

**MINUTES**  
**ORANGE COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT**  
**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**  
**June 16, 2014**

The Meeting was **CALLED TO ORDER** by the Chairman at 9:10 AM. Directors J. Wright, G. Keeton, S. Wong, P. Ruskiewicz and P. DeBlock were present, along with K. Sumner, C. DeGrootd and K. Brown (OCSWCD) and J. Heller (NRCS).

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

R. Baglia (CCE) joined the Meeting at 9:12 AM.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

Dairy Processing information was passed around for review. A brief discussion followed regarding processing plants in Orange County.

The District received a quarterly appropriation from the County of Orange.

Wright signed the Ag NPS Round 15 Contract Amendment.

The 'Bills To Be Paid' list was passed out to Board Members for review. There were eight items on the original list. Several bills were added on for approval: (1) an estimate from Tire King for the purchase of a spare planter rim (\$50) and tire (\$140) (2) a request to make a partial payment to Vellenga's Lawn Care for the stump removal project (the total of the bill is approx. \$35,000.00 and Vellenga requested half which will be \$17,500.00) (3) an invoice from B&L for \$6,352.53 for the Flood Project (this will not be paid to B&L until this money is reimbursed to us) (4) an invoice in the amount \$2,375.00 from Vellenga's Lawn Care for the Wallkill Maintenance Project work (5) the District's health insurance payment for \$3,685.70. A Motion was made by Keeton to approve May's Financial Report and the payment of May's bills including the added-on bills, seconded by Ruskiewicz. All in favor.

DeBlock mentioned it would be a good idea to black out the District's account number on the credit card statement copies that are handed out to Board members.

Brown said that approximately 90 acres of soybeans were planted with the District's soy cups by DeBuck, Butryn and P. Ruskiewicz.

AgNPS RD 15 – We need to close this out but we've been waiting on the state office to come here and do field visits.

**STAFF REPORTS**

**C. DeGrootd (SWCD)** - DeGrootd has been busy working on the *Draft* 2015 Budget.

The new laptop has been purchased along with Quickbooks. DeGrootd has been adding information to the new Quickbooks program.

DeGrootd has been researching Dental and Vision insurance for employees and completed the second quarter state and federal income tax reports.

This past Friday, DeGrootd assisted Jim from STRATA with historical aerial photos of the Wallkill.

**K. Brown (SWCD)** – Brown attended the NRCS Phase III training from May 19<sup>th</sup> to May 23<sup>rd</sup>.

On May 29<sup>th</sup> Brown attended the Water Quality Coordinating Committee Meeting. During this meeting the RSR Project was discussed as well as the AEM Strategy. The AEM Strategy is good for every five years. This year it's mandated that we update it in order to get paid via the AEM Program. This is one of the core grants that Brown uses to work on farm planning in order for the farms to get funding through the Ag NPS grants.

On June 6<sup>th</sup> a SEQR mailing for the Wallkill Project was sent out.

On June 11<sup>th</sup> Brown took Jim from STRATA on a tour to look at project sites.

Friday Jim came to the District office to look at historical photos. Sumner clarified that STRATA is not SHPO. Jim does the work that then gets presented to SHPO. Jim is thorough, has worked with us on other projects and is easy to work with. He has a drone airplane and he sent us a link to the video of it flying over the river. Brown will send the link to the Directors. DeBlock said that it will show growers that the Wallkill is being monitored. Sumner added that the drone will show if there are any obstructions in the river. Keeton said Jim has done work for National Geographic.

Seeders and planters are all being used in the field. There has been several tire issues. Rob Hubert from Hudson River Tractor authorized a mechanic to assist Brown with the tire repair. He told Brown there is a one planting season warranty on it.

Pellets Island Tree Clearing and Stump Removal Project Update – Chris had about 100 stumps cut and is progressing on schedule. He is actively trying to reduce disturbance but is currently reducing 40%.

Employees Association Meeting - Brown asked for permission to attend on July 9-10, 2014. The District will get reimbursed for her mileage. Brown explained the meeting and her role in the Association. Keeton made the Motion to allow Brown to attend the Association Meeting, seconded by Wong. All in favor. This is her sixth and last year as the Division VII representative. Sumner added that the meetings are time consuming and most are far away.

**K. Sumner (SWCD)** – Has also been working on the proposed *draft* 2015 budget.

Sumner interviewed a few of the technician job applicants.

