

**MINUTES**  
**ORANGE COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT**  
**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**  
**August 16, 2021**

The **MEETING** was **CALLED TO ORDER** by the Chairman at 9:02 AM. Director G. Constable joined remotely along with C. DeGroodt (SWCD). Directors P. DeBlock, J. Wright and P. Ruszkiewicz along with K. Sumner (SWCD) were present at the PathStone conference room.

**2021-8-1 DeBlock made the Motion, Ruszkiewicz seconded, to approve July's Board Meeting Minutes as written. All in favor.**

**ACTIONS TAKEN BETWEEN MEETINGS** – There were no actions between meetings aside from some bills that were paid and are listed on Bills for Board Approval.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

- The bank statements and collateral agreements were available for review.
- The District received a letter from the Wawayanda Volunteer Fire Company regarding their annual fund drive. Discussion followed. No action taken.
- A letter came from the New York Association of Conservation Districts (NYACD). They are seeking sponsors at different funding levels for their annual meeting. No action taken.
- The Nuggets & Nibbles newsletter was received from the Cornell Local Roads Program.
- The District received an NYACD update. It gives the status of Stream bills going through the State Legislature and updates on the Envirothon.
- An Upper Delaware Council newsletter was available for review.
- The District was copied on a letter to Jean M. Ramppen, Clerk at the Orange County Legislature, from Commissioner Richard A. Ball, indicating that Ag & Markets reviewed and approved the proposed changes to the County's ag district.

**FINANCIAL REPORTS** – Sumner mentioned that the District's unobligated fund balance is in the positive.

**2021-8-2 DeBlock made the Motion, Ruszkiewicz seconded, to file July's Financial Reports for audit review. All in favor.**

**BILLS FOR BOARD APPROVAL** – **2021-8-3 Ruszkiewicz made the Motion, DeBlock seconded, to accept the Bills to be Paid. All in favor.**

**GRANT REPORT UPDATE** – The Grant Update Report is updated monthly to reflect changes.

**STAFF REPORTS**

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

**C. DeGroodt (SWCD)** – DeGroodt’s staff report was attached to the Draft Minutes.

**T. Ferry (SWCD)** – Ferry’s staff report was attached to the Draft Minutes. Ferry did not attend today’s meeting.

Sumner mentioned a Conservation Skills Workshop that Ferry would like to attend during the last week in September. The cost to attend is \$30/week for the classes. It would cost approximately \$500.00 for the week for him to attend the workshop including the cost of the hotel. **2021-8-4 DeBlock made the Motion, Ruszkiewicz seconded, to allow Ferry to attend the Conservation Skills Workshop. All in favor.**

**K. Sumner (SWCD)** – Sumner mentioned that it would be good to do any repairs or maintenance on the no-till equipment now before the next planting season. The fertilizer hoppers may need to be replaced on the old planter.

**Flood Plain Bench Phase 4 Update** – Sumner asked Barton & Loguidice when things will be ready for us. The latest schedule discussed was submitting the permit application to NYSDEC/ACoE by the end of September.

**Phase 3, Area 1** - Sumner discussed the fall work with the contractor. The plan is to do lower bank grading and seeding by 9/15, then return later this fall to plant #2 containers. There was discussion on the use of weed mats. The research is unclear on the benefits of using them. The NYSDEC Trees For Tribs Coordinator considers weed mats to be optional if tree tubes are used. This is because either tubes or mats serve the function of drawing attention of volunteers to reduce the chances of unintentional mowing. TFT’s also has not seen clear survival or growth rate improvements from using the mats alone.

**Phase 3, Area 2** - There has been some activity with the DASNY. They indicate they will be back in full operation by September, but are still not able to provide any schedule for delivery of an approved contract.

Sumner spent a day in the field with a Landscape Architect professor from Cornell who intends to hold a ‘design studio’ this fall focused on green infrastructure opportunities in the Wallkill/Black Dirt region. We are helping Cornell by providing them with a real world work area for their students. Sumner, in return, is hoping to get help renewing interest in implementing a flood mitigation/habitat improvement project at the Refuge.

A black dirt farmer called to inquire if the District can financially assist with removing approximately 50 tires. Sumner told him that he would bring this up to the Board. Discussion followed. **2021-8-5 DeBlock made the Motion, Constable seconded, to pay 50% of the tire removal up to a cap of \$200.00 for this farmer, providing he shows us receipts. All in favor.**

A grower from Minisink called to report a major debris blockage at the Rutgers Creek/Wallkill River confluence. Sumner investigated and found a huge tree had pulled away from the bank and the root ball is in the middle of the channel. Discussion followed.

