

MINUTES
ORANGE COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
April 17, 2023

The **MEETING** was **CALLED TO ORDER** by the Chairman at 9:07 AM. Directors P. DeBlock, J. Wright, P. Ruszkiewicz, B. Cheney and G. Constable were present along with K. Sumner and C. DeGroodt (SWCD), B. Luskin (NYS Ag & Markets) and Natasha Wozniak (Climate Smart Woodbury Task Force).

Introductions were made to Natasha.

Bids for the District's 1998 Great Plains EWNT7 no-till seeder were opened. 1) Mike Simpson - \$7,500.00 2) Richard Lacouette - \$6,590.00 3) Richard Wieboldt - \$5,738.00 4) Russell Smiley - \$2,485.00 5) Mike Nunes, President of the Whortlekill Rod & Gun Club - \$6,651.00. **2023-4-1 A Motion was made by Constable, seconded by DeBlock, to accept a personal check or a certified bank check from Mike Simpson in the amount of \$7,500.00 for the 1998 Great Plains EWNT7 no-till seeder. If paid with a personal check, he can pick up the machine after his check clears. All in favor.**

2023-4-2 Ruszkiewicz made the Motion, DeBlock seconded, to approve March's Board Meeting Minutes as written. All in favor.

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

CORRESPONDENCE

- The bank statements and collateral agreements were available for review.
- Ben Luskin, NYS Soil and Water Conservation Committee (SWCC), sent us a written report of general updates on NYS SWCC activities.
- The District received the NYSCDEA State Fair Booth Assessment Invoice for \$100.00 & a Volunteer Request. **2023-4-3 Wright made the Motion, Constable seconded, to pay the \$100.00 NYSCDEA State Fair Booth Assessment Invoice. All in favor.**
- The New York Association of Conservation Districts updates/news was available for review. The 2024 NCF-Envirothon New York committee is working on the upcoming event.
- Sumner sent a letter to Kyla Hastie, Acting Regional Director, Northeast Region, US Fish and Wildlife Service, regarding the Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge/Floodplain Restoration. In 2019, the District reached out to the Wallkill Refuge Manager to discuss the potential for collaboration between USFWS and OCSWCD to implement a floodplain restoration project and there appeared to be interest, but he has had difficulty renewing the conversation. Some discussion followed.
- Sumner nominated DeGroodt for the Division VII Merit Award, which she received. An excerpt from the District Employees Newsletter that recognized District employees who received awards was passed around.

FINANCIAL REPORTS

The District's 'Unobligated' account balance is up. Our Performance Measures Part A and Part C money was received. By next month we will designate Part C money to projects.

2023-4-4 DeBlock made the Motion, Ruszkiewicz seconded, to file March's Financial Reports for audit review. All in favor.

BILLS FOR BOARD APPROVAL

Once the payment to Orange County Land Trust is made (listed on bills for board approval), the Legoland EBP funding can be closed out.

There were a couple of projects that required the landowners to lay out a significant amount of money. Sumner had asked the Board prior to the meeting to approve some interim cash reimbursements to assist the landowners with the project costs (see list of Bills for Board Approval).

2023-4-5 DeBlock made the Motion, Cheney seconded, to pay the bills as presented. All in favor.

Sumner noted that our engineers Barton & Loguidice break down their bills according to the different grant projects.

GRANT REPORT UPDATE – The Board reviewed the monthly Grant Report. The Grant Report is updated monthly to reflect changes.

There is ongoing progress on various projects. For the first time, we have made a payment applicable to the CRF Round 5 grant which is supporting the Phase 4 of the Floodplain Bench.

INTERAGENCY REPORTS

Natasha Wozniak (Climate Smart Woodbury Task Force/CSWTF) – Wozniak is part of a newly formed task force in Woodbury. She is interested in flood mitigation and obtaining grants for the Town. She felt that the District may be a good resource to see what is available. Wozniak said she is also involved with the Climate Smart Stewardship through the Cornell Cooperative Extension. Some discussion followed. Sumner said there is a loose coalition of town Conservation Advisory Councils (CAC) in the County. He will send her the information. The CACs are created and approved by the Towns, and are official town sub-committees, where the Town appoints the members.