The Ford truck needed an oil pan. We had approval to do the work and had it completed. Afterwards, the District was handed a bill which was double the estimate. The mechanic never called the District to get approval for this. Now it sounds like either the head gasket is blown or something is wrong with the exhaust system. We have an appointment to bring it back to them tomorrow to have it looked at.

5-Spoke completed their barnyard project. Pictures were passed around.

Pellet Project – we are required by NYSERDA to do a public demonstration. We are looking into doing one in July at either the former Gill Farm (now the Hudson Valley 'Farm Hub') or Aden Brook Farm in Montgomery. When it's all firmed up, Sumner will let the Board know. At the last project meeting it was discussed that we may need to shift the project to being a more of an educational demonstration project as opposed to something that is economically feasible. There was also discussion on selling the equipment if someone is interested. If staff keeps generating reports to earn remaining NYSERDA money the project can last a few more months. There is currently around \$20,000.00 left.

The District received a call from Kelly Dobbins, Orange County Planning Department. Apparently there is some interest in getting some of the watershed plans to become part of the County's Comprehensive Plan. They're

pretty sure they're going to include the Quassaick Creek Watershed Plan and they are debating whether or not they will include the Wallkill Watershed Plan. Sumner encouraged the legislative Board members to keep inclusion of the Wallkill Plan in the County Comprehensive Plan update in mind if this comes up at Committee meetings.

The District has been continuing to assist with the update of the County's Ag Plan. Sumner then asked Brown to give an update on the Ford's Farm.

Brown, D. Briggs (Ford's Nutrient Management Planner) and Jennifer Simpson met with Dean Ford Sr. and Jr. regarding CAFO and their environmental issues. The Fords brought in Cornell with hope that Cornell will aid in their environmental issues. Dean wants Karl Czymmek from Cornell (their pro dairy person) to come down and look at their water test results from the blue line streams their water empties into. Their test results showed double the phosphorous. Brown said that with CAFO, the #1 nutrient they look for is phosphorous. The Fords told Brown that they are still hoping to do some projects when the haylage comes off.

## **INTERAGENCY REPORTS**

**R. Baglia (CCE)** – Their new Equine Livestock person, Rachel Moody, started last week. Part of her involvement will be with the 4-H showcase. They are starting to work on infrastructures and roadways.

There has been a number of fundraisers such as Open House, a Barn Dance and the Duck Derby.

The Stormwater series has ended for this year. Estuary Resiliency Grant - they have a program tonight on forested wetlands for flood mitigation at the Dutchess Extension office.

They are still advertising for a veggie/produce person.

**J. Heller (NRCS)** – It was discussed at a previous Board Meeting that NRCS provides annual Civil Rights Training for employees. Heller asked Wong if she was going to provide this training to District Staff and she replied that she offered to provide the District with a Sexual Harassment policy. Heller printed out their Civil Rights Presentation (which would normally be put up on a screen) and handed it out to the Board and staff. He asked the Chairman if this would be acceptable and if anyone had questions they could feel free to approach Heller with them.

Cooperative Working Agreement – NRCS is seeking a signed Cooperative Working Agreement from Soil and Water Boards. A copy was given to the Chairman for review and it is up to the Board to decide if this will be signed. Heller said it was discussed at their last meeting about the importance of the possibility of District's to provide services to NRCS to offset the cost of rent. He said that DeGroodt does already perform some administrative functions for NRCS. Brown stated that the Technician in Ulster County does work mostly for NRCS. Heller said maybe we could look into how other Districts work with NRCS. Heller said that there are a lot of changes with NRCS and their administrative functions are now going to be regional. They will be starting to look at who pays and who does not. He wants to prepare everyone in advance in case rent will need to be paid.

Brown added that at the last Employees Association meeting, Dennis DeWeese and Don Pettit said that Districts that do not have a plan for rent should have one within two years. Some Districts are divorced from NRCS, they are totally separate. She said that a tech working via the cooperative working agreement would be spending most of their time working on NRCS projects depending on how the agreement is written. Heller said that it may be possible for NRCS to use Board Member's hours. NRCS can take credit for conservation technical assistance. A lot of work the District is already doing on farms can be claimed by NRCS and can be applied towards a working agreement.

