

**MINUTES**  
**ORANGE COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT**  
**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**  
**February 19, 2019**

The **MEETING** was **CALLED TO ORDER** by the Chairman at 9:01 AM. Directors P. DeBlock, G. Keeton, P. Ruskiewicz, J. Wright and J. Kulisek were present, along with K. Sumner, T. Ferry and C. DeGroot (OCSWCD).

**2019-2-1 Keeton made the Motion, Wright seconded, to approve January's Board Meeting Minutes as written. All in favor.**

**ACTIONS TAKEN BETWEEN MEETINGS** – There are a few bills that were paid that are listed on Bills for Board Approval.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

- Bank account statements from the District's banks were available for review.
- An update from the New York Association of Conservation Districts was received.
- The District received a copy of a letter sent to Barron Field, LLC from Richard W. Hoyt, Attorney, regarding the deeding of the Barron Field property to the Orange County SWCD.
- The District received a formal response from the NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC) regarding the 'boulder field' project the Board asked Sumner to investigate. The project would trigger multiple permit requirements.
- The NYS Soil and Water Conservation Committee sent the District a letter acknowledging receipt of our Final Ag NPS RD 19 report, which closes out this grant.
- The District received appointment and re-appointment letters from the County for all of the Directors except for Wright, his term has not yet expired. There is a bit of confusion on the Legislator's appointments as NYS Soil and Water Law states they are to be appointed yearly but the County appointed them for three years.
- An email was received from NYSDEC Solid Waste Division as a follow up to a phone conversation Sumner had with them regarding the farm tire regulation. The return call Sumner received was apparently spurred by an inquiry to DEC from Senator Metzger's office. The email indicates that there are no funding mechanisms currently available from the NYS DEC for farm disposal.

**FINANCIAL REPORTS**

The Monhagen Watershed Planning Grant still has an outstanding receivable. The end date for the grant was January 2019. In theory, once the Orange County Planning Department and Water Authority request reimbursement from the NYS DEC the District should receive something from them. Sumner said he will put in an inquiry about it.

Sumner mentioned that we adjusted our 2019 Budget to reflect the fact that we did not receive our requested modest increase from the County of Orange.

On the Accounts Receivable page the District will change the name "RA-100s" to "Soil Group Worksheets". Sumner mentioned that the Town of Warwick Assessor is sending a lot of people to our office for new worksheets.

The "Unobligated Fund" balance discussed at previous meetings was brought up again. We will revisit it again next month and at that time see about replenishing the Equipment Fund. There was a brief discussion on District field equipment and the idea of sending out a survey to other Districts to see what kind of seeders they currently use.

**2019-2-2 Keeton made the Motion, Wright seconded, to file January's 2019 Financial Report for audit review. All in favor.**

DeBlock asked again about the Monhagen Planning Grant money that is still due to the District. Kulisek recommended that someone speak to D. Church about it.

The District will look into setting up auto payment for the District's credit card and also switching to a credit card that offers rewards. Ruskiewicz suggested researching the different business credit cards and presenting them at next month's Board Meeting for discussion.

The list of Bills for Board Approval was reviewed and briefly discussed. DeGroodt mentioned that the District's credit card had a late fee added and she will call the company and attempt to have it removed. **2019-2-3 DeBlock made the Motion, seconded by Ruskiewicz, to accept the Bills to be Paid. All in favor.**

**Ag Grant Update Report** – Sumner explained the Ag Grant Update Report to the new Board member. There was very little change from last month's report. Ag NPS RD 19 will be removed from the Report since it was closed out. The Walkkill Flood Project \$2 million grant was removed since it was completed. The Walkkill Maintenance Project is updated and will now reflect year 2019 and on. There are now only three open ag grants. Round 20 Livestock Waste has only one farm left participating in it and RD 20 Farm Runoff has only two participants in it. Ag NPS RD 22 is scheduled to end at the end of this year. Reminder letters were sent in August, 2018 to participants who had not begun their projects. There has been very little activity since the letters were sent. Sumner sent more letters out last week with a date (June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2019) by which participants would be expected to show substantial progress in completing their scheduled projects. The letter explained to participants that we would reserve the right to cancel funding due to non-activity.

