

MINUTES
ORANGE COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
July 22, 2019

The **MEETING** was **CALLED TO ORDER** by the Chairman at 9:07 AM. Directors P. DeBlock, G. Keeton, J. Kulisek, P. Ruszkiewicz and J. Wright were present, along with K. Sumner, T. Ferry and C. DeGroot (OCSWCD) and J. Heller and A. Armlin-Sorgen (NRCS).

2019-7-1 DeBlock made the Motion, Keeton seconded, to approve June's Board Meeting Minutes as written. All in favor.

ACTIONS TAKEN BETWEEN MEETINGS – A few bills were paid between meetings (see list of Bills for Board Approval) - the District's credit card, a payment to Pine Island Turf Nursery for a Stream Corridor and Shoreline Management System and a payment to a local producer for the Tire Removal Project.

CORRESPONDENCE

- Bank account statements and Collateral Agreements from M&T Bank were available for review.
- Miscellaneous newsletters were available for review (one was from the NYS Grange).
- The District received a membership donation request from the National Association of Conservation Districts. This request was tabled.
- The Agenda and Minutes from the Ag & Farmland Protection Board Meeting were available for review.
- The District received a New York Association of Conservation Districts update from Blanche Hurlbutt, NYACD Ex. Director which included a packet of information in preparation for the upcoming annual meeting.

Sumner mentioned that he participated in a conference call regarding the Carbon Farming Project which appropriated money for five counties, which includes Orange County.

FINANCIAL REPORTS

It was mentioned that the District's no-till usage is dropping but that it is a good program and the District will continue it.

Quickbooks is going well.

2019-7-2 Wright made the Motion, Ruszkiewicz seconded, to file June's 2019 Financial Report for audit review. All in favor.

(M. Cordella and D. DeWan, Senator Metzger's staff, joined the Meeting at 9:25 AM)

2019-7-3 DeBlock made the Motion, Keeton seconded, to accept the Bills to be Paid. All in favor.

Introductions were made to the Senator's staff Max Cordella and Deborah DeWan.

Senator Metzger and her staff had met with Orange County dairy farmers here at our office this past April to discuss issues that farmers think Senator Metzger could potentially help the dairy farmers in Orange County with. In the time since, Deborah said that the Legislature has been very active so she wanted to update the District on a few things relevant to us. One thing is the Tire Legislation – remediation/reimbursement. There were two bills regarding waste tires that came through the Legislature: 1- the Remediation and Reimbursement passed the senate at a vote of 62-0 but it did not pass the Assembly and 2- Tire Re-use passed both senate and assembly directing Ag and Markets and the NYS DEC to come up with regulations to allow the continued use of farm tires as long as there is not an animal or public health concern, and this will probably become law. They will then look at whether or not there needs to be further legislation regarding remediation and reimbursement down the road. There is another session in January 2020. She

does not see any Orange County reimbursement for the tire removal in the future. The Board asked Metzger staff where does the tire money that is collected from vendors go? Metzger staff said they will find out and get back to us.

The District found out last week that our Celery Avenue CRF Grant proposal we submitted was not successful.

The floodplain bench phase 2 project is finished, except for tree planting. Sumner identified the project area on an aerial photo for the Board. We still need to complete Phase 3 on the south side of the river in order to make the entire floodplain bench project work the way it is intended.

Sumner received a call from Scott Cuppet, NYS DEC Estuary Program and was told approximately \$200,000 was earmarked for Wallkill River water quality work. The DEC is talking about coming up with a program to regulate phosphorus runoff into the river so Sumner's understanding is they want to have a complimentary proactive program to help farmers address that. It sounds like it is in the discussion stage and Sumner told them our preference would be to use the money towards one of our permitted projects, not to try to start developing some new farm runoff program in the black dirt. If we can use that money to plant trees on the bench project then that would free up funds for us to proceed with other flood mitigation work. Sumner asked Metzger staff if they could find out when this money would be available to us.

