

MINUTES
ORANGE COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
May 19th, 2025

The **MEETING** was **CALLED TO ORDER** by the Chairman at 9:05 AM. Directors J. Wright, G. Constable, B. Cheney, P. Ruszkiewicz, and P. DeBlock were present along with K. Sumner (SWCD), E. King (SWCD), and O. Vélez-Juarbe (NRCS.)

2025-5-1 DeBlock made the Motion, Constable seconded, to approve April's Board Meeting Minutes as written. All in favor.

ACTIONS TAKEN BETWEEN MEETINGS – Some bills were paid and are indicated on the Bills for Board Approval. The Board gave approval via email to issue an interim payment to Mark Hoyt in the amount of \$23,144.82 for his project in AEM Round 18.

CORRESPONDENCE

- Bank Statements
- Collateral Agreements
- Region 5 Monthly SWCC Report from Ben Luskin
 - Sumner noted that the annual Regional District Manager's Meeting for region 5 is on 6/12/25 at Dutchess County SWCD in Millbrook, NY. DeBlock asked whether there is an option to attend virtually since she would like to satisfy one of the District's requirements to qualify for Part C funding. King told DeBlock that she will reach out to Luskin and let her know. Sumner reminded the Board that their attendance at any of the monthly State Committee meetings will satisfy the requirement.
- The Upper Delaware: Spring 2025 Issue
- ShelterPoint: Notice for Policyholder of Non-Roster Group Term Life Policy
- The Empire State Granger: May/June 2025

FINANCIAL REPORTS

Sumner reported that the District neglected to add the \$50,000 to the 2025 District's Local Cost Share Program, LCSP, line which the Board allocated at April's Board of Directors meeting. Sumner noted that with the LCSP included, the District still has a substantial unobligated fund balance. The District still has a lingering negative balance on the Carbon Farming Project which ended a few years ago. Sumner reminds State Committee every few months of this remaining payment.

2025-5-2 Wright made the Motion, Cheney seconded, to file April's Financial Reports for audit review. All in favor.

BILLS FOR BOARD APPROVAL

Sumner indicated that #4 on the bills to be paid refers to a fall cover crop that did not make adequate growth in fall 2024. However, Held recently checked it and found there was an acceptable amount of growth for a spring payment. If the District were to approve this payment, it would be added to the already existing cover crop payment balance of \$58,000. Should these sign-offs not receive approval from the State, then the payment falls on the District. Sumner asked Vélez-Juarbe about NRCS's policy of approving cover crop that grew in the spring, but not in the fall. Vélez-

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Juarbe explained that NRCS wants to know what the goal of the cover crop was, i.e. was it for winter erosion control or to improve soil health. Given these two methods, Sumner proposed offering two different payment rates, with the Local Cost Share funds, based on the purpose of the cover crop planting. Where the cover crop is planted early enough in the fall to achieve winter protection (or by the last planting date in NRCS standards), the participant would be eligible for full reimbursement. Plantings that did not occur according to NRCS standards for latest planting date and do not achieve enough growth for winter protection, but achieve adequate growth in the spring to contribute to soil health improvement would be eligible for a payment equal to one half of the full reimbursement rate. Per Sumner, the District would be setting a precedent with this since he is not aware of NRCS or State Committee having these options. Sumner noted that planting for winter erosion control would be a higher payment since it offers more benefits. Vélez-Juarbe confirmed that rates for cover crop planting increased by 30% since 2024 from the lower Hudson Valley to Long Island. Sumner would like to Board to make a decision regarding the District's 2025 cover crop rates prior to paying this fall's plantings. Wright expressed that he trusts Sumner's judgement when it comes to this matter. Cheney asked Sumner how much the District gets reimbursed for the cover crop payments. Sumner noted that if a planting is covered in a NYS program then a District receives full reimbursement (\$70/ac for single species, \$85/ac for multi-species for current contracts). Cover crop payments made with funds from the LCSP are not eligible for State reimbursement. The payment to Jason Touw sourced its funds from CRF Round 6, which is a State program. As it stands, NRCS is waiting on Held to provide the needed documentation to sign off on the previous cover crop payments. Sumner did not assign blame to either party, but acknowledged that months have gone by with little progress to show. Sumner wants to avoid having farmers compare cover crop pricing from the State vs. LCSP. Wright feels that the District should adhere to their previously passed resolution to pay fall cover crop plantings in the spring. Sumner is okay with paying this fairly modest payment to Touw, but does not feel comfortable adding \$20-30k a year to the existing balance until the outcome of the 'sign-off' issue is more clear. Sumner mentioned that these existing grant contracts will be ending soon. Sumner confirmed that the Board does not need to pass a motion to pay the Touw cover crop payment.

