner noted that the Board gave approval in March for the purchase of a second Esch 12-foot grain drill, which is ready for order. The District has not purchased the Esch yet since Sumner wanted to gather more information on the available corn planters. Additionally, Sumner wanted to know if the District should purchase the Esch now given the staff limitations. Sumner expressed his concern that the District needs more help with the fieldwork. Sumner told the Board that he would hire a qualified candidate with no hesitation. DeBlock told the Board that Held is pregnant and is due later this year. DeBlock felt that the Board needed to know, given that it may complicate the District's fall rental program. DeBlock does not think it is right to have Held transporting equipment in fall since she will be further along in her pregnancy. Sumner is not opposed to moving equipment himself, but knows it will be challenging with all his other responsibilities. Ronne O'Dell is only able to deliver the equipment if the District is in dire straits. Sumner mentioned that classification as an independent contractor and requirement to purchase insurance deters possible part time employees. Schellenberg suggested that the District could advertise a position through CCE's all ag sending list. DeBlock proposed that a fellow farmer pick up the equipment and deliver it to their own farm. Sumner noted that this is a possibility, but that the District could experience conflicting accounts from farmers as to the condition of the equipment when it was delivered. Schellenberg suggested that Held could inspect the equipment prior to its transport and give approval for the other farmer to pick it up. Sumner does not think allowing farmers to transport equipment would be a major issue. After all, the farmer could be named as an additional insured on the farmer's rental agreement. The Board agreed that the District could exercise discretion in allowing certain farmers to move the equipment, pending a call to the insurance agent. DeBlock proposed distributing an ad for a field technician or equipment mover through CCE. Sumner countered with posting an ad for a contractor to move equipment on a fee basis rather than permanent employment. The Board instructed Sumner to use his judgement in regards to posting a listing and that this conversation will continue.

NYCLASS- Sumner reminded the Board that the District needs to have separate bank accounts for each grant project that is funded with State money. While working on opening a new account, Sumner read the District's investment policy which states that the District cannot keep more than \$250,000 in a single bank, but this policy is outdated. The District's current balance with M&T Bank exceeds that. Sumner spoke with the manager at our M&T Bank branch who assured him that the District's current accounts are protected as stated in the collateral agreements. Per Sumner, the District has never received concerns related to our bank account balance during our yearly audits. The M&T Bank manager told Sumner that they cannot raise the District's interest rates to match NYCLASS, but informed him that the Bank is not charging the District wiring fees which could total \$7k annually. As of now, Districts are **not** allowed to put grant funding received from NYS Ag & Markets in NYCLASS. Sumner commented that the District at times has a significant unobligated cash balance from the Part C & the County Appropriation funds. Sumner acknowledged that historically, the District did not have such a large cash balance, but he wants to see it grow for the public & District's benefit. There is no maximum or minimum investment or transaction requirements. Sumner told the Board that King can continue to research NYCLASS if they want her to. Cheney is familiar with NYCLASS, but highlighted that an investment in NYCLASS is not insured or guaranteed by the FDIC. King found this information on NYCLASS' website under their disclaimer page. Cheney urges the Board to strongly consider this in their decision to join NYCLASS, as well as its liquidity process. Cheney recommended that the District contact the County Commissioner of Finance to gain her opinion on NYCLASS. Sumner distributed the copy of the Lewis County Soil & Water's investment policy that King received to the Board for reviewal. Cheney recommended that King reach out to Gallagher to request a copy of the County's investment policy

Next meeting date: May 19th

ADJOURNMENT

2025-4-11 DeBlock made the Motion, seconded by Cheney, to adjourn the meeting at 10:52 AM. All in favor.

Minutes Prepared By:

Emily King, Secretary to the Board

Report to Board KMS

April, 2025

Increase local share c/s for **rd 27** projects? Weiboldt, Soudant

Soudant

Barnyard – Current - \$13K NYS; \$3K SWCD; \$4 LO \$20K total

Proposed – increase SWCD to \$17,000(Plus **\$14K**), inc. LO from \$4k to \$10K revised total \$39,000

Fuel Storage – current - \$6,500K NYS; \$1,500 SWCD; \$2,000 LO \$10K total

Proposed – increase SWCD to \$13.5K (plus **\$12k**) revised total cost \$22k

Weiboldt

Fuel Storage – current - \$13K NYS; \$3K SWCD; \$2K LO \$20K total

Proposed – increase SWCD to \$13.5K (**plus \$12K**) revised total cost \$22K

Compost Facility – current - \$19.5K NYS; \$4.5K SWCD; \$6k LO \$30K total

Proposed – increase SWCD to \$9.5k (**plus \$5K**) revised total cost \$35K

Total increase in SWCD funds for rd 27 projects - **\$43,000**

Current 2024 Part C - \$112,303

Current 2025 Part C - \$231,230

\$343,433

Existing commitments from these funds –

P4S Easement Purchases - \$45,000 (expected to be due 5/2025)

AgNPS rd 27 (original budget, not including above) - \$25,000 (may not all get earned)

Commitments that will extend into 2026 and beyond –

P4N easements - \$75,000

P3 easements - \$75,000 (est.)