Wright said that Sumner needs to review the plan. DeBlock suggested we let it ride for a while.

Sumner said if we need to pay rent then it might be better to look into paying it. Heller said he takes the working relationship between NRCS and SWCD very seriously and if the District wants to look more into paying NRCS rent instead of utilizing a working agreement, we can do that.

Sumner said we toured the CCE facility and there was enough room for the entire service center and there is also the option of the District moving without the Service Center. There have been previous discussions regarding co-locating. Sumner said that sometimes it's easier to pay rent and it doesn't mean we won't cooperatively work with NRCS. We have to budget for rent. Wright said that what we've done with NRCS in the past has worked. DeBlock said maybe we can figure out how many hours the District can claim and maybe we are already up to the rent amount.

There were approx. 40 EQIP applications out of which 15 were funded in Orange County. There were eight AMA Irrigation contracts funded.

EQIP had four activity plans (planning documents where they hire an outside contractor to write Nutrient Management Plans). There is Cover Crop on a variety of farms, mostly black dirt. They have some drainage improvements on a farm in Walden, NY. They have five or six Seasonal High Tunnels. Heller was able to procure approx. \$170,000.00 for Orange County for an irrigation project.

They are taking sign-ups for 2015.

Heller excused himself from the Meeting at 10:30 AM.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

The Draft Workplace Discrimination and Harassment Policy was Adopted on a Motion by Keeton, seconded by DeBlock. All in favor.

Wallkill Flood Project Update– The Stump Project is progressing on schedule. We would like to purchase seed to put down on the work area. The contractor is cutting the stumps and leaving them, on Saturday he plans on putting them in the dumpsters. The contractor may need an extra dumpster. Root systems are not being removed. Sumner said the contractor is looking into purchasing a brush hog attachment for his excavator so he can grade while mowing.

The SEQR letter went out. Sumner has a hard copy of the Environmental Assessment Form if anyone wanted to review it. Most of the land where these projects are being proposed is owned by the DEC. The deed is still in the name of the landowner but 90% of the land value is paid by DEC. Apparently Dave Church from the OC Planning Department had a conversation with Bill Rudge, Natural Resources Director at DEC, and Rudge told Church that DEC is considering several different possible approaches to the SEQR process. Sumner said the District wants to be the lead agency as it's our project and we can move things forward more quickly. The decision was made for the District to be the lead agency with our engineers doing the paperwork. Sumner mentioned that the engineers filled out the environmental assessment form and he reviewed it. He said there is one area of text in there where they describe what is going to be done with the soil excavated from the bench project. Previously there had been different options discussed such as a berm next to the bench, spreading it on fields (but fields are in flood plain) and also physically removing it from the flood plain. All options are still under discussion. The way it read in the assessment form language was that all soil would be removed from the flood plain. That is a significant statement to make. Sumner discussed this with the engineers and they didn't think the regulatory agencies would go along with the berm idea. Sumner said he's not fond of an unsightly 15 foot tall 60 foot wide berm but it's the cheapest way to do it. The engineers thought the berm might constrict the flood plain and it doesn't fit with the natural channel design. This will be a long on-going review until findings are accepted.

Baglia questioned if the soil is moved is it going to be tested for contaminants.

Ruszkiewicz excused himself from the Meeting at 10:56 AM.

RSR Mitigation Project – There was a Water Quality Coordinating Committee meeting and D. DePew, Town of Wallkill Supervisor, came and his tone was more agreeable. Several phone calls since he said he's going to bat for the District to get the money passed through to us.

**NEW BUSINESS**

The Draft Proposed 2015 Budget, previously emailed to Directors, was passed out for review.

DeBlock made the Motion to go into Executive Session to discuss matters that could lead to employment or promotion at 11:00 AM, seconded by Keeton. All in Favor.

The Board reconvened from Executive Session at 11:45 AM. It was noted that the Board was in favor of the proposed 2015 Budget draft presented by staff and the inclusion of a increased County Appropriation request to \$161,654. The increase is intended to improve the District's employee benefit package, but the exact details of these improvements will not be decided until the District receives feedback from the County regarding the appropriation request.

The **NEXT MEETING** is scheduled for Monday, July 21, 2014 at 9:00 AM.

The **MEETING** was adjourned at 11:50 AM on a Motion by DeBlock, seconded by Keeton. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine DeGroot  
Secretary to the Board