2025-5-3 Cheney made the Motion, DeBlock seconded, to pay the bills as presented. All in favor.

CONTRACT REPORT UPDATE

Per usual, any updates to the contracts report for the month of April are highlighted in red ink. Sumner listed the balance for each grant contracts, as well as updates on interactions with the contract participants. Sumner reported that besides the work at Mark Hoyt's farm, there has not been a lot of construction activity. Sumner updated the projects for AEM Round 18 by removing the two Minkus farms eliminated at April's BOD meeting and adding three new farms. These farms are DeBuck's Sod Farm, Freedom Hill, and Possible Farms.

INTERAGENCY REPORTS

NRCS: Vélez-Juarbe reported that his two employees, Mason & Evarts, who opted for the Deferred Resignation Program, are no longer working in the office. Currently, Martire is the only NRCS employee at the Middletown office. There are 27 new approvals for the Middletown office alone. Prior to Evarts & Mason leaving, the Middletown office was able to have more than half of the applications obligated.

Comments from Director: DeBlock mentioned that Mike Miedema's farm, which has been selling bottled milk at their farm stand, is now available for purchase at several Shop Rites. The Directors reflected that their growth is great for the dairy industry in Orange County & to help keep land in agricultural use and not be developed.

There were no representatives from NYSC, CCE, or WCC present at the meeting.

STAFF REPORTS

*Sumner, King, and Held emailed their written staff reports to the Board prior to the meeting for review.

E. King (SWCD)- Since April's meeting, King oversaw the District's annual audit performed by PKF O'Connor Davies and was pleased with how it went. It will be a few months before the District receives the report, but it will be shared with the Board when it arrives. King attended the closing of the conservation easements for Pine Island Turf Nursery & Shari Lain with Sumner last week. Cheney asked King whether she received his email regarding the contact for NY Muni-Trust, to which she confirmed she did. Cheney informed the Board that the County utilizes this investment opportunity extensively. Cheney reported that Kerry Gallagher, who is the County Commissioner of Finance, is on the Board of Directors for NY Muni Trust. Sumner would rather heed the recommendation of the County since they are the District's main funding provider than enroll in NYCLASS. King will collect further information regarding NY Muni Trust and present it to the Board.

Water Cooler Proposal- King informed the Board that Soil & Water employees do not have access to clean drinking water at the office. King reported that the tap water in the kitchen is undrinkable which forces staff to purchase their own drinking water. King noted that this is not only inconvenient for employees, but costly as well. King provided the Board with the prices of water coolers & water suppliers prior to the Board meeting. King clarified that the cost of the water cooler is a one-time purchase totaling around \$180.00. King feels that purchasing water from Fox Ledge is the best option for the office, since 5 gallons of water costs \$6.45. King provided further information regarding costs which can be found in her written report. DeBlock agreed with King's logic to allow NRCS access to the water cooler since NRCS pays for the District's office space. DeBlock does not want other agencies to have access to it to avoid abuse of the supply. DeBlock shared her support to allow King to purchase a water cooler and water for the office based on whatever is the easiest or most affordable option. Cheney asked King what the problem is with the water, specifically if it is a matter of poor taste or aesthetic. King explained that the water is supplied by the City of Middletown, but it could be either the supply or pipes that contributes to its foul taste. Sumner confirmed that there is a consensus among agency staff that this water does not taste right. Cheney asked whether the water tastes bad year-round or if it is periodical, to which King confirmed that it is year-round problem. Ruskiewicz, Wright, and DeBlock voiced their support of the water cooler & water purchases. Cheney asked King whether she researched purchasing a UV or ozonation machine to treat the water in the office. King said that she did not investigate those machines, but that she can if the Board would like her to. Constable suggested that the District purchase large gallons of water from the receptacle at Shop Rite if it could be a cheaper option. DeBlock remarked that it would require employees to purchase this during the workday. Sumner would rather the District not allow other agencies to contribute money towards to water cooler to avoid a bookkeeping headache since the District is paying for it. DeBlock instructed King to store the water cooler in an inconspicuous place in the office.