AgNPS rd 29 - \$31,000

AgNPS – rd 30? (\$13,600)

Total commitments 2025 - \$70,000

Commitments 2025 and beyond - \$251,000 (not including rd 30)

2026 Part C expected to be similar in amount to 2025

Do we want to allocate funds to a 2025 Local Cost Share Program?

Resolution for DOS Celery project

Wallkill Flood Projects –

P4S – We are shooting for a closing for the p4s easements the week of 5/12. There will a payment due at the closing of approximately \$45,000 plus title company fees.

Floodplain Bench Phase 4 North

A ‘rental payment’ to the farmer who has been leasing the p4n land for cropland that was unavailable last year as a result of project activity is on the Bills To Be Paid this month. There are a couple construction loose ends to tie up: 1) ‘connect’ existing pipes under County Route 1 to the Bench; 2) address a small ponded area of the field where Bench soil was added.

Other Flood Control Items

Celery Avenue ledge lowering project – I am working on the DOS grant application discussed last month. Due 6/2. We have Resolution to submit this grant under New Business. I Contacted Skoufis’ office about delay in permit finding. They contacted DEC, and we soon after received a request from DEC to re-submit information we had previously supplied. So apparently Skoufis office resulted in some action, but still no indication when a finding may be rendered. I made renewed efforts to get a status report from Goshen and Wawayanda regarding the Floodplain Development permits we need from them, but was unsuccessful.

Carbon Farming Project – Still waiting on final payment of \$4,268.32 on Southway project (same status as last month).

AEM Round 18 –we will be asking the Board to officially cancel two Tier 4 projects and add three new ones that will obligate the same amount of funding that was attached to the two cancellations. We will need a Board Resolution to do this. Hoyt project is progressing – currently waiting for drainage plow contractor.

CRF Round 7 - Still waiting for payment from NYS on Crist contract. Apparently we did not get our CFP in before the NYS budget ‘black-out’ period.

‘Sign Offs’ on Soil Health Practices –No real updates from last month.

Revision of Wallkill Maintenance Agreement –Still waiting on updated procedures from County. Contractor has submitted billing of about \$26,000. We will submit a reimbursement request to County per past procedures unless new guidance is available soon.

Roller Crimper Project Update -Phil Johnson has been experimenting with the R/C as an alternative to brush-hogging unharvest hay ground and corn stalks.

The AgNPS Round 29 – No recent project activity.

AgNPS Round 30 –No word yet on Wallkill Watershed Proposal.

Other Items

Gas Purchase – asked Ryan from DPW to investigate possibility of fueling at their New Hampton/Goshen facility.

PDR–. No updates to report.

Possible Collaboration with Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge – no updates from last month.

DWSP2 – I have missed some of the more recent zoom meetings due to construction priorities.

Equipment Planning

Skoufis Equipment Funding – I will update the board on corn planter purchase considerations at the meeting.

Secretary to the Board Update

I emailed PKF O'Connor Davies, which is the firm that conducts the District's yearly audits, to figure out when we can expect them. The firm typically contacts the office around December/January to schedule our audit, but the District never heard from them. Coleen, a supervisor at PKF O'Connor Davies, informed me that the District is scheduled for the week of May 5th. She mentioned that the same auditor as last year will be coming, as well as another. Per Coleen, the two auditors will let me know before their arrival what documents they need and instructions on how setup an online portal. The auditors request that I upload these documents to the portal. As of 4/18, I am still waiting to hear from them and will reach out should I not hear from them by 4/21.

I wrote a summary of the meeting for the Annual Flood Management of the Wallkill River Advisory Board which took place on 3/7/25. Once it was approved by Sumner, I distributed the document to the attendees of the meeting. I want to acknowledge that I am actively working towards writing meeting summaries/minutes more concisely. I am working on discerning what information is pertinent and what can be summarized.

