

**MINUTES**  
**ORANGE COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT**  
**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**  
**April 20, 2015**

The Meeting was **CALLED TO ORDER** by the Chairman at 9:04 AM. Directors J. Wright, G. Keeton, P. DeBlock and P. Ruszkiewicz were present, along with K. Sumner, C. DeGroot, K. Brown and N. Meyer (OCSWCD), R. Baglia (CCE), F. Barber (FSA) and J. Heller (NRCS).

DeBlock made the Motion, seconded by Keeton, to approve March's Board Meeting Minutes as written. All in favor.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

The District received information on an Annual ReLeaf Conference to be held July 16-18, 2015 at SUNY ESF in Syracuse, NY.

A letter was received from Karl Brabenec, Member of Assembly, 9<sup>th</sup> District, thanking the District for a follow-up letter relative to funding for flood control in the Black Dirt region and also for the work the District does for agriculture in Orange County.

A National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) Investment request was Tabled by the Board.

DeBlock requested that the District contact the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation to have Thomas Pahucki's name removed from their mailing list for the District.

Copies of the 2014 Audit Report completed by O'Connor Davies LLP were passed out for Director review.

The Ag and Farmland Protection Board Meeting Minutes from March and April's Agenda were passed out.

Two Notices of Complete Application for projects were received from Joseph R. Murry, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, Division of Environmental Permits. One application was for the Pochuck Rock Ledge in the Town of Warwick and the other for the Celery Avenue Rock Ledge in the Towns of Goshen and Wawayanda.

Sumner sent a letter to Dale Stein, Chairman of the New York State Soil and Water Conservation Committee formally appealing the State Committee staff decision to penalize the District's Round 21 Walkkill proposal 5 points (out of a possible total of 240) for missing documents. This was the first year that proposals were submitted through the Grants Gateway and there were numerous quirks with the process. Given the documented issues with the on-line application procedure, the District feels it is inappropriate for State Committee staff to penalize in this fashion.

**FINANCIAL REPORTS**

There was a brief discussion regarding the Walkkill Maintenance Fund. Sumner explained that the \$60,000.00 in the fund is replenished annually. \$5,000.00 of this is used towards District staff time.

The two Ag NPS Round 20 Grant advance payments were received.  
S. Wong joined the Meeting at 9:11 AM.

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

There was a brief discussion regarding repairs to the District's copy machine. It will cost \$249.00 for Kristt Company to replace the drum unit. The Board agreed to have the copier repaired.

The Bills to be Paid were approved by the Board.

There was discussion on paying Lehman & Getz Engineering for engineering work they completed on 5-Spoke Farm. Sumner explained the list of practices that we need a Private Engineer to sign off on. Wright added that this is fairly common to have this listed on Bills to be Paid.

The purchase of a spare rim and tire for the corn planter was discussed. Wright suggested checking after-market prices. DeBlock made the Motion, seconded by Keeton, to give permission to the District to purchase a tire and rim for the corn planter as long as the District looks for the lowest price which includes shipping. All in favor.

### **STAFF REPORTS**

**C. DeGroot (SWCD)** – DeGroot mentioned that the District's Investment Policy will need to be updated to add TD Banknorth as the District's additional bank.

**K. Brown (SWCD)** - On March 23<sup>rd</sup> there was a meeting with the partners on the Monhagen Project.

On March 25<sup>th</sup> Brown met with Brian and Brett Ford regarding the bench project to discuss where to put the soil.

On March 27<sup>th</sup> Brown was included in a teleconference with Maloney's staff regarding updates on the Wallkill Projects. It was recommended that Maloney staff be invited to a face-to-face meeting with District Directors.

Brown and Meyer met with Martin Sauer on April 17<sup>th</sup> to complete an Ag Environmental Management (AEM) update.

On April 18<sup>th</sup> District staff handed out seedlings at the Shoprite in Middletown to promote the Monhagen Project.

Brown mentioned the upcoming Stream Cleanup event on April 25<sup>th</sup> for the Monhagen Project.