2025-5-4 Ruskiewicz made the Motion, DeBlock seconded, to allow King & Sumner to purchase a water cooler & water supply that is the best option for the District. All in favor.

M. Held (SWCD)- Held was not in attendance, but provided her written staff report to the Board on 5/16/25. On behalf of Held, Sumner told the Board that Held unfortunately had a miscarriage after April's Board of Directors meeting. Held noted in her written report that it has affected her time in the office & productivity. The District is understandably allowing Held time to process her grief following this immense loss. Sumner expects that with time Held will adjust to her new normal.

K. Sumner (SWCD)- Sumner provided the following reports and discussions to augment and add to his written staff report. Review "Old and New Business" for further information.

OLD & NEW BUSINESS

Ag NPS Round 27- At April's meeting, the Board passed a resolution to increase the local funding for two different contracts in Ag NPS Round 27. Sumner wants the Board to formerly approve contract revisions increasing the sponsor contribution to \$17,000 for Jason Soudant's barnyard project and \$13,500 for his fuel storage project. Regarding the

Weiboldt project, the District's contribution will increase to \$9,5000 for his barnyard project & \$13,500 for the fuel storage project. Between these two contract revisions, the District's contribution is an additional \$43,000.

2025-5-5 Ruskiewicz made the Motion, Constable seconded, to approve the Soudant & Weiboldt ANPSACP Round 27 contract revisions as presented today. All in favor.

Celery Avenue Ledge Lowering Project-Sumner is continuing to work with Jody at the County grants department on the Department of State application for Celery Avenue. Sumner noted that working with Jody has been very helpful. Sumner feels confident that the District will meet the 6/6/25 deadline. Sumner learned the District would need an enhanced flood study done to determine how the project will address climate change in order to apply for one of the funding opportunities. The District's engineer at Barton & Loguidice confirmed that there is not enough time to conduct this study before the deadline. Additionally, Sumner found out that the District cannot apply for the coastal program grant if the area is not in a disadvantaged community area. The Goshen side of the river at the Project location is classified as a disadvantaged community area, the Wawayanda side is not. DAC area on the Goshen side qualifies the District to apply for the program.

Even though the Board gave approval for the District to apply for the grant, Sumner would like the Board to decide how much local match the Board should contribute. The application's minimum local cost match is 10%. Sumner is estimating a total project cost of \$500,000. Sumner continued the minimum local cost match of \$500,000 is \$50,000. Sumner could not find any mention in the request for proposal of an applicant's ranking increasing if they have a larger local match. Based on previous experience he is led to assume that it does affect the applicant's ranking. Sumner contacted Schreibeis via email to find out if the County Executive's office is interested in contributing to the District's local match, but he is still waiting for a response. If the District increases their local match, then the District will need to consider the possibility that the County may not provide additional funding, and the full amount will fall on the District. The District could request extra funding in our county appropriation for 2026, but there is no guarantee the County will approve it. If the District's application is approved, it is likely that work will not start until 2026. Sumner reported that the Environmental Protection Fund as included in the approved NYS budget appears to provide for 'Part C' funding of approximately \$230,000. The application provides a scoring sheet for the application, but Sumner does not know if there are criteria that specify the local match. Cheney wants Sumner to ask Jody what her opinion is of this matter. Sumner asked the Board whether they feel okay with giving Sumner the discretion to decide whether to increase the match to \$100,000 based on his discussion with Jody. If Sumner does not learn otherwise, then the District will contribute the minimum 10%. Sumner does not need the Board to pass a motion based on this discussion.