Kate Schmidt, who is the Sustainability Coordinator at SUNY Orange, contacted me to find out if the District is interested in attending an Earth Day fair at the Middletown campus on 4/24. I spoke with Sumner who approved Held and I attending. This will give the District an opportunity to highlight our recent projects such as the Wallkill River Flood Control & Monhagen Watershed. Held & I will bring informational material pertaining to the District's history as well. An added plus to the District's attendance is that it will satisfy one of the performance measures needed when the District is applying for the Part C funding from NYS Ag & Markets.

I contacted the New York State Local Retirement System to figure out how to enroll Sumner as a non-member. I was told at the WQS that even non-members, such as Sumner, need to have their workdays and salary reported monthly. NYSLRS mandates that employers report non-members in case the employee chooses to join later I emailed the Employer Services Bureau within NYSLRS and saved their written answers to the Share Drive. Thankfully, I do not need to retroactively report Sumner's wages from when the District joined NYSLRS in 2021. I confirmed that I do not need to report Chris DeGroot's wages from her time of employment with the District. Since Sumner's official full time appointment date occurred more than a year ago, I cannot register him online. Instead, I need to fax a cover sheet and an unsigned application to NYSLRS. The District does not have a fax machine, so I intend on using my family's fax machine. Additionally, I learned that Held's health insurance buyout, which is considered a non-pensionable payment, needs to be recorded in the monthly report that her buyout was issued. Thankfully, the NYSLRS instructor assured me that I do not need to correct previous reports.

Sumner tasked me with finding out the steps to opening new checking accounts for two of the grants in CRF Round 7 at M&T Bank. I spoke with the manager at M&T Bank who instructed me to gather the needed information for one of the new authorized signers. The manager is scheduled to stop by after the BOD meeting to collect the signatures and finalize

the opening of the accounts. The District is still waiting on funds from Ag & Markets for Crist Orchard's project in CRF Round 7.

In relation to the District's bank accounts with M&T Bank, I emailed my fellow office managers to determine what their District's Investment Policy says about account fund limits. Sumner reviewed our Investment Policy, which states that account funds are not to exceed \$250,000, and wanted to know what other District's Investment Policies are. I received a copy of Lewis County's Investment Policy and shared it with Sumner. M&T Bank offers deposit insurance through the FDIC up to \$250,000. Sumner spoke with the manager at our M&T Bank who assured Sumner that M&T provides a lot of protection for the District's current accounts

Additionally, I learned about that some Districts have a portion of their funds in NYCLASS. NYCLASS, which stands for New York Cooperative Liquid Assets Securities System, is a short term, highly liquid investment fund, created specifically for the public sector. The office manager from Jefferson County told me that her District earned over \$54k last year in interest. In comparison, OCSWCD earned \$8,126.81 in interest from our main checking account in 2024. They currently have \$500k in their savings account with NYCLASS. On average, it takes a day for funds to be transferred, and it is a straightforward process. However, it is important to note that an investment in NYCLASS is not insured or guaranteed by the FDIC.

I am only learning about NYCLASS now because it was offered as a course at the Administrative Conference in November 2023. Given that I was only hired in September 2023, Sumner and I decided that I needed to prioritize learning my responsibilities rather than attend the Conference.

As of now, Districts are **not** allowed to put grant funding received from NYS Ag & Markets in NYCLASS. Instead, the District can transfer funds earned from Part C & the County Appropriation to NYCLASS. There is no maximum or minimum investment or transaction requirements. NYCLASS does not charge a banking fee, but recommends that the District speak with their bank to rule out whether the District would incur wiring or incoming ACH fees. NYCLASS encourages Districts to speak with their bank first to find out if they will raise the District's interest rates. The M&T Bank manager told Sumner that they cannot raise our interest rates, but informed him that the Bank is not charging the District wiring fees which could total \$7k annually. Sumner and I want to discuss this with the Board before opening an account with NYCLASS.

I mailed the updated conservation easements, their related Schedule "A" descriptions, and the TP-584 forms for the four parcels associated with the Phase 4 South project to Richard Hoyt. Sumner spoke with Hoyt who reviewed the documents and found a few minor edits. I spoke with Hoyt on 4/17 who walked me through his edits. I will email his office the updated docs for his final reviewal.

Lastly, I updated the various grant ledgers, as well as the receipts, disbursements, and payroll Excel spreadsheet. I updated the online bank accounts to reflect the total listed on March's dedicated fund summary. Once the new checking accounts are created, I will

allocate funds from the main checking to show their current balance. I prepared and submitted the District's quarterly taxes, NY-45 & Form 941, for the first quarter well ahead of the 4/30 deadline.