## **INTERAGENCY REPORTS**

**NRCS** – No one attended from the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

**DeBlock (FSA)** – Dairy farmers that bought milk insurance have been receiving payments every month.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

**Office Procedures** - USDA has returned to a mandatory face mask policy. They also are not allowing any meetings at USDA facilities.

**Hudson Valley Carbon Farming Project (HVCFP)** – (This is a joint project with the State Committee and four other counties in the Hudson Valley). Keith Stewart is on the list waiting for engineering assistance. He's ready to start his project towards the end of September.

Matt Southway is scheduled to install a covered composting facility. The current plan is to use a conventional pole barn roof design with features designed by our office to create the composting ability. Sumner continues to research options for the aeration aspect and leachate treatment. Wright asked what is Southway composting. Sumner said he has small livestock (chickens, goats, sheep, pigs). From what he understands, it will probably have a good moisture content and carbon nitrogen ratio and should compost well. Discussion followed.

Sumner mentioned there is a time extension request for the HVCFP. The HVCFP Project Managers put out an invitation to enhance projects and request additional staff time support. Our request for additional money for staff time was approved (back to our original staff time amount we had requested in the original application) and a \$10,000 increase for the Southway project was also approved.

The District also inquired about funding for a roller crimper, something which is a good fit for the Carbon Farming concept. This machine rolls in and crimps cover crop by mechanical means instead of using herbicides or conventional tillage. The cost is approximately \$6,000 for the machine. Sumner requested input from the Directors to see if this is something they would be interested in having the District purchase. Discussion followed.

**Soil Health Initiative Program** – Sumner mentioned that the District has five people signed up. If we can get these cover crop projects added to the Hudson Valley Carbon Farming Project grant, we would have more funding for additional acreage or for other projects.

**Black Dirt Drainage/Pulaski Highway Drainage** – A meeting was held with the Orange County Department of Public Works (OCDPW) and several farmers on 7/29. A Request For Proposals was prepared in cooperation with OCDPW and sent out to seven consulting engineering firms. We set a deadline of 8/20 for return of the proposals so that we would have them before the 8/23 Physical Services committee.

A landowner visited the office and reported placement of fill material in the Wallkill River floodplain off Filomena Drive in the Town of Goshen. This same issue was reported to us 3 years ago by another landowner. At that time, NYSDEC responded that they had no jurisdiction over the filling, but the Town should. We are not aware that any action was taken by the Town to address the illegal filling after the previous report. We provided the landowner who made the recent report with the NYSDEC hotline for reporting potential violations of environmental protection laws.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

A draft Conflict of Interest Policy was presented to the Board for approval. **2021-8-6 DeBlock made the Motion, Ruszkiewicz seconded, to adopt the District's Conflict of Interest Policy. All in favor.**

**NEXT MEETING DATE** - The next **MEETING** is scheduled for **Monday, September 20th at 9:00 AM.**

## **ADJOURNMENT**

**2021-8-7 The meeting was Adjourned at 10:05 AM on a Motion by DeBlock, seconded by Ruszkiewicz. All in favor.**

Minutes Prepared By:

Christine DeGroodt, Secretary to the Board

Report to Board                      KMS

August, 2021

**Office Procedures** – USDA has returned to a mandatory face mask policy. They also are not allowing any meetings at USDA facilities.

**AEM/AEM Round 16 Tier 4 (Implementation Projects) [Must be completed by 12/31/21]**

Planning, design and construction progressing on all three projects.

Browne completed installation of roof gutter project component. A fencing practice is still expected to be completed and certified before the project is totally closed out.

Vreeland still waiting for metal building installers.

Van Aken plans approved by engineer. Still seeking contractor proposals.

**Hudson Valley Carbon Farming Project [contract ends 4/30/2022]**

Keith Stewart - on waiting list for engineer assistance

Matthew Southway – on waiting list for engineer assistance. Continuing to do research on facility design, including Aerated Static Pile aspects. Draft plans that include active aeration have been shared with landowner.

Minkus Controlled Drainage – Waiting on landowner .

Project Managers put out an invitation to enhance projects and request additional staff time support, which I have done. I followed up to see if our request had been acted on, but have not received a reply yet.

**Floodplain Bench Phase 4**

I have had several conversations with the design engineer since the last meeting. The latest proposed schedule is to submit permit application to NYSDEC/ACoE by end of September.

**Phase 3, Area 1**

Discussed fall work with contractor. Plan is to do lower bank grading and seeding by 9/15, then return later this fall to plant #2 containers.