Phase 4 South Conservation Easements- Sumner and King attended the closing of the Phase 4 South Conservation Easements on 6/14. The payments to both the title company and landowners are listed on the Bills to be Paid. Sumner told the closer that the District was informed by the assistant county clerk that the District is exempt from the easement filing fees. However, the closer noted that this is not always the case when she goes to file the documents with the County. The District paid the closer per page for the recording, but if the title company is not charged, then they will reimburse the District. Sumner received a call from Tom Barry with the County Surveyor's office a day after the closing who told Sumner that he discovered an error with the surveys he provided him for the closing. Barry realized that all the bearings on the surveys were off by six degrees. Sumner was skeptical as to whether the title company would let them replace the descriptions, but thankfully she did not record them yet and they were able to do so. Sumner was unsure whether the bearing error changed the acreage, but it was just a coordination switch. The updated descriptions were provided to the District's attorney & title company. Barry was very apologetic and swiftly delivered the new descriptions to the District. The District needs to continue negotiations with Green Farmland for their conservation easements. Barry completed the survey work for Bastek's properties, which are a part of Phase 4 North, and he is now working on the property descriptions. Sumner reminded the Board that Bastek wants the CE payment spread over five years.

Celery Avenue Permits- The District has not heard back from the NYS DEC regarding the permits the District submitted several months ago. Nor has the District received an update on the Goshen & Wawayanda floodplain permits. Sumner has followed up with the two town building departments to no avail. Sumner asked Ruskiewicz & Cheney to speak with the town supervisors for Goshen & Wawayanda. In the past, Sumner has resorted to contacting the town's consultants directly in effort to progress regulatory inquiries. However, this could be considered improper protocol. Sumner did not receive any guidance from the Town of Wawayanda's building department after sending his questions twice. Sumner believes that once action is taken, the permit approval process will move swiftly with the town. Kevin Shuback and Sumner discussed contacting the Regional Administrator for EPA Region 2, Mike Martucci, in effort to advance the permit review process.

Sumner noted that King submitted a reimbursement request to the County's Department of Public Works for work associated with the Federal Flood Control Project. The District is still waiting for answers from the County as to when the District will receive the funds from the four towns. King emailed her contact at the DPW who told her that the request is currently being reviewed by the finance department. Cheney will speak with Mr. Mahoney from the County Law Department to further discuss the change in the funding procedure.

Equipment Planning- The District received an email from NYS Ag & Markets with several documents noting that they will be the contract agency for the equipment funding from Skoufis' office. This news comes after the District worked extensively with Empire State Development. The State Committee told Sumner that this point of contact reassignment often happens. Sumner reached out to ESD for their confirmation with the current switch, but he did not receive an answer from them. The District still does not know when the start date is. Ag & Markets does not think it will take three to six months to reimburse the District for the equipment purchase as previously stated by ESD.

The District and CCE are still finalizing the equipment purchase plan with the Conservation Innovation Grant funding. Per Sumner, the District is undecided on the corn planter bids, but he has received a quote for a Kinsey planter. He is trying to determine the best way to satisfy relevant procurement requirements. There are a lot of factors that are currently up in the air when it comes to equipment purchases. The twelve-foot Esch drill that the District intends on buying is ready for purchase on the lot. Sumner does not know if the District needs to issue a request for proposal for a twelve-foot drill that contains features like the Esch. Sumner does not expect the District to have any new equipment available for the spring '25 planting season.

Wetland Mitigation Proposal, Town of Warwick- The District received a notice from the Army CORP of Engineers relating to the Wetland Trust. Sumner explained that the Wetland Trust is an entity that creates wetlands and sells the credits to developers that are disturbing them and don't have a site to create their own. The proposal focuses on property the Trust owns near Ruskiewicz's property in the Black Dirt which totals around 30 acres. This proposed site borders active agricultural land and would fill ditches as well as create shallow impoundments. Sumner feels that these changes are very incompatible with the adjacent land use. One of the arguments from the Trust's 169-page report claims that the restoration will clean runoff from the adjacent farmland, reduce flooding on neighboring lands, and curb erosion. Ruskiewicz commented if anything these actions will raise the water table of the neighboring land. Sumner feels these claims weaken their report since they are unsubstantiated. Per Sumner, to do this in not only an active agricultural area, but also a formal ag drainage district, is a solid counterargument. Sumner found that the Trust paid \$7,500 an acre on some of the parcels, but others were purchased for \$20k an acre. Sumner feels that the Trust should implement this project on marginal agricultural soils that are of little value to farmers. Sumner drafted a letter on behalf of the Board that he would like the Directors to consider. Additionally, Sumner provided it to the Town of Warwick and the Agriculture & Farmland Protection Board, AFPB.