## STAFF REPORTS

- **C. DeGroodt**

- DeGroodt has been assisting Ferry with Soil Group Worksheets as needed.
- DeGroodt finished sending all of the annual reports to the state office.
- The Annual Treasurer's Report was completed and submitted to the State Committee and the Office of the NYS Comptroller.
- The Shelterpoint Life Insurance Policy paperwork was completed and submitted.
- The Quarterly Volunteer Report for our volunteer policy was completed and sent in to our insurance company.
- DeGroodt completed the Hartford online insurance audit.
- Several hours were spent on 4-Hour Erosion & Sediment Control training paperwork.
- A few different business credit cards were researched.
- DeGroodt has continued to enter information into Quickbooks. There was discussion on having Rachel from KKB&N come back for additional training since she did not use up all of her time in her last visit. The Board agreed to have her come back.

- **T. Ferry**

- Ferry received a call from a local orchard that wants to get into the Grown and Certified program so Ferry sent them AEM Tier I paperwork to fill out.
- Ferry assisted Sumner with the 4-Hour Erosion & Sediment Control Training held at the Local 17 Training Center.
- Ferry has been working on Soil Group Worksheets, most for the Town of Warwick but others are starting to come in for other towns. Ferry explained what the Soil Group Worksheets are to Kulisek.

- **K. Sumner**

- Sumner said that Ferry worked on the Quaker Creek project off and on for a two week period getting the sites done. Sumner said the landowners were all cooperative. He mentioned that the District's UTV has been useful for scouting sites and staying ahead of the contractor. Some sites that were ID'd last year were gone but they found new ones. As usual, the contractor was great to work with and alot was accomplished.

- Sumner provided a 4-Hour Erosion and Sediment Control Training at the Local 17 Training Center with assistance from Ferry. Contractors doing earth moving on sites need this training every three years.
- Dairy Feasibility Study – DeBlock collected acres (23,000) kept open by the 34 remaining dairy farms. The Orange County Planning Department expressed an interest in this information as they are trying to prepare a map that will go along with this Dairy Feasibility Initiative. Wright said that the Ag Board was willing to put \$8,000 in for the study. Sumner asked what if the RFP was issued for a project instead of a study. Wright said the Implementation Committee doesn't remember the phases of proposal. Sumner would be interested to see the draft of the proposal.
- Last month there was a meeting at the County which Sumner and some people from the County Industrial Development Agency (IDA) attended. The farm tire disposal issue was discussed. Subsequent to the meeting, Sumner submitted an application to the Orange County Funding Corporation, which is part of the IDA, for \$50,000.00 to help address the tire issue. Sumner and Ruskiewicz met with the IDA on February 14<sup>th</sup> regarding the application, which the governance committee tabled pending more information on what other entities would be financially supporting the project and in what amounts.
- There was discussion on the hemp initiative. There was sentiment that it held little opportunity for the Orange County dairy industry but could possibly provide options for other types of farms.
- The Chairman of the AFPB called Sumner about two inquiries in a week he had about the pelletizer machine. It was mentioned that dairy farmers that stopped milking will likely be selling more hay which is getting people to think about biomass now. Sumner checked with Cobleskill and they are not doing much with the machine.

## **INTERAGENCY REPORTS**

- None

**Federal Programs Update:** At the end of the month there will be a conference call regarding the Farm Bill that will discuss any changes/updates. Milk insurance should offer more coverage. Grain ARC should be improved. There are no new programs but the existing ones will be more enhanced.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

It was mentioned that the RC&D can be removed from the District's Board Meeting agenda.

Celery Avenue Ledge Project and CRF grant Update – Sumner was directed to look at rankings and see how close we were to receiving this grant, which he did, and to use this as input on whether or not we should apply for this grant again. Based on his review he feels we should try for it again. There are two big areas on this grant: (1)Adaptation – how it allows farmers to adapt to climate change and (2)Mitigation – how does the project reduce greenhouse gasses. This year they will have a tool to help applicants calculate mitigation. This round has \$2.5 million available and a lot of it will go to manure pit covers. The next round (2020) will have \$5 million available. Sumner will take last year's Celery Avenue Project, revise it and resubmit it.