Sumner received a call from Dean Ford who owns the land adjacent to the Phase 1 project. A lot of the soil from the excavation was put on his fields. Because of the contractor, there was significant damage to these fields. We are continuing to try and remediate these fields and get them back to where they were or better before the project. There were some issues with their corn crop this year so Sumner went out and assessed the area including taking some soil samples. He thinks additional drainage (open trench method) in these fields may help.

P. Ruskiewicz mentioned he met with the County Executive last week regarding putting more money into next year's budget for flood control. They also discussed having the Orange County Department of Public Works take on more of these flood control projects. Maybe they can do the Celery Avenue Project. Sumner mentioned we are earmarking \$50,000 of our annual County appropriation for Wallkill Flood Projects.

Sumner explained the Performance Measures Part C to Cordella. This money comes through the NYS Soil & Water Conservation Committee to every County SWCD as long as the District satisfies certain performance measures. This amount changes every year and we can use it for whatever project we need it on within broad parameters.

The Carbon Farming Pilot Project funds came through and they are trying and get some projects on the ground on farms. Senator Metzger was able to expand the project. The project implementation specifics have not yet been established. Sumner summarized the conference call he was on with NYSSWCC and some of the other five counties. We were told it is \$400,000 out of the EPF and it has a carbon sequestration soil health focus. It includes five counties and it is a 2-year project. They would like to have it happen on 2 commercial farms in each county (potentially 10 projects). This comes out to approx. \$30-\$40,000 per farm. Columbia, Dutchess and Orange County SWCDs were on the call, Ulster and Sullivan SWCDs were not. One discussion was the Cornell Soil Health Test, it is broad and looks at organic matter, soil compaction and other soil quality factors. An idea was to do the test before the projects and then another test afterwards and see if we can document improvements, but Sumner said these are long term goals to improve organic matter and we might not see improvements for a few growing seasons.

Senator Metzger continues to look at the processing issue in Orange County. It was mentioned that there are a couple of projects going on in other counties. Orange County's Dairy Feasibility Study Project is in a holding pattern. They have not been able to identify funding for the entire cost of the first phase of this project. Sumner said that we need to make sure that the dairy producers are at the table when this is discussed.

There was discussion on CBD extract and growing hemp. The goal of the Bill the NYS Assembly and Senate passed on hemp was to make sure that NYS gives preference to NYS grown and processed to help NYS farmers. They do not know yet if this Bill will be signed. Several farms in Orange County are already producing hemp. DeWan said that the federal government has already permitted industrial hemp. NYS Dept. of Ag and Markets have issued licenses on approximately 1,000 acres of industrial hemp which can produce CBD extract.

Senator Metzger continues to look into how to get local dairy farmers' whole milk in schools.

Senator Metzger's staff will send us updates on bills awaiting action and information on the carbon project.

(Cordella and DeWan left the Meeting at 10:37 AM).

Ag Grant Update Report – A copy of the quarterly report was mailed and emailed out to Directors prior to the meeting.

(H. Persoon, USDA FSA, joined the Meeting at 10:45 AM)

Introductions were made to H. Persoon.

STAFF REPORTS

- **C. DeGroot**

- DeGroot continues to enter data into Quickbooks.
- The District has a new rewards business card which has to-date accumulated \$280 in cash awards.
- We received a call from Paula Preston, NYS Retirement Supervisor, regarding the District joining the NYS Retirement. She said it will cost the District approximately \$4,400/year for Ferry to join. She said she would send the District a breakdown of the cost for each employee to join, which we did not receive yet.
- The proposed 2020 budget was submitted to Orange County.
- The Round 25 Ag NPS Grant Resolutions for Moodna and Wallkill proposals were prepared for Board approval.
- Claim for Payments for the AEM Year 14 Final Report and the Year 15 advance were sent in.
- DeGroot completed the NYS and FIT/FICA quarterly tax reports.
- DeGroot and Ferry worked on removing Japanese Knotweed on a Trees for Tribs site on West Main Street in Middletown on 7/10 and 7/11.
- The District received the 2018 audit booklets.