2025-5-6 DeBlock made the Motion, Cheney seconded, to send the letter Sumner wrote on behalf of the Board to the Wetland Trust. All in favor.

Sumner will attend the AFPB meeting on 5/21 to discuss this issue at hand. Sumner will prepare and offer to the AFPB a resolution to act on since the comment period ends 5/30. Sumner noted that the EPA could exert influence on the Army CORP of Engineers and change how they review the permit application. Cheney recommended Sumner CC Martucci on the email he sends. Sumner will let Ruszkiewicz know when he sends the email so that he can follow up with Martucci.

Request from Town of Warwick for Review of Solar Proposal- The District received an inquiry from a consultant who is working on a solar project in Warwick. The consultant included an excerpt from the scoping document that references the Town of Warwick's mandate for the District's approval of their reclamation plan and performance bond. Sumner is confused by this request since the District would not approve an entity's performance bond. Furthermore, the District would not approve of their reclamation plan, but rather provide comments to the town to aid in their decision to accept or deny it. After corresponding with the town, Sumner learned that the town does want the District to review it. Sumner wants to know from the Board if they want the District to review the plan. Secondly, Sumner noted that the District previously charged towns for review of plans which the fee would then be passed to the applicant. Sumner acknowledged that it would be for a good cause if it will provide better assurances that this land can be returned to agriculture after the project lifespan. Sumner feels that this is within the District's responsibility to do so, but it depends on the District's workload and whether they want to set a precedent. Sumner stated that planning boards often do 239 reviews, but it is unclear how much attention they receive. The project claims that the land will be returned to its original condition prior to construction. However, Sumner noted the level of ground disturbance that occurs with these solar farms. Such construction includes that of roads and pads for the electrical components of the solar panel. The District spoke with the consultant after receiving confirmation from the planning board chairman, Ben Astorino, for this request for review. The District requested a site plan & reclamation plan from the consultant, but have not received anything thus far. The District does not have anything official in writing from the planning board, just a casual email from Astorino. A component of the proposal will outline their reclamation plan for agriculture production. If Sumner had fewer specific parameters for the review, then Sumner would advise the solar farm be built on less favorable soils.

The town's consultant sent Sumner the language from the local law that discusses the town seeking outside review, but it does not mention Soil & Water specifically. In fact, the town's local law indicates that the applicant can be referred elsewhere. Sumner feels that the town should be considerate of the District's responsibilities and communicate with us before referring consultants to the District. Cheney noted that most municipalities require that the applicant create an escrow fund to pay for services of those enlisted at the request of the town such as the town attorney or the planning board engineer. Cheney recommends that the District have a schedule of fees when sending a bill to the town which will be taken out of the applicant's escrow account. The Board advised that the District charges the town based on the individual employee's hourly rate plus the fringe benefit factor. Sumner will send the town the District's availability and the State approved employee hourly rate. Per Sumner, the District often does a \$5/hour overhead charge. Sumner stated that the District is not a for profit operation, but also wants to cover hidden expenses and to set boundaries with the town.

2025-5-7 Constable made the Motion, Cheney seconded, to establish a schedule of fees for general & technical reviews. All in favor.