DeBlock asked Sumner if CSWTF could apply for the grants that the District applies for. Sumner said that most of our grants are tied to commercial agriculture but that there are other grants not specific to agriculture that can be obtained through the DEC. He recommended that Wozniak research DEC funding opportunities which can be found on their website.

Climate Resilient Farming grant program projects need to be sponsored by a commercial farmer. Discussion followed.

Sumner briefly described the Wallkill Flood Project.

B. Luskin (NYS Ag & Markets) – The next State Committee meeting is April 26th and will be in-person only.

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Ben mentioned that Districts still have time to nominate a farm through the AEM Leopold Conservation Award. This award recognizes landowners who inspire others with their dedication to ethical land, water, and wildlife habitat management on ag land. The recipient will be presented with \$10,000.00 from the Sand County Foundation. The deadline for applications is May 27th.

P. DeBlock mentioned that the Pandemic Assistance Revenue Program (PARP) deadline is in June. She said that staff at FSA are doing a great job keeping up with the workload.

STAFF REPORTS

Written staff reports were emailed to Board Members prior to the Meeting for review.

C. DeGroodt (SWCD) – DeGroodt submitted her staff report via email to Directors prior to the Board Meeting. She wanted to add a bill from The Computer Shop to the Bills for Board Approval.

K. Sumner (SWCD) – See “Old and New Business”.

OLD & NEW BUSINESS

AG NPS Round 27 – The Keziah Lain compost shed project is 90% complete. Our project budget is \$30,000.00 (\$19,500 from the State, \$4,500 from SWCD and \$6,000 from the landowner).

Hudson Valley Carbon Farming Project (HVCFP) – The Southway compost facility, which is being funded through the HVCFP is 90% complete. Sumner has been communicating with the managers of that project and has gotten verbal approval to increase the budget from \$30,000 to \$36,000, possibly a little more than that. The final complete cost is expected to be approximately ~\$40,000.00 so the landowner will have to contribute ~\$4,000.00.

Since the Lain project is going over budget, Sumner asked the Board if they would be willing to increase the District's contribution to Lain's by \$4,500.00.

2023-4-6 DeBlock made the Motion, Cheney seconded, to increase Lain's funding by \$4,500.00 for his compost facility project through the Carbon Farming Project. All in favor.

Sumner mentioned to the Board that they may want to consider re-funding the District's 'local cost-share program', which has been used primarily for fall cover crop projects.

Wright asked Sumner how the compost projects are aerated. Sumner told him that the aerator is powered by a bounce house blower, which is powerful enough for the composting process. Sumner passed around a photo that shows aeration trenches where the concrete was poured. Discussion followed. Sumner would like to take the compost facility plans the District now has and find a local engineer that can tweak some of the construction details and maybe reduce the cost of building the next facility. It would also be nice to have an engineer closer to our location that can come and look at projects because, as of now, Barton and Loguidice (B&L) travels six hours round trip to come to us. Cheney said that B&L has contacts that are closer to our location that may be able to sign off on projects.

Sumner received a phone call last Friday from Lucinda, the Manager at the Chester Ag Center. They were having a meeting with NRCS because a new renter applied for 20 high tunnels through NRCS. The Chester Ag Center said they knew he was applying but had no idea he applied for 20 on one field. Sumner does not know the outcome of that meeting. The District has some confusion on what the ranking criteria are for high tunnels, because in the past some

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commercial farm operations have been declined, but this one received 20 without the landowner's knowledge. Lucinda was concerned that the high tunnels will cover the entire field and possibly increasing impervious area and shedding the water right into the ditches.

Sumner had a meeting with NRCS last year to see if he could come up with some way to assist them with their engineering workload, in order to assist the farmers. Jason Touw's project was a test case where he has Roof Runoff Management, collecting the roof water and piping it to a stream. It was a pretty simple straight forward design. Sumner submitted a plan to NRCS in December 2022 and it has not been approved yet. It was reviewed but the reviewer did not have approval authority.

The Ag NPS Round 29 and Round 7 Climate Resilient Farm Request for Proposals are out. We have a list of projects, approximately nine applicants. The Ag NPS application is due in June. The CRF application is due in August.

