

**MINUTES
ORANGE COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
May 20, 2019**

The **MEETING** was **CALLED TO ORDER** by the Chairman at 9:05 AM. Directors P. DeBlock, G. Keeton, J. Wright and P. Ruskiewicz were present, along with K. Sumner, T. Ferry and C. DeGroot (OCSWCD) and E. Schellenberg (CCE).

2019-5-1 Keeton made the Motion, Ruskiewicz seconded, to approve April's Board Meeting Minutes as written. All in favor.

ACTIONS TAKEN BETWEEN MEETINGS – None.

CORRESPONDENCE

- Bank account statements from the District's banks were available for review.
- 2019 Assessment Notification for the District's property located next to the Wallkill River was received from the Town of Wawayanda Assessor's office. The District is tax exempt.
- Resolution 132 of 2019 from the Orange County Legislature – A supplemental appropriation was made to the 2019 County Budget for the Orange County SWCD to receive the amount of \$75,000.00 for the Farm Tire Removal Project.
- The District's invoice for work on the the Monhagen Plan was paid by the Orange County Water Authority.
- The District received a New York Association of Conservation Districts update from Blanche Hurlbutt, NYACD Ex. Director.
- A New York State Local Retirement System participation inquiry cost estimate was received for the three SWCD staff. To be discussed under staff reports.
- A Summary of Senator Metzger's Bill on the State-Wide Farm Tire Proposal was available for review. The Bill says that Senator Metzger is directing Ag & Markets and the NYS DEC to provide financial and technical assistance for the farm tire situation.
- A list of 2019 Regional District Managers Meetings was received. The Region 5 meeting will be on June 4th in Millbrook, NY. The District will find out if the Lower Hudson Coalition of Conservation Districts meeting on May 30th will qualify for Director attendance at a meeting for the Performance Measures. We will send in the Special Request Form to see if Director Ruskiewicz's attendance at a State-wide growers meeting will qualify again this year. We'll need info on the meeting from Paul.
- The District received an invitation from Senator Metzger and Assemblywoman Donna Lupardo to take part in the annual June Dairy Month celebration in the NY State Capitol, Legislative Office Building on Wednesday, June 5th.

FINANCIAL REPORTS

It was mentioned that the District has earmarked \$50,000.00 from our County Appropriation again this year for the Wallkill River Flood Projects.

The Performance Measures Part C money was received and is listed in a separate line under the Dedicated Funds Accounts.

2019-5-2 Keeton made the Motion, DeBlock seconded, to file April's 2019 Financial Report for audit review. All in favor.

2019-5-3 DeBlock made the Motion, seconded by Keeton, to accept the Bills to be Paid. All in favor.

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

STAFF REPORTS

- **C. DeGroot**

- The District received verbal approval for new business rewards credit cards and is now waiting to receive the cards.
- The District organized a Monhagen Brook Stream Clean-up Event held on May 11th. All District staff and one Board Member and approximately 10 additional volunteers showed up to collect the accumulated trash before it made its way into the Monhagen Brook.
- The District is looking into whether or not joining the NYS Retirement System is an option. We received a cost estimate for all three staff members to join, which includes buy-back time for prior service. The cost is estimated to be \$66,547/year for 25 years. It would be approx. \$18,000/year without prior service (which they do not give as an option). Current staff have the option of Opting Out of NYS Retirement but if we join then any future District employees will have to sign up for NYS Retirement. There was discussion on looking into having a financial planner meet with staff to discuss options and discuss findings at a future Board Meeting.
- DeGroot has been revisiting older District projects to check on their status. So far she has been to three rain gardens. 1-Walden Boat Launch, 2-Town of Newburgh Water Treatment Plant and 3-Town Hall in Newburgh.

- **T. Ferry**

- The Wallkill River Maintenance Inspection Report was available for review.
- Working on AEM plans and completed the Year 14 Final Report.
- Ferry volunteered at the Regional Envirothon in Red Hook.
- Ferry volunteered at the Monhagen Brook Stream Clean-up event.
- The AG NPS RD 25 proposal was announced and Ferry has been working with interested parties.
- Both of the District planters are out in use and the warm season grass box on the new seeder was repaired.

- **K. Sumner**

- Sumner has had several technical assistance field visits this past month: 1-Blooming Hill Farms, 2-Great Joy Pastureland – where they want to grow rice, brief discussion followed, and 3-Arrow Park – possible rain garden project but more than likely they need drainage.
- Sumner discussed more on District staff revisiting prior projects. The District would like to keep better track of the completed projects which also includes stream bank and tree planting projects. We would like to track projects better and maybe do follow ups with some of the site owners. Going forward we may need to have something for owners to sign making it clear that they will maintain the project. Sumner mentioned the rain garden installed in front of Cornell Cooperative Extension in Middletown which was modified around 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. There may need to be signs put up at sites stating “Do Not Modify This Project” to make people aware. Sumner is trying to find the liason to discuss options. Schellenberg will try to find out who the contact person is.
- Sumner was on a call with Maloney Staff, Army Corp and the NYS DEC. They are supposed to be setting up a site meeting here some time after Memorial Day regarding federal money for flood control. Sumner mentioned that the NYS DEC announced they are planning to establish a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for the Wallkill River. Sumner questioned the feasibility of calculating or enforcing a TMDL for such a large and multi-jurisdictional watershed.

INTERAGENCY REPORTS

E. Schellenberg (CCE) – Ethan Grundberg and Schellenberg are working together on a project with two Cornell researchers on gas flux testing on muck soil – the difference between conventional tillage vs. no-till. Hopefully good data will be gathered by the end of the season.

