

MINUTES
ORANGE COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
February 26, 2024

The **MEETING** was **CALLED TO ORDER** by the Chairman at 9:06 AM. Directors P. DeBlock, J. Wright, G. Constable and B. Cheney were present along with K. Sumner (SWCD), E. King (SWCD), M. Held (SWCD), O. Velez-Juarbe (NRCS), and V. Bartow (NRCS.)

2024-2-1 Cheney made the Motion, DeBlock seconded, to approve January’s Board Meeting Minutes as written. All in favor.

ACTIONS TAKEN BETWEEN MEETINGS – Some bills were paid and are listed on the Bills for Board Approval.

CORRESPONDENCE

- Bank statements and Account Analyses were available for review.
- Letter from NYCDEA Requesting Donation for the National Conservation Foundation Envirothon
- Nuggets & Nibbles Winter 2024 Newsletter
- NYACD 2024 Legislative Day “Conservation at Work”
- Clear Waters Winter 2023 Issue- Magazine from the NY Water Environment Association, Inc
- Selective Insurance Policy Claims
- Letter from Blake Glover, NRCS State Conservationist, With an Update on the Financial Assistance Application

Sumner noted that the District has not received any collateral agreements since December 2023. Sumner told the Board that if the District does not receive them by March that we will contact our bank. The District received correspondence from Selective Insurance regarding our claims procedures. Sumner noted to the Board that the District received a letter from Blake Glover, an NRCS state conservationist, which stated that the District was not chosen to receive funding for the Walkill River Flood Control Project. This decision was based upon the findings of their Preliminary Investigation Findings Report (PIFR.) The District initially agreed to work with NRCS to see if they could sponsor the Walkill River Flood Control Project as a major project. Sumner informed the Board that he will discuss this ruling in further detail during his update to the Board. Sumner distributed Ben Luskin’s report from the State Soil & Water Committee for the Board to review.

FINANCIAL REPORTS

Sumner admitted that he was initially worried about our revenues, but that the District finally received our first quarter appropriation check from the County last week. Although the first quarter check is not reflected in the January report, the Board will see it come February’s financial report. Sumner noted that he and King updated the dedicated fund summary on the receipts page. Sumner noted that the District is still carrying the \$30,000 from the Carbon Farming Project and from Climate Resilient Farming, CRF, Round 5 expenses. Per Sumner, with the arrival of the first quarter check, the District is okay now cash flow wise. The District is waiting on the State to close out the older grants to pay for them. Sumner pointed out the newly added AEM Round 18 and the three CRF projects on the

bottom half of the dedicated fund summary to the Board. The District started to charge staff time to those grants while they wait for contract paperwork to be approved by the State. Sumner clarified that the District will not be starting any of these projects until they receive a contract and advanced payment.

2024-2-2 DeBlock made the Motion, Constable seconded, to file January's Financial Reports for audit review. All in favor.

BILLS FOR BOARD APPROVAL

DeBlock asked Sumner to clarify what the two coupons offered by the New York State Conservation District Employees' Association, NYSCDEA, covers for the Water Quality Symposium. Sumner noted that King and Held's hotel and food expenses while at the conference are covered by the two coupons. Any travel expenses or meal purchases incurred on the road are not covered under the coupons.

2024-2-3 Cheney made the Motion, DeBlock seconded, to pay the bills as presented. All in favor.

Sumner mentioned to the Board that the District recently received a few invoices from the Floodplain Bench Project which was substantially completed in 2023. Sumner reminded the Board that the District held back 25% on one of the contractor's larger bills. Sumner informed the Board that the same contractor completed more work and billed the District further. Sumner will work to arrange another payment for him now that the District received the bill from the County. Additionally, Sumner stated that the County completed the 'As Built' survey. One of the contract provisions is that the quantities of soil excavation will be measured at the completion of the project. These findings can affect the final project payment. Per Sumner, the contractor's initial bid was based on a projected certain number of cubic yards of excavation. In Sumner's experience, these findings tend to be accurate. There will be a pre and post comparison of the land surface to determine the actual quantity of soil handled. The final payment to the contractor will be adjusted as necessary based on this comparison.

GRANT REPORT UPDATE –Sumner highlