

MINUTES
ORANGE COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
February 23, 2015

The Meeting was **CALLED TO ORDER** by the Chairman at 9:14 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) and J. Heller (NRCS).

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

Introductions were made to Noah Meyer who was hired as the new District Technician.

CORRESPONDENCE

There was an email string regarding NRCS State Office staff that planned on coming to our March Board of Directors' meeting to discuss the NRCS Working Agreement. Sumner said there was some miscommunication as it appears they thought the District requested them to attend the Meeting. Sumner responded to them that we did not request this and he feels that we can move everything along through phone calls and email.

The Ag & Farmland Protection Board Meeting Minutes and Agenda were passed around. There was a brief discussion regarding a flood letter that Orange County Planning said they'd discussed with Sumner. Wright brought this up again at the last AFPB meeting and as of now they still have not contacted Sumner. The Board asked Sumner to email them.

A copy of an email Sumner sent out to the Directors regarding Director reimbursement was passed out. At January's Board Meeting the Board discussed the establishment of a reimbursement schedule for Soil and Water Conservation District Directors and asked Sumner to research what other Districts are doing. This would be separate from any mileage reimbursements and it would be based on a flat rate reimbursement per meeting. Out of 57 New York SWCD's asked, 33 responses were received. Of these, 6 do not currently pay Directors other than mileage. The average of the remaining is \$30 per meeting. There was a brief discussion. DeBlock made the Motion, seconded by Keeton, to present to the Chairman of the Legislature a request for the District to reimburse non-legislative Board members quarterly at the rate of \$50 per Meeting as the budget allows. All in favor.

The Board must consider a new contract with B&L regarding the Wallkill Flood Project as the old one expired. Sumner passed out B&L's report.

FINANCIAL REPORTS

Sumner noted that the unobligated funds were adjusted with money going into Equipment Replacement and the Ag Grant Contingency Fund. Wright made the Motion, seconded by DeBlock, to approve February's financial report. All in favor.

Winner's Bracket was added to the list of Bills to be Paid in the amount of \$468.00. DeBlock made the Motion, seconded by Keeton, to pay February's bills. All in favor.

Grants' Report Update – Landowners to be removed from Ag NPS Round 17 Wallkill were highlighted in yellow on the Grant Report. The District is still working on the time extension request for Ag NPS Round 17 Wallkill. We tried to get commitment letters from all landowners but did not receive them back from some. A Motion to remove the following landowners from the grant if they do not respond by Friday, 2/27/2015 was made by DeBlock, seconded by Keeton. All in favor. Chris Pawelski, Richard Pawelski, Brian Pawelski, Jeff Bialis and Anna Needleman.

STAFF REPORTS

C. DeGrootd (SWCD) – The audit is scheduled for February 23rd and 24th.

DeGrootd has been busy working on the 2014 end of the year reports and Soil Group Worksheets.

K. Brown (SWCD) – Brown attended the WQIP Monhagen kick-off meeting on January 29th. Representatives from Shop Rite and Campbell Hall Plaza attended as well as Dave Getz and Karen Emmerich, Orange County Water Authority, Ed Helbig, Rose Baglia and Kevin Sumner.

On February 13th Brown participated in the Grants Gateway webinar.

Pine Plains picked up the District's old seeder on February 18th.

Brown has been working on completing AEMs and updating T. Vellenga's Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan.

Brown has been working on a PRISM grant to remove invasive multiflora rose at the Benedict Farm Park, located in the Town of Montgomery. Brown attended the Town Board Meeting and they agreed to support this project and to contribute \$2,500.00 in in-kind match towards it.

N. Meyer (SWCD) – Meyer has been working on Soil Group Worksheets as requests come in, as well as working on the ArcGIS program. He brought one of the District's laptops to the County GIS department and had them update the parcel information on it.

Meyer is also assisting with the RSR Grant Project.

He is planning on taking the GIS course at March's Water Quality Symposium where they will be using a newer version of our GIS program which would cost approximately \$5,000.00. The Orange County GIS department loaded an "Open Source" version of ArcMap on our laptop that performs all the functions SWCD uses routinely.

Meyer has been researching trucks as requested at the last Board Meeting. A discussion followed regarding the purchase of a new truck for the District. The Board requested that staff look up the prices for different options on a new truck and to present it at this month's Meeting. There was further discussion regarding options.

K. Sumner (SWCD) – Sumner has been working on plans for 5-Spoke Farm.

The Orange County Water Authority (OCWA) has been working on a grant proposal for the Monhagen and wanted to use the District's WQIP Monhagen project as a match. Sumner mentioned that he requested that OCWA include funds for District staff time since we did not include staff time funding in our WQIP proposal. The last version Sumner saw of the budget for the OCWA proposal included staff time funding for other project partners but not for us.

Sumner has been reviewing the flood plain bench plans and working on the new B&L Contract.

There was a brief discussion regarding Soil Group Worksheets.

Sumner is working on getting a flood plain development permit application to Goshen. We sent all the affected towns a letter about the ledge projects and Goshen is the only one that wants the District to request a floodplain development permit.

Ag NPS Round 21 Update – The District is planning on submitting two proposals for this grant, one for the Moodna and one for the Wallkill. There was a brief discussion regarding Edgewick Farm in Cornwall, which is going into the Moodna grant.

S. Wong joined the Meeting at 10:16 AM.

The Annual Plan of Work was passed out for review.

INTERAGENCY REPORTS

J. Heller (NRCS) - The Environmental Quality Incentives Program had approximately 20 applicants this year. Participants that are entities must have a Dun & Bradstreet number and register with the system for award management.

Agricultural Management Assistance - Last year NRCS in Orange County brought in over \$300,000.00 for Irrigation Management (IM). This year March 20th is the deadline for AMA.

The USDA News Release for AMA was passed around.

The Ag Conservation Easement Program used to be called the Farm and Ranchlands Protection Program and the Wetland Reserve Program. There was a shortfall in funding.

Heller participates on the national "Know your Farmer Know your Food" Task Force. From there he is seeking to increase organic farms' participation with EQIP transition to organic.

NRCS is holding interviews for the Soil Conservationist position.

Heller was involved in a brief teleconference with Tom Mince from Senator Maloney's office regarding the Wallkill Project. Part of the discussion was on the PL 566 - Flood Control Program - that NRCS has but has not been funded for years.

R. Baglia (CCE) - Nursery Greenhouse School starts on the 27th at the CCE office.

March 4th is the stormwater class on project design.

March 20th is the 4 hour Erosion and Sediment Control Contractor Training class.

L. Joyce offered to attend a Board Meeting to discuss the 4-H Park Project. Last year, Joyce had called Sumner and asked if he would be interested in doing the weekly inspections associated with the storm water construction permit for the Park project. The Board suggested that Joyce hold off on attending. CCE is trying to get the barns up by July in order to do a showcase.

OLD BUSINESS

Wallkill Flood Project Update - The ledge modification projects are still in DEC's hands. The bench project was covered in Wendall's (B&L) report. The plan view was passed out at last month's Board Meeting. Letters went out to all of the bench project landowners and we have not heard back from any of them. Sumner has a copy of a sample ten page easement that is available for review. B&L thinks that the DEC will want an easement with landowners where the bench project is going. There has been discussion on whether we should look into any of the government easement programs such as CRP or WRP. There is money set up in the Wallkill Flood Project budget to purchase easements. A lot of the property in the work area is marginal muck, gray soil. It's mainly on DePalma's land on the South side and Ford, Barron and Gantt on the North side. A funding request to Senator Bonacic for additional Wallkill/Black Dirt flood mitigation went out last month. All money has been expended with the old contract with B&L. Sumner proposed a new contract with a two to three page Work Plan. The new contract runs January 1, 2015 to December 31, 2015 with a budget of \$50,000.00. The contract was passed out to the Directors for review. Keeton made the Motion, seconded by Wright, to approve signing the contract. All in favor. There was a discussion on the issue of B&L's sub-contractor billing (Integrated River Solutions). Sumner said that IRS's expenses are being reflected on B&L's monthly billing. Wright said we should have a meeting with the Advisory Committee in the next couple of weeks before field work.

RSR Project Update - Sumner has Meyer working on researching potential sites for a planting project. One site is the Monhagen where it meanders between Dolson Avenue and Route 84. It was mentioned that there is a March 1st deadline to order trees through the Trees for Tribes program. The 2nd deadline is sometime in August.

The next Monhagen Brook Project meeting will be on March 23rd at 2:00 PM at Shop Rite. There is a potential stream cleanup scheduled on April 25th.

GIGP Program - Sumner spoke to Campbell Plaza management about doing a large grant project to re-do their parking lot.

The proposal for a new District truck was passed around. The total is \$27,275.28. The truck order has to be placed, or at least a Letter of Intent sent, by this Friday. DeBlock made the Motion, seconded by Keeton, to purchase the truck. Half of the cost of the truck is to be taken out of the District's General Fund and the other half out of the Equipment Replacement Fund. All in favor. The District will look into trading in or bidding out the Ford.

There was further discussion on storage for the District's UTV and trailer. DeBlock made the Motion, seconded by Keeton, to approve a one year rental payment of \$900.00 to Sumner to store the equipment. All in favor.

NEW BUSINESS

Existing Office Policies - Four policies were reviewed and accepted by the Directors with no changes: Director Attendance Policy, Procurement Policy, Vehicle Policy and Investment Policy.

New Office Policies - A Motion was made by DeBlock, seconded by Ruskiewicz to replace the District's Sexual Harassment Policy with the Discrimination Policy. All in favor. The Cover Crop Policy was mailed to farmers that have the Cover Crop practice included in one of the NYS NPS Ag Grants. DeBlock made the Motion, seconded by Keeton, to accept the District's Financial Policy as amended. All in favor.

A Motion was made by Keeton to approve the purchase of a locking file cabinet, seconded by DeBlock. All in favor.

DeBlock made the Motion, seconded by Ruskiewicz to approve the District's Annual Plan of Work. All in favor.

Wright made the Motion, seconded by DeBlock, to grant the Chairman and Sumner the authority to sign contracts for the remainder of year 2015. All in favor. This signatory authority will be reviewed annually at the time of the District's annual reorganizational meeting.

Keeton made the Motion, seconded by DeBlock to approve the Ag NPS Round 21 Resolutions for the Wallkill and the Moodna. All in favor.

Discussion then turned to the retirement plan arrangements for new employee Noah Meyer. The District provides existing staff \$2,500 annually for deposit into their IRA of choice. These payments are made quarterly. Previous technicians in Noah's position have been started at a reduced amount of \$1,000 annually. There was discussion of putting the IRA payments on hold until Noah moves from provisional to permanent status. But since this time period would be open-ended (until the Conservation District Technician civil service test is offered), the Board decided to institute a 6 month wait period. Once Noah completes 6 months of service, he will be eligible for IRA contributions. At the time of the first quarterly IRA contributions after his 6-month service date, he will be reimbursed retro-actively to his start date and then regular quarterly IRA payments will be made to him. The Board agreed to start Noah at the full \$2,500 annual contribution amount.

The **NEXT MEETING** is scheduled for Monday, March 23, 2015 at 9:00 AM.

The **MEETING** was adjourned at 1:00 PM on a Motion by Keeton, seconded by Ruskiewicz. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine DeGroodt
Secretary to the Board