**Phase 3, Area 2**

There has been some activity with the DASNY. They indicate they will be back in full operation by September, but are still not able to provide any schedule for delivery of an approved contract.

**Round 27 ANPSACP**

Submitted, awaiting results.

**Other**

Legoland EBP – We have had several conversations with the DEC attorney handling the matter who indicates we should expect a completed Agreement very soon.

Pellets Island Reach Maintenance Program – I have provided attorney Rich Hoyt with background materials and have been corresponding with him about the expansion proposal. Still no reply or input from the County regarding their position on the matter.

Pulaski Culverts – A meeting was held with OCDPW and several farmers on 7/29. A RFP was prepared in cooperation with OCDPW and sent out to seven consulting engineering firms. We set a deadline of 8/20 for return of the proposals so that we would have them before the 8/23 Physical Services committee.

Budget Hearing with County Executive's Office – We were told at the hearing that the CE office was approving our appropriation request as submitted.

I was 'interviewed' by OCPD as part of the County's Open Space Plan update. I primarily emphasized my opinion that preservation of commercial agriculture is the most critical need for effective open space preservation.

Spent a day in the field with Landscape Architect professor from Cornell who intends to hold a 'design studio' this fall focused on green infrastructure opportunities in the Wallkill/Black Dirt region.

Presented an 'update' to the Physical Services committee on 7/26. I was afforded about ½ hour to describe Soil and Water programs, goals and funding issues. I spent quite a bit of time preparing a document to support the presentation, and used it for the County Executive Budget Hearing.

Provided input to AFPB/OCPD regarding a NYS proposal to require local mitigation fees for solar installations, with the fees based on soil quality.

A landowner visited the office and reported placement of fill material in the Wallkill River floodplain off Filomena Drive in the Town of Goshen. This same issue was reported to us 3 years ago by another landowner. At that time, NYSDEC responded that they had no jurisdiction over the filling, but the Town should. We are not aware that any action was taken by the Town to address the illegal filling after the previous report. We provided the landowner who made the recent report with the NYSDEC hotline for reporting potential violations of environmental protection laws.

Completed a draft design and construction plan for three small ponds at a winery in Greenville. Waiting on feedback from landowner before seeking PE review of the plans.

Black Dirt farmer called to inquire if Soil and Water could provide financial assistance for removal of about 50 tires.

Farmer from Minisink called to report a major debris blockage at the Rutgers Creek/Wallkill River confluence. I investigated. A huge tree pulled away from the bank. The root ball is in the middle of the channel. A tremendous amount of debris is trapped upstream of the down tree. The sheer bank left behind is an issue for sediment delivery to the Wallkill and is threatening to undermine a farm road. We can address the debris removal through the FFCP maintenance program, but the bank repair would be beyond the normal scope of what has been done through the MP.

**C. DeGroodt**

**Board Meeting Activities July 17, 2021 – August 13, 2021**

- We currently have \$422 cash awards on the rewards credit cards.
- Webinar on updates to NYS Retirement reporting.
- Attended the budget hearing.
- Updated the District's M&T bank account names.
- Conservation Districts Employees Association webinar.
- I have been sorting/reorganizing older files, archiving some and recycling unnecessary paperwork.

## TF August Board Meeting Activity Summary

- Corn planters are both back at Ron's, they have been cleaned out.
  - Parts for old planter are at Ron's, awaiting his schedule to get them installed.
    - Old planter fertilizer boxes are worn, as are the metal ends where fertilizer spills into hoses. Ron recommended we consider replacing these. He is likely going down to PA at the end of the month and can pick up parts from there.
  - New planter doesn't need much maintenance.
  - No-till stats for 2021 so far.
    - 504.2 ac w/ Corn planters, 157.5 ac w/ seeders (661.7ac total to date)
    - \$14,208.00 in income
    - \$2,544.76 disbursed in parts/rent (\$1,344.76 in parts)
- Fall requests for seeders are coming in.
- Update on CCA status. Application packet has been sent to the local (northeast region) board for review. This was the first week of August, I was told it would take 4-6 weeks before I hear anything.
- Been working on AEM plans.
- Been working on preliminary designs for some projects submitted as part of Round 27.
- Helped Kevin survey, used NRCS GPS to survey for ponds.
- Conservation skills workshop is the last week of September. The cost to attend the workshop is **\$30** for 1 or all the classes. It appears that hotels around that time in September are currently going for **\$120/night to \$130/night**.
  - Max cost of the workshop would be approximately **\$420**, assuming hotel rates don't go up.