**N. Meyer (SWCD)** – The District's no-till seeder is currently in the field. Three farms have finished using it and there are several on a list scheduled to rent it.

Meyer passed out flyers for the Monhagen Project.

Meyer has been soil testing Jessy Raap's fields.

He has been busy updating the District's website and facebook page and created an on-line sign-up sheet for people to receive future announcements. He plans on sending email reminders to everyone who signed up to volunteer at the Monhagen Project.

A brief discussion followed regarding the District's broken seeder.

**K. Sumner (SWCD)** – 5-Spoke, a farm included in one of the District’s ag grants, is scheduled to install a new milkhouse drain and treatment system. The producer asked Sumner if he could tie another drain into the system, one that comes out of his cheese plant. Sumner asked the State Committee and they approved it.

Ed Cossa, included in ag grant Round 18, is installing a concrete slab for brewers grain.

G. Johnson, who is in Round 17, wants to start his project. Round 17 is the grant we are trying to get a time extension on and our request will be presented to the State Committee this week.

There was additional discussion regarding the Ag NPS Round 21 Grant Proposals that were submitted via the Grants Gateway program. There were clearly issues with this program and it is the first year that Districts are using it to submit proposals. The District was told that one of their proposals was missing a couple of maps. Sumner sent a letter to the State Committee Board asking them to remove the 5 point deduction due to missing maps. There are a total of 240 points that can be granted.

Grass Pellet Project Update – They are still trying to find a farm in the tri-county area where the machine can stay long term. Tantillos may be interested.

The Wallkill River Summit is in New Paltz this week. Sumner plans on attending.

The Ford pickup truck was delivered to the highest bidder. We are still waiting for the District’s new truck to be delivered.

Staff are currently working on certifying cover crops for payment via the Ag NPS grants.

Sumner received a call from the Code Enforcement Officer from the Town of Hamptonburgh. He is involved with the Tri-County Association. They are looking for continuing education credits that they have to get. They would like Sumner to teach either a 4-Hour Erosion and Sediment Control Course or a 2-Hour Site Plan Review Course. These Tri-County trainings are offered twice a year as a service to municipalities. They would like us to waive any fees. Sumner suggested they make that request to the Board in writing. The District could charge for time and materials.

## **INTERAGENCY REPORTS**

**R. Baglia (CCE)** – On April 30<sup>th</sup> there will be another class held at CCE that is part of the Stormwater Management Series called “Ensuring a Long Life for SMP’S”.

27 people attended a class on hydroponics and aquaponics.

On April 22<sup>nd</sup>, the Hudson Valley Regional Council and Simon Gruber are having an Urban Revitalization program in Newburgh at Kaplan Hall.

A roundtable discussion at Delaware County CCE is planned for April 27<sup>th</sup> for those with an interest in recycling agricultural plastics.

Baglia has been working on a Cornell Local Roads Program on roadside drainage on the 30<sup>th</sup> in Rockland County.

She is also working on two DAM safety removal seminars. The first one is May 8<sup>th</sup> in Rockland County and the second one is in Ulster County. The date and location has yet to be determined.

**F. Barber (FSA)** – The Farm Service Agency is hiring for a Program Technician. The closing date to apply is April 29<sup>th</sup>.

CREP – There are complaints coming in and a handful of contracts are nearing expiration. 2008 was the last year they did sign-ups. CREP is available in other locations, just not in Orange County.

FSA just finished the election period for Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC).

Highly Erodible Land(HEL)/ Wetland Compliance – This is a simple form that can be filled out in the FSA office.

The USDA is looking into doing a new ten year lease in this building. They would like to include any office improvements/repairs in the lease.

**J. Heller (NRCS)** – NRCS is currently obligating 2015 contracts. There are over 20 agricultural management assistance applications for Irrigation totaling over \$500,000.00 in requests.

NRCS is hiring for the Soil Conservationist position in the Middletown Office.

There is a new Area Engineer to replace Deron Davis.