Cheney asked Sumner if the District has the ability, and if so, should we be teaching municipalities the difference between prime and marginal farmland. Especially given the implications of developing on more favorable agricultural land versus less desirable. Sumner performed a cursory review of local laws in regard to solar facilities, but they varied significantly. Sumner reported that Warwick's law stated if a proposed site of a solar farm is on prime farmland, then a reclamation plan is needed. Sumner imagines that 10% of our agricultural land is prime, but a large amount is still suitable. This prompts discussion as to how to differentiate between the two. Sumner does not recall any language in the municipal laws forbidding the construction of solar facilities on prime or statewide important soils. Sumner assumes that the Board does not want to issue a statement that farmers in the County should not lease

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their land to solar facilities. Sumner feels that it is within the power of the towns to enforce which soils are preferable for construction. The applicant should invest the extra money, when feasible, to build on the poorer soils. Cheney iterated that the town is there for guidance, but he does not know if they are obligated to do anything beyond just that. Cheney advised that the District send a letter to every town planning board chair reminding them of the significance of the agricultural soils. DeBlock commented that solidarity amongst the towns is essential to the overall efficacy of preserving farmland.

DeBlock asked whether the Board can notify a town when they notice an environmental violation such as the filling in of a floodplain. Sumner does not see any legal obstacle to the Board submitting a notice to the town. Sumner does not know of any legal violations, but notes that there is watch dog accusations. Cheney cautioned that it may be more efficient to submit the concern as an individual given the time it takes for the Board to vote on sending a notice. DeBlock left a note with the building inspector's secretary regarding a floodplain filling situation she was aware of, but has not heard back. Cheney noted that emailing one's concerns is advantageous since it leaves a paper trail of when and who you contacted. Sumner believes it is appropriate for the District to write yearly to the towns to remind them that floodplain regulation is the town's responsibility. Sumner is open to writing this type of letter, but does not think it is a good idea to list specific locations or farms where violations are occurring.

Sumner asked Cheney whether the Drinking Water Source Protection Program, which is a State grant affiliated with the DEC, is still active. Cheney noted that the group is finishing the final draft of the drinking water source protection plan for the municipality's water resource. Cheney reported that the Village of Warwick joined the program in the fall of 2024. Additionally, the program is discussing training DPW staff in terms of mitigating the impact of road salt on water resources. Sumner feels that it is more appropriate to address this concern at the County level rather than the individual towns.

Next meeting date: June 16th

ADJOURNMENT

2025-5-8 Cheney made the Motion, seconded by Constable, to adjourn the meeting at 10:52 AM. All in favor.

Minutes Prepared By:

Emily King, Secretary to the Board

Report to Board KMS

May, 2025

Wieboldt and Soudant AGNPS RD 27 contracts were revised to increase sponsor (SWCD) share, per last month's meeting, and will be presented for approval.

I am continuing to work on the DOS grant application for the Celery Avenue project. Jody from County Grants Division has been very helpful. We need to decide how much of a local match to offer so I can finalize the budget portions of the application. Due 6/2.

Wallkill Flood Projects –

P4S – Finally had official closing for floodplain bench Phase 4 South Conservation Easements. Related expenses are on Bills for this month.

Floodplain Bench Phase 4 North

Flooded for the first time since construction over the 5/9 – 5/10 weekend. County Surveyor has completed maps and is working on descriptions. Then we will begin the easement acquisition process all over again. Reminder that we still need to work on Phase 3 easements with Green Farmland.

Other Flood Control Items

Celery Avenue ledge lowering project – Still no word on the DEC permit, or on Wawayanda/Goshen floodplain permits.

Carbon Farming Project – Still waiting on final payment of \$4,268.32 on Southway project (same status as last month).

AEM Round 18 – Hoyt project about 80% complete. Over 9,000 feet of drainage tubing was installed with drainage plow on 4/23. Partial reimbursement payment made with director approval by email.

CRF Round 7 - Finally received payments on Crist contract. No rd 7 BMP installation activity this month.

'Sign Offs' on Soil Health Practices – No real updates from last month.

Revision of Wallkill Maintenance Agreement – Still waiting on updated procedures from County. Contractor has submitted billing of about \$26,000. We submitted a reimbursement request to County per past procedures.

Roller Crimper Project Update - See Held's report.

The AgNPS Round 29 – No recent project activity.

AgNPS Round 30 – No word yet on Wallkill Watershed Proposal.

Other Items

Gas Purchase – no updates

PDR–. No updates to report.