- **T. Ferry**

- It was mentioned previously that Ferry removed knotweed on a Trees for Tribs site in Middletown.
- Ferry completed and submitted the AEM Year 14 final report.
- Ferry visited the Flood Plain Bench project.
- One no till corn planter is out in use and it was mentioned it can plant sunflower seed.
- Ferry worked on the AG NPS Grant Round 25 Moodna proposal.

- **K. Sumner**

- The Carbon Farming Project (5-County project) was talked about earlier in the meeting.
- B&L's engineer, Wendell, went and looked at the Wallkill Bench Project and he did not find any issues with it and is therefore certifying it. Sumner identified on the aerial where the bench is fully constructed on the north and south sides and showed two areas that still need to be completed in order for the project to function. It is a challenge because not only are the areas heavily wooded but they are far from any road. For one of the meanders, at the Pochuck confluence, Sumner and Buckman discussed a temporary stream crossing to facilitate access and soil removal.
- Sumner gave a presentation to the Ag & Farmland Protection Board on Wallkill flood mitigation work.
- Sumner gave a presentation on the Wallkill Floodplain Bench Project and our rain garden projects at the Annual ReLeaf Conference at Mount Saint Mary College.
- Sumner made calls and sent several letters and emails and has not gotten any response regarding the Cornell Cooperative Extension Seward Avenue rain garden. The rain garden the District designed and installed modified the catch basin so that it could catch the parking lot water. The County repaved around the catch basin so now water does not go into the rain garden, taking it out of service.
- The contractor hired by the District to maintain the Federal Flood Control Project was directed to remove a large tree in the Wallkill River at Pine Island Turf Nursery.

INTERAGENCY REPORTS

Hans Persoon (Farm Service Agency) – Hans was hired as the FSA County Operations Trainee. He started on July 8th and is undergoing training that will take him to various counties throughout the state for the next six months.

J. Heller and A. Armlin-Sorgen (USDA NRCS) - Angelica introduced herself as the new Soil Conservationist for the NRCS. She attended SUNY Cobleskill and studied Wildlife Management.

K. Capella (NRCS) retired and J. Heller is Acting District Conservationist.

NRCS had 13 funded applicants in 2019. Director Wright is a recipient for EQIP 2019. For year 2020 they have 21 applications and NRCS received an additional amount of \$80,000 for high tunnels. NRCS completed two ag land easement plants - one in Ulster and one in Orange.

GLI Program Update - Grassland Initiative pays \$18/acre for grasslands. Two livestock farms signed up for it.

(Heller and Armlin-Sorgen left the meeting at 11:11 AM)

OLD BUSINESS

Sumner handed a financial summary of Walkkill Flood Project expenses out to Directors. We have spent the \$2 million received through the Housing Trust Fund, of which \$1.5 million was on construction. He suggested we keep monitoring D. Ford's fields and keep open the option of assisting with some additional corrective measures. The Board was in general agreement.

Financial summary of the Tire Removal Project passed out. We may be able to accommodate three additional people added to the list and stay within our budget. Approx. 28,000 tires have been picked up so far.

(J. Kulisek left the Meeting at 11:22 AM)

There was discussion on retirement options for the District. A financial advisor met with staff back in June to discuss the best options and he felt that NYS Retirement is the best option for Ferry, but Simple Employee Pension Plans were the best option for Sumner and DeGroodt. A NYS Retirement supervisor was supposed to break down the amount of what it would cost to join NYS Retirement for each employee and email it to us, but it has not yet been received. She said the cost for Ferry to join would be \$4,400/year as mentioned earlier in the meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

Board Members gave Sumner hydrangea plants in memory of his father. Memorial services were discussed.

The District's 2018 audit book was available for review.

2019-7-4 Ruszkiewicz made the Motion, DeBlock seconded, to approve the Resolutions for submitting Ag NPS RD 25 Moodna and Walkkill proposals. All in favor.

The next **MEETING** is scheduled for **Monday, August 19, 2019 at 9:00 AM.**

2019-7-5 The Meeting adjourns at 11:46 AM on a Motion by DeBlock, seconded by Keeton. All in favor.

Minutes Prepared By:

Christine DeGroodt, Secretary to the Board