Heller is participating in an Organic NY Event on June 2<sup>nd</sup> with Northeast Farm Access Group on a farm in Chester.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

Wallkill Flood Project Update –The Joint Application for Permits went out Friday on the Bench Project. It's possible that work on the Pochuck Ledge Project could start this summer. DeBlock asked where the rocks will go from the Ledge Project. Sumner stated that the planset does not specify. Sumner discussed the soil utilization. B&L did not get very far so the District took control of this and did most of the write-up on a soil utilization plan. The most inexpensive and efficient thing to do is use the adjacent fields. It was proposed to use up to 60-70% of soil material on these fields. There was a brief discussion regarding soil makeup based on soil borings.

RSR Mitigation Project Update – Meyer sent out letters to landowners but has not yet heard back from them. He is looking for three sites to plant this year and is working on getting the planting material through Trees for Tribes.

UTV and Trailer Space Rental Update – Sumner said that he will work on getting price quotes from commercial storage unit companies to present at the next Board Meeting.

Monhagen Brook Projects at Campbell Hall Plaza Update - The Monhagen Brook Stream Cleanup is scheduled on April 25<sup>th</sup> with a rain date of May 2nd. Flyers were passed out.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

The completed Audit Report for 2014 was distributed to the Board for review. It will be discussed at next month's Board Meeting.

District's Investment Policy – The District's policy needs to be updated to reflect TD Banknorth as the District's second bank and to also increase the amount so that funds will not exceed \$250,000.00 in any one

account. Wright made the Motion to accept the updates, seconded by Keeton, providing that State Law does not prevent the amount being raised. All in favor.

Cooperative Working Agreement – Reports were made by Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) employees to the State Committee that the District’s Ag NPS Grant project at 5-Spoke Creamery in the Town of Goshen did not meet NRCS specifications. New York State Soil and Water Conservation Committee Engineer, Tim Clarke, visited the site after reviewing relevant technical design documents and indicated to our District Manager (the Project designer) that he found no issues with the project. It was mentioned that at no time did the Private Planner, who deemed the project did not meet standards and specs, contact the District and express concern. When Sumner called and confronted this planner (who at the time of the plan preparation was employed by Agricultural Consulting Services, he indicated that they “never consult with the Soil and Water offices”. Sumner stated that he found this to be poor practice and irresponsible use of taxpayer dollars since it is bound to lead to duplication of work and inefficiency.

Sumner noted that while he was pleased that the State Committee engineer found no deficiencies with the project, his greater concern was that no one from NRCS ever discussed the matter with him directly. He felt this lack of communication was in direct contravention of the principles of the Cooperative Working Agreement that the District just recently signed. In particular, Sumner felt that it was a serious slight and highly unprofessional that the NRCS staff person, Heller, who works right in our office chose to not apprise him of the situation. Sumner indicated that it would be difficult for him to work cooperatively with this Heller due to the lack of trust created by this lack of communication. When asked directly if he reported to the State Committee that the project did not meet specs, Heller stated that he could not remember. Heller stated that he was advised by his Supervisor not to discuss this project or confront Sumner or the SWCD Board about this project. The Board plans on sending a letter regarding this incident to State Level NRCS. The Chairman indicated that he wants to request a joint meeting between NRCS, SWCD Directors and the State Committee. His concern is that this situation should not impact services to our clients or to our conservation programs in general.

There was a discussion regarding delinquent no-till payers. If someone paid a delinquent bill, should they still have to pre-pay 100% to use the equipment again? It was determined that if someone has been delinquent in paying in the past, they will have to pre-pay 100% in order to use the equipment again, but they will have the option of requesting their name be removed from the pre-pay list at the discrepancy of the Board. The Rental Agreement Policy will be updated to reflect this.

The NEXT MEETING is scheduled for Monday, May 18, 2015 at 9:00 AM.

The MEETING was adjourned at 11:44 AM on a Motion by DeBlock, seconded by Wright. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine DeGroot  
Secretary to the Board