DWSP2 – I have missed some of the more recent zoom meetings due to construction priorities.

Equipment Planning

Skoufis Equipment Funding – I am now being told that the contract for this funding will come out of Ag & Markets, not Empire State Development where we recently completed extensive paperwork. I reached out to ESD to report the outreach from A&M and confirm we would not be working with them, I did not receive a reply. I have submitted the requested contract documents to A&M. I don't even know at this point what the contract start date will be.

New Business

We were made aware of a proposal by the Wetland Trust to create 'mitigation wetlands' within the Wallkill Valley (Agricultural) Drainage District. The sites are near the end of Missionland Road. In my opinion, this is an inappropriate location. It appears that there will be opposition to this proposal from multiple entities and individuals. I have requested it to be put on the AFPB agenda for this month's meeting. I will discuss further at Board meeting.

Review of Warwick Solar Proposal – We received an inquiry from the consultants for a solar proposal, indicating that the Town had directed them to obtain a review from our office. Upon reaching out to the Town, I confirmed that they want us to review the proposal. I would like to discuss this request with the Board.

Secretary to the Board Update

Since April's meeting, a large amount of my time was spent preparing and providing numerous documents/figures for the auditors from PKF O'Connor Davies. I submitted these documents to the District's account on Suralink which was newly implemented this year. I primarily oversaw the District's 2024 audit, but did enlist Kevin's help with certain requests. As of 5/16, the District has provided most of the materials needed. I am waiting on our IT provider, The Computer Shop, to review a questionnaire PKF sent us and will submit it once he has done so. Overall, I am happy with how the process went and enjoy the working relationship I have with the auditors at PKF.

Mary and I attended SUNY's Orange Earth Day fair at the Middletown campus on 4/24. I gathered materials and created documents that highlighted the District's work on the Wallkill Floodplain Bench & the Monhagen Watershed. I also brought copies of the District's 2024 annual report and various brochures. I would say that ten or so students stopped by our table, which I thought was good for that type of event. The Sustainability Coordinator at SUNY Orange will keep me posted of any other community events that the District may attend.

Unfortunately, I was not able to look further into the District signing up for NYCLASS. I contacted the County Commissioner of Finance to ask for her opinion on NYCLASS, but I did not hear back from her. However, I was able to get a copy of the County's Investment Policy from her which I will share with the Board at the meeting. I will dedicate more time this month to finding out more information about NYCLASS.

On 5/5, I emailed a request for reimbursement to Gina with the Department of Public Works. The reimbursement includes staff time billed to the Wallkill River Flood Control Project, as well as a CEC Excavating invoice. Gina informed me on 5/16 that she is still waiting for it be approved in order to make payment. The total reimbursement request is in the amount of \$30,457.75.

I was able to fax the requested documents to NYSLRS to register Sumner and subsequently report his workdays and salary. Kevin has not been added yet as an employee yet to NYSLRS, but I will contact them for an update.

I emailed my latest edits to the PITN & Shari Lain conservation easements, TP forms, and Schedule A documents to Richard Hoyt's office. On 5/14, I attended the closing at Hill-N-Dale Abstracters and handled the payments. I appreciate the opportunity to attend the closing with Kevin and see firsthand how the closing works.

Lastly, I updated the various grant ledgers, as well as the receipts, disbursements, and payroll Excel spreadsheet. I updated the online bank accounts to reflect the total listed on April's dedicated fund summary. Once the new checking accounts for Shuback & Crist are created, I will allocate funds from the main checking to show their current balance. The manager from M&T Bank is scheduled to stop by at 8:45am on 5/19 to create the two new accounts with John, Paula, and Kevin.

I wrote a proposal to present at the Board meeting that is asking the Board to allow the District to purchase a water cooler/water for its employees. I look forward to discussing this with the Board and having the opportunity to present my case. I have prepared a document that provides the costs of various water coolers and water jugs.

As always, please let me know if you have any questions or concerns. Thank you!

Best,

Emily

OCSWCD Technician Update

Mary C. Held

5/14/2025

I apologize for missing a second Board meeting. Between being sick, allergies, and some personal health issues, I'm afraid my time in the office has been more sparse than what I'm used to. I am working on catching up with the workload and appreciate the District's patience as I deal with my health and grief.