Floodplain Bench Phase 2 South Update (C. Lain and Green Farmland property) – The District has approximately \$60,000 from a CRF grant that is obligated to this project. Pine Island Turf Nursery is in the process of seeking proposals from construction contractors. Once proposals are in hand we can discuss a funding plan to complete the project using the CRF funding and other District funds. If a viable plan can be put together, we can then give PITN the go ahead to hire a contractor. We will have to create a conservation easement on the project area and will need legal assistance.

Sumner updated the Board on investigations to utilize the County Law department for flood project legal matters. Reyes from the Law Department is trying to set up a meeting this week between the District and Damian Brady, an attorney at the OC Law Department, to try to progress work on the easement, Phase 2 South and the effort to expand the Walkkill Maintenance Agreement.

The last Wallkill River/Black Dirt Region Flood Mitigation Steering Committee meeting held on February 8, 2019 was set up so that the black dirt farmers could meet Senator Jen Metzger and try to enlist her support to help secure funding needed to continue implementing priority flood mitigation projects. Out of professional courtesy, Sumner invited the four Town Supervisors. At this meeting, Doug Bloomfield, Town of Goshen Supervisor, suggested that work proposed by the District threatened to de-stabilize the banks of the Wallkill and release the contents of the Orange County landfill. He indicated that he will not approve any permit for any project along the river in their Town. Sumner was concerned that it was disrespectful to make these statements, which he believes are very inaccurate, at this meeting. The Board suggested Sumner draft a letter to the Goshen Town Board about Bloomfield and the meeting with the Senator.

The land purchase of the Barron Field property was discussed. There are three acres in the project area at the cost of \$4,000/acre plus legal/filing fees. The cost to the District will be approximately \$15,000.00.

Harry Porr, Deputy County Executive, had a meeting with Congressman Maloney's staff in Newburgh a week or so ago about Wallkill/Black Dirt flood control, and asked Sumner for information so he could prepare for it. Apparently, Maloney's office was unclear as to why an effort to access Army Corps of Engineers assistance for the Wallkill some years ago seemed to have stalled. Sumner explained that the Army Corp has rigid procedures for accessing money. If an initial reconnaissance (funded by the Corps) suggests there is promise for a project, they next step would be a feasibility study which requires 50 percent local match. Sumner told Porr that the recon was favorable, but the County and stakeholders were not in favor of committing what looked to be well over a million dollars for a study, so that was why the process stalled. Sumner noticed that in a Delaware County SWCD newsletter they did a Flood Plain restoration project and received \$650,000 in federal funding through the Water Resources Development Act. Sumner suggested asking Maloney staffers about this program and whether it has any potential for funding Wallkill work. Maloney staff could contact Delaware SWCD to find out more about how they accessed the funding.

Tire Project Update – as previously mentioned, the District submitted an application to the IDA for \$50,000. Sumner and Ruskiewicz met with the Governance Committee, who have to carry it to the IDA Board in order for it to be considered for funding. There was not a lot of support for the application. The application was Tabled and the Committee wanted to know where the rest of the money is coming from. The NYS DEC changed the deadline again for farmers to dispose of tires on their farms. The District already approved \$95,000 out of our own budget to start the tire project. Sumner mentioned exploring options with the Orange County Health Department. Kulisek suggested sending letters to Senators Skoufis and Metzger. Ruskiewicz said he will speak to Barry Cheney and get it put on the Physical Services Agenda.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

- Previously discussed.

The next **MEETING** is scheduled for **Monday, March 18, 2019 at 9:00 AM.**

**2019-2-4 The Meeting adjourns at 11:06 AM on a Motion by DeBlock, seconded by Keeton. All in favor.**

Minutes Prepared By:

Christine DeGroodt, Secretary to the Board