As always, please let me know if you have any questions or concerns. Thank you!

Best,

Emily

OCSWCD Technician Update

Mary C. Held

4/18/2025

I attended CNMP training at the beginning of April in Ithaca, NY. It was very informative and I was pleased with the three-day training course. The connections I made were very helpful both for eventual CNMP certification and for when I'll take the CCA exams again.

Largely, I have been working on AEM Tiers 2 and 3 for Alex Ronne and a new Grown and Certified client at Collina Piccolina Farm. These have taken up the majority of my time in the office lately.

Additionally, new developments occurring with the Minkuses including the replacement of a culvert along Celery Avenue have arisen. The installation of a new culvert is being partially funded out of the Wallkill Maintenance Agreement pool. Joe Minkus informed me that the work is contracted to be accomplished by Brian Gurda at some point before the end of the month.

Equipment:

Roller Crimper Demo Project:

(no update since last meeting) Phil Johnson picked up the Roller Crimper. As a reminder, these are the farms interested in utilizing the Roller Crimper as a demonstration project:

O'Dell, Mike

Rowe, Chuck

Ronne, Alex

Conklin, Sue: will crimp if CC germinates in spring

Touw, Jason: will crimp if CC germinates in spring – last update indicated that cover crop was coming in, I have plans to put eyes on it in the coming week.

Johnson, Phil: will crimp if CC germinates in spring

LCSP:

Only update here is that another farmer had reached out to inquire about cover crop reimbursement opportunities. We still have not allocated funding to the Local Cost Share fund.

CRF Update:

Round 6:

Currently working on running RUSLE2 for the round 6 farmers. I'm getting re-acquainted with the software. Oscar met with me after the last meeting and we determined that NRCS would sign off on cover crop providing I supply them with the information they need. I will be

I plan to run a quick round at Touw's farm for the cover crop he planted that didn't get funded last year due to late planting. He still has roughly 17 acres of cover crop area that will be checked out next week.

Payments (RECAP FROM LAST BOARD MEETING):

Russell Smiley: \$1,706.05

Alex Kocot: \$10,441.15

Phil Johnson: --

Jason Touw: \$1,701.70

Bob Stap: \$1,152.90

Total CRF6 **2024**: \$15,001.80

Projected **2025** CRF6 payout (JT): \$1,232.00 (To be put on bills for board approval in May)

Soil testing and compost testing need to be completed before the closeout of this grant. I am preparing a schedule of those who need soil testing to be completed and plan to get it done when the weather is more agreeable.

Round 7: No updates from the technician.

AGNPS Update:

Round 27: Contract End Date: March 2025

- No update since last meeting.

Round 29:

- No update.

Round 30:

- (No update since last meeting) Feb 24th: AGNPS 30 was submitted. The following projects were submitted:
 - o Michele Callisto (mixing facility)
 - o Tom Owens (fuel tank storage)

AEM Update:

Round 18 Tier 4 Projects:

Joe Minkus: Phone call on 3/21/2025 indicated that he is comfortable with dropping the project and allowing SWCD to re-allocate the funds elsewhere. Further communication confirmed that

he was not interested in amending his barn project to agree to the construction plan and therefore will surrender his AEM Tier 4 Funding. Kevin will touch on this more.

Steven Demberg: Sent an email of his singular quote under 20k and indicated that construction is imminent. Emailed and sent a physical letter reminding him of his obligation and to let us know at least 2 days before construction was scheduled to commence. No response from the letter or email that was sent last week.

Kevin has been in contact with Rick Minkus, Mark Hoyt, Pete Ewanciw, and Devon Simpson more so than I have and will touch on their updates.

AEM Activities:

- Tier 2s completed since last board meeting:
 - o Alex Ronne – Possible Farm LLC
 - o Brian Jay – Collina Piccolina Farm: Grown & Certified verification
- Tier 2s planned to be completed:
 - o Potentially Orion Blake – waiting to hear back in terms of project idea
- Tier 3s being put together
 - o Alex Ronne – heavy use area management
 - Grazing plan to be completed after this
 - o Marc Suffern – grazing plan

CCA Plan:

- I have decided to re-take at least a portion of the CCA exam in August with a new strategy and extra materials acquired by friends who have taken the exams and passed before. There are 2 more opportunities to take the exams this year. I will keep the Board posted of any further decisions made about this opportunity.