

MINUTES
ORANGE COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
January 26, 2015

The Meeting was **CALLED TO ORDER** by the Chairman at 9:07 AM. Directors J. Wright, G. Keeton, P. DeBlock, S. Wong and P. Ruskiewicz were present, along with K. Sumner, C. DeGroot and K. Brown (OCSWCD) and F. Barber (FSA).

Election Of Officers – P. DeBlock made the Motion to retain the existing slate of Officers: J. Wright as Chairman, G. Keeton as Vice-Chairman, P. DeBlock as Treasurer and J. Wright as Assistant Treasurer, seconded by P. Ruskiewicz. All in favor.

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

CORRESPONDENCE

The Cornell Cooperative Extension Dairy Trade Show is in March at the Pine Bush Fire Hall.

A memo with information on the New York Association of Conservation District, Inc. (NYACD) Lobby Days and a 2015 Membership Invoice in the amount of \$1,500.00 were presented to the Board for review. The memo mentioned that Judy Littrell was no longer employed with the NYACD as the Executive Director. DeBlock made the Motion to pay \$750.00 to NYACD, seconded by S. Wong. All in favor.

Various newsletters were passed around for review.

Governor Cuomo's one page Executive Proposed Budget 2015-2016 for the Environmental Protection Fund was passed around.

The Ag & Farmland Protection Board Meeting Agenda was passed around.

R. Baglia (CCE) joined the Meeting at 9:27 AM.

No action was taken on a NACD Invoice.

The Ag NPS Round 20 contracts were presented for the Chairman's signature.

The District was copied on a letter to Rick Minkus from Senator Bonacic's office regarding a follow-up to his letter on funding and permits for the District related to Wallkill River/Black Dirt flood control efforts. Senator Bonacic suggests that the District submit a detailed budget request and specific information on permits needed. Sumner presented a draft cover letter and budget that he had prepared for the Senator which details additional needs beyond the \$2 million already secured, for three priority projects that are currently being progressed through the design and permitting process. These include two ledge modification projects, one on the main stem of the Wallkill and one on the Pochuck Creek, and a floodplain bench creation project that will extend from County Route One downstream one mile to the Cheechunk Canal. A brief discussion followed.

There is a movement out of New Paltz to revisit the Watershed Management Plan that was done years ago on the Wallkill. Sumner was asked to speak at a summit sometime in April.

Jennifer Clifford is the new regional Associate Environmental Analyst coordinating 9 Conservation Districts in the Southeast NY as well as managing the State Aid to Districts program.

A three year contract from our auditor's O'Connor Davies was presented for Board signature. The price for auditing our 2014 records stayed the same at \$3,200.00 but increased by \$300.00 for the next two years.

Noah Meyer was approved by the County's Dept. of Human Resources to be hired provisionally as a District Technician.

An Invoice for the Columbia County Envirothon was passed around. No action taken.

FINANCIAL REPORTS

The Grant Report for December was reviewed by the Board.

A Motion was made by Wright, seconded by Keeton to approve January's Financial Report. All in favor.

A Motion was made by DeBlock, seconded by Keeton to approve paying the bills. All in favor.

DeBlock suggested the District's Contingency Fund be used to pay the Lehman and Getz bill in the amount of \$675.00, seconded by Ruskiewicz. All in favor.

A Time Extension request is in-progress on the NYS NPS Round 17 Ag Grants.

A NYS Agricultural Nonpoint Source Abatement and Control Program (ANPSACP) Participant Removal and Project Completion Policy was passed out for Board review. Discussion followed.

A Motion was made by Keeton, seconded by DeBlock, to move an additional \$30,000.00 into the District's Equipment Replacement Fund and an additional \$20,000.00 into the Ag Contingency Fund which includes paying for engineering fees. All in favor.

STAFF REPORTS

C. DeGroot (SWCD) – The audit has been scheduled for February 23rd and 24th.

DeGroot has been busy working on the 2014 tax forms, end of the year reports and Soil Group Worksheets.