Schellenberg will be working on an Emerald Ash Borer project and he is trying to find stands of 40+ ash trees.

A 3-Day Extravaganza will be held on July 5-7 at the 4-H Park.

CCE is trying to figure out how to incorporate a rain system that was donated to the 4-H Park. It will be able to supply 2/3 of the water needs at the park.

A milk shake shack "Jeremy's Shake Shack" is being built at the 4-H Park to honor Jeremy DeBlock's memory and will be unveiled at the 3-Day Extravaganza. It will be a new structure at the Education Center & 4-H Park.

Federal Programs Update: Staff are working on acreage reporting. Milk Insurance Program – not able to sign up yet.

It was suggested writing a letter of support for P. DeBlock on behalf of the Soil & Water Board to recognize her work efforts at the Farm Service Agency and send it to the Chairman of the FSA Board and send a copy to their State Office. **2019-5-4 Keeton made the Motion, Ruskiewicz seconded, to send a letter to the Farm Service Agency (FSA) recognizing DeBlock's work efforts at the FSA. Wright – aye, DeBlock-recused.**

OLD BUSINESS

Phase 2 Bench South – Stumps of the trees that were cut in 2017 were dug out. We had a County permit for when we had cut trees but Sumner was told to close it out and let them know when we start up again. When we went to start again we were told we need a new permit. Sumner also found out that the County has an easement going down river. We do not yet have formal approval to remove soil over the pipeline but Gurda has approval to move equipment over the pipeline. Sumner met with Gurda Landscaping and Green Farmland on Friday to keep things moving along. County has been moving forward on the survey work for the Conservation Easement that needs to be placed on the Project area.

Tire and Trench Silo Project Update – The \$75,000.00 was approved by the County of Orange plus an additional \$37,500.00 from the IDA. All voted in favor of the \$37,500 except for Robert Schreibeis and Edward Diana.

2019-5-5 A Motion was made by Ruskiewicz, seconded by Keeton, for the District to enter into the Agreement with IDA. All in favor. Sumner is checking with farmers to see who is ready to have tires removed now. Sumner explained the viable options we have at this point for removing the tires. Casings, Inc. from Catskill, NY charges \$4 for car and small truck tires, and they load the truck. Don Stevens Tire from Connecticut has a set price for a container, but farmer has to load himself. Stevens has been difficult to make arrangements with, often not returning calls. Board agreed that we would start doing some farms with Casings and see if arrangements can be made with Stevens for farms that are willing to load the container and not bill for their time. A couple of farmers on the list have already agreed to do so. Sumner will report back at the June meeting, and program procedures may be adjusted based on initial experiences.

There are two County Legislature committee meetings this week with Metzger's Bill on the State-Wide Farm Tire Proposal on the agenda. Legislature Clerk asked Sumner to attend both. One meeting is today at 4 PM and the other is Wednesday at 3:30.

Sumner received several calls from Tim Tucker (Orange County Budget Department) and Rob Schreibeis asking about a tire shredder that they were told the District owned. We told them the District has never owned a tire shredder but does own a side wall cutter.

A Round 4 Climate Resilient Farming Proposal for the Celery Avenue Ledge Modification Project was submitted.

Follow up on Senator Metzger's meeting last month at our office with dairy farmers. Sumner has not heard anything back from them yet on anything. Sumner and a few of our local dairy farmers were invited by Metzger staff to a meeting held in Liberty last Friday with other dairy farmers.

The District waited to pay the \$500.00 Envirothon fee for the Warwick class to attend the Hudson Valley Regional Envirothon to make sure they registered first. The District Technician also volunteered at the event to show support for the Orange County School. Since Warwick ended up not attending the event the Board suggested writing a letter to the Warwick High School stating that should Warwick want to attend the Envirothon in the future, we will be disinclined to make advance payment on their behalf.

NEW BUSINESS – On June 4, 2019 there is a Regional District Managers Meeting for our Region in Millbrook, NY which would qualify for the Performance Measures.

There was discussion on the Chester Ag Center requesting Soil Group Worksheets from the District on Chester muck parcels. Sumner realized as requests have been coming in we have classified that ground differently over the years for a variety of reasons including remapping by NRCS in the early 1990's, and some landowners provided us with documentation that it flooded frequently and others didn't. There is too much variation at this point and he feels we need to do an overall re-assessment of the Chester muck area and he also feels it would not be fair to make the landowners come in and pay again to get new soil worksheets once it's completed. Sumner drafted a letter and sent it to Bob Somers from Ag & Markets for review to make sure he thinks we are approaching things the correct way. We want to apprise the town and other relevant parties. The first step would be to collect input from interested parties and look at all the information and use a more uniform approach. If we start now, we have between now and March 1st of next year.

Browns Pond Update – The State awarded another grant on that project to potentially remove the dam. They required that an outreach effort be done to assess the public's sentiment on it. Hudson Valley Regional Council is the grant holder. Sumner has been receiving calls about this. He believes that we should generally avoid involvement in the project based on the same concerns that caused us to withdraw our support for a proposal to remove this dam a few years ago. If the Rows indicated an interest in exploring development of an alternative water supply, it might be appropriate for the District to get involved.

The next **MEETING** is scheduled for **Monday, June 17, 2019 at 9:00 AM.**

2019-5-6 The Meeting adjourns at 11:24 AM on a Motion by Ruskiewicz, seconded by Keeton. All in favor.

Minutes Prepared By:

Christine DeGroot, Secretary to the Board