Equipment rentals are not as booming as I would have imagined just yet, but it is early in the season yet and the weather has not been favorable.

The Minkus culvert at Celery ledge was installed. I was on site a couple of times during construction and took photos of the 'during construction' phase. I am uncertain of how the billing process / reimbursement process is supposed to go for that, but I am collecting receipts and invoices still. I am currently waiting on the Brian Gurda invoice from Dylan Dembeck, who seems to do most of the paperwork for Minkus Farm.

Equipment:

Roller Crimper Demo Project:

As a reminder, these are the farms interested in utilizing the Roller Crimper as a demonstration project:

O'Dell, Mike

Rowe, Chuck

Ronne, Alex

Conklin, Sue: will crimp if CC germinates in spring

Touw, Jason: will crimp if CC germinates in spring – please see bills to be paid and discuss whether we want to pay Touw's late-emerging cover crop. In 2024, the Board decided to hold off on paying Touw's cover crop reimbursement to see if it came up in the spring. I have put eyes on a portion of the acreage and he it is up and row-able.

Johnson, Phil: will crimp if CC germinates in spring – indicated that he had a 10 ac field he would be interested in using the roller crimper on.

LCSP:

We still have not allocated funding to the Local Cost Share fund to my knowledge but I have created a cover crop application for fall / winter 2025 cover crop.

CRF Update:

Round 6:

After the March meeting, we determined that NRCS would sign off on cover crop providing I supply them with the information they need. I have not given them anything yet as I am still running RUSLE2 between other responsibilities and projects.

To my understanding, to the last cover crop payment still on the line was one for Jason Touw. I ran around a couple of fields he planted in and did confirm that he planted cover crop last year at the 17 acres of field he did not get paid for due to late planting. The payment for that cover crop planting would total to \$1,232.00 which I have included in the bills to be paid, but understand that this payment may need to be put off until we come to a better understanding of the State's reimbursements for this grant.

Payments (RECAP FROM LAST BOARD MEETING):

Russell Smiley: \$1,706.05

Alex Kocot: \$10,441.15

Phil Johnson: --

Jason Touw: \$1,701.70

Bob Stap: \$1,152.90

Total CRF6 **2024**: \$15,001.80

Projected **2025** CRF6 payout (Wagon Wheel Farm): \$1,232.00 (To be put on bills for board approval in May)

Soil testing and compost testing need to be completed before the closeout of this grant if farmers are wanting those services. I am preparing a schedule of those who have soil testing to be completed and plan to get it done when the weather is more agreeable.

Round 7: No updates from the technician.

AGNPS Update:

Round 27: Contract End Date: March 2025

- No update since last meeting.

Round 29:

- No update.

Round 30:

- (No update since last meeting) Feb 24th: AGNPS 30 was submitted. The following projects were submitted:
 - o Michele Callisto (mixing facility)

- Tom Owens (fuel tank storage)

AEM Update:

Round 18 Tier 4 Projects:

Joe Minkus: Mailed formal letter indicating cancellation.

Rick Minkus: Mailed formal letter indicating cancellation.

Steven Demberg: Emailed asking for a follow up on project progress. Demberg indicated that construction is still imminent and will reach out to us when further progress is made.

Alex Ronne: Kevin helped me reach out to a few contractors in requesting quotes for his project. I have contacted the contractors and emailed out the construction plan and bid forms so we can meet procurement requirements.

AEM Activities:

- Tier 2s in progress:
 - Taffera Family Farms – G&C
 - Royal Acres – potential erosion project?
- Tier 3s completed:
 - Alex Ronne (needs signature but work is mostly completed)
- Tier 3s being put together
 - Alex Ronne – grazing plan
 - Marc Suffern – grazing plan

CCA Plan:

- (no update from last board meeting) I have decided to re-take at least a portion of the CCA exam in August with a new strategy and extra materials acquired by friends who have taken the exams and passed before. There are 2 more opportunities to take the exams this year. I will keep the Board posted of any further decisions made about this opportunity.