2023-4-7 Cheney made the Motion, DeBlock Constable seconded, to act on Resolution AGNPS-2023-04-17 to authorize submittal of our Ag NPS Round 29 Proposal. All in favor.

Sumner mentioned that the CRF Round 7 application will have an irrigation focus.

The Zylstra farm in Montgomery recently stopped milking cows and is transitioning into a horse boarding facility. They have inquired about assistance to establish a grazing system.

EBP Legoland - Photos of the Schunnemunk Trail pedestrian bridge were passed around.

Wright mentioned the passing of Jack Hoeffner.

NEXT MEETING DATE - The next **MEETING** is scheduled for **Monday, May 15, 2023 at 9:00 AM.**

ADJOURNMENT

2023-4-8 The Meeting was Adjourned at 10:20 AM on a Motion by Cheney, seconded by DeBlock. All in favor.

Minutes Prepared By:

Christine DeGroodt, Secretary to the Board

April, 2023

AEM/AEM Round 17 Tier 4 (Implementation Projects) Deadline for Completion – 12/31/2023

O'Dell project is complete except for final grading/seeding in spring

Dean Ford – completed week of 2/13

Hoyt- design complete. Participant seeking contractor proposals

Ewanciw – Design complete. Participant indicates he has started.

Hudson Valley Carbon Farming Project [contract extended to 4/2023]

Southway Compost Facility – Construction mostly complete. Waiting for concrete to strengthen before setting big blocks that create the 4 'bins'. Installation of blower and electric also still pending.

Minkus controlled drainage project – no schedule for construction. Talking to DeBuck Sod Farm about possible controlled drainage project on recently purchased Glenwood Road property. I have been told that the contract actually is in effect until end of this year.

Floodplain Bench

Phase 4 (CRF 5)

Tree cutting and processing complete. Working on addendum to B&L Design/construction plan, and then bid package, hope to start soliciting bids this month. Met with landowner.

Phase 3, Area 2

Still working with attorney and County Surveyor on Conservation Easement matters. Re-planted about 75 trees that floated or tipped from flooding of the bench this past winter.

Other Flood Mitigation

Pellets Island Reach Maintenance Program – No further progress on easements. Hope to do mowing/maintenance work this year using 2023 'Part B' funding.

Round 27 ANPSACP

Keziah Lain compost shed – same status as Southway.

Other

Final LLNY EBP payment on agenda for approval this month (\$35K to OCLT for Sugarloaf Mountain project).

New Hire – No immediate prospects on radar.

Meat Processing Facility –

I suggested that the AFPB send a thank you letter to survey participants that included survey results. CCE responded to this suggestion and prepared a draft letter and updated survey results summary along with list of respondents for AFPB to review at March meeting. I am not aware that a letter has gone out yet.

I will be out of the office 4/21 to 5/2. I will need help with equipment program, assuming weather that week is favorable for planting. I have discussed this with Chris and Ron. Ron expects to be available to cover equipment moves.

Tried out new Esch seeder at O'Dell farm. Everything seems to be working as it should.

We are starting preparation of two grant proposals, AGNPS Rd 29 due in June, CRF Round 6 due in August.

I am a presenter at the Wallkill River Watershed Alliance (WRWA) 'summit' in New Paltz on 5/3. Will discuss Ag BMP's we have installed on Orange County farms, and a Wallkill Floodplain Bench project update.

Filling in floodplain/Black Dirt areas – Continuing to see new fill sites. No communication from Warwick about their policy of allowing more fill with a plan from Soil and Water (as reported by Black Dirt landowner).

C. DeGroodt

Board Meeting Activities March 18, 2023 – April 13, 2023

- We have \$570 cash awards on the rewards credit cards.
 - Worked on Soil Group Worksheets.
 - Assisted auditor with some final info. needed for audit.
 - Researched and purchased a portable scanner.
 - Listened in on the Ag NPS RD 27 webinar on 4/11/23. Started proposal paperwork.
 - Keeping up with entering staff time into AEM spreadsheet.
 - Sent out letters to NYS Legislatures regarding the proposed changes to Soil & Water District Law.
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- **MISC/MONTHLY:** Payroll, taxes, mail, phones, walk-ins, office supplies ordered, type minutes/board meeting documents/financials, pay bills, computer backup, bank deposits, etc.