K. Brown (SWCD) – Brown worked with M&M Auto Group on the purchase of a Polaris UTV. She also worked with Tractor Supply Company to purchase a 7x12 trailer.

Brown has been assisting with the annual reports.

Brown sent permit packages to the Towns of Goshen, Wawayanda and Warwick for the two ledge projects.

She met with Pine Plains to discuss the seeder rebuild.

Brown worked on cover crop paperwork for several farms.

Brown requested to attend a Conservation District Employees Association meeting in Syracuse on February 19-20. A Motion was made by Wright, seconded by Keeton, to allow Brown to attend. All in favor.

Brown requested to attend the Water Quality Symposium March 10-13. Sumner added that he would like to send the new Technician as well. The cost will be approx. \$1,100.00. Brown received Certified Crop Advisor credits for attending. A Motion was made by Wong, seconded by Wright to allow both Brown and Meyer to attend the Symposium. All in favor.

K. Sumner (SWCD) – Sumner reviewed the Deposition from his testimony regarding the suit several landowners are bringing against the County and others over Wallkill River flooding issues, and corrected two items in it.

There have been requests for the 4-hour Erosion and Sediment Control course coming in. Sumner has taught this class in the past with Pat Ferracane, NYS DEC. Sumner is scheduled to teach a class on February 24th at the Local 17 from 5:30-9:30 PM.

Sumner has been working on the end of year reports.

Sumner completed informational profiles on some of our Green Infrastructure Demonstration Projects for the NYS DEC website.

Sumner has been working on Soil Group Worksheets and updating the District Policies.

There was further discussion on the round table that is being planned for April in New Paltz regarding the renewed interest in the Wallkill Watershed Plan. Sumner's recommendation is to look at sub-watershed plans rather than updating the Plan for the whole Wallkill Watershed.

INTERAGENCY REPORTS

R. Baglia (CCE) – Nursery Greenhouse School is cancelled for tomorrow because of the predicted snowstorm. It will be rescheduled as 65 people signed up to attend and it offers recertification credits for pesticide.

The Soil and Water kickoff meeting is on the 29th for the Monhagen project.

The first class in the stormwater training series on Hydrology is scheduled for February 4th. The bedbug program is on the 10th.

The late blight webinar is February 18th at CCE and other locations. Brown asked what time it will be held and if there will be CCA credits offered. Baglia said she would find out.

F. Barber (FSA) - There are a number of new programs being offered such as a new dairy program and a revised NAP program.

All NRCS programs and all crop insurance are now tied to conservation compliance. The land needs to be NHEL/HEL compliant and wetland compliant in order to participate.

There was a brief discussion on a memo released by the heads of the USDA agencies regarding an Office Closure Policy. The District has historically followed the USDA's snow delays or early dismissal and charged the time to a "Snow Closing" code. If the USDA does not delay then the District staff uses personal time.

There is a Suffolk County staffing opportunity in Riverhead.

OLD BUSINESS

Wallkill Flood Project Update – Bench project plans were passed out to the Directors. The consultants are working on finalizing the alignment. They are favoring the bench on the north side which has more ag land. This side will have less mature woody material being removed. They are proposing doing the work on the south side another year. The next step is for us to review this locally and decide whether or not to have another Flood Committee Meeting to review these plans. The land owners involved need to be engaged soon. There was a brief discussion on what can be done with the soil.

There was further discussion on the draft cover letter to Senator Bonacic which details additional needs beyond the \$2 million already secured for three priority projects that are currently being progressed through the design and permitting process. The budget asks for just under \$10 million and shows what amount of the \$2 million has already been spent and what we will do with the remainder of it. The \$10 million is based off of an estimate of \$2 million dollars per mile to extend the flood plain bench concept to Oil City Road. Sumner is asking for Director feedback on this letter and budget and asked whether or not we should circulate it to the Flood Committee. The Board was fine with sending the letter and budget with a minor revision to the cover letter.

RSR EBP Project Update – We need to find three sites near the point of violation, preferably in the Town of Wallkill, to do tree planting projects near a stream.

There was discussion on the long-term storage of the new UTV and trailer, which is currently stored at Sumner's residence. Jim Bergen was contacted and said the cost to store it in one of his barns would be approx. \$50-\$75/month. A discussion followed regarding other options for storing the equipment. The Board asked Sumner if he would be willing to store the equipment long-term. After discussion and consideration of other options that would be more costly to the District, it was decided that the District would make a one-time rental payment to Sumner equivalent to the cost of materials to construct a shed roof off of one of Sumner's barns. In exchange, Sumner would agree to keep the UTV under cover and available for staff to pick up as needed.

Discussion shifted to the District's ditchbank mower being stored at Alex Kocot's farm. A Motion was made by DeBlock, seconded by Ruszkiewicz to allow Kocot to use the mower for free providing he maintains it and has everyone requesting it call the District, as they will need to provide insurance for it and sign a rental agreement, and Kocot makes it available for everyone to rent. All in favor.

Monhagen Brook Project Update – Working on a kick-off meeting with the landowners and partners. Everyone appears to still be on board with the project. Sumner mentioned that Ed Helbig from OC Water Authority is working on another grant proposal for the Monhagen that's due February 3rd. They are pushing for the District to have a large role in this, and are hoping to use our Monhagen grant as match for theirs. Sumner wanted to note to the Board that while he favors the idea of leveraging grants and expanding activities in the Monhagen watershed, he is concerned about the limited communication that has occurred in the formulation and planning of the OCWA proposal. He is attempting to work with Helbig, but has not been comfortable with the work items Helbig has put in several versions of the grant proposal for which we would be responsible. Sumner will let the Board know how this process proceeds.

R. Baglia and F. Barber left the meeting at 11:55 AM.

NEW BUSINESS

Keeton made the Motion, seconded by DeBlock to approve the NYS Agricultural Nonpoint Source Abatement and Control Program Participant Removal and Project Completion Policy draft developed by Sumner, with the addition that participants removed from grants under this policy will be notified in writing of their removal. All in favor.

A revised Provisions of Employment draft was presented to the Directors. The changes in the draft were limited to page 6, and included specifying the contribution rate required of employees seeking family health insurance coverage (based on length of service), and establishing capped reimbursement rates for dental and vision plans for employees. Wright suggested adding that there are 26 pay periods somewhere in the District's Provisions of Employment. The revised Provisions were adopted by the Board on a motion by Keeton, seconded by DeBlock.

Due to the length of today's meeting, the remainder of the annual office policy reviews will be done at the February Board meeting. In addition, the review of employee leave summaries will be postponed until next month.

Brown was looking into prices for a new seeder and a seeder rebuild. Pine Plains quoted a price of \$31,304.00 for a new 7' seeder and \$38,541.00 for a 10' seeder. To rebuild it they quoted \$8,695.17 plus \$765.00 to pick it up and drop it back off. Phillip Johnson estimated the cost of a new seeder to be around \$30,000 and quoted \$4,500-\$4,800 to rebuild. Great Plains quoted \$2,000 for parts and labor would be \$1,000-\$1,500. Ruskiewicz made the Motion, seconded by Keeton to have the seeder rebuilt by Pine Plains. All in favor.

There was a brief discussion on purchasing a new District truck off of State bid. The Board would like staff to look up the prices for different options on a new truck and to present it at the February Board Meeting.

Noah Meyer's resume was passed out to the Board for review along with his application. A Motion was made by DeBlock, seconded by Keeton to hire Meyer. All in favor.

The Round 21 Ag NPS Grant Proposals are due March 31st. This now has to be completed through Grants Gateway.

Next month a per diem payment for the non-legislative Board members will be discussed. The Board would like Sumner to research what other Districts are paying.

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

The **MEETING** was adjourned at 12:46 PM on a Motion by Wong, seconded by DeBlock. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine DeGroot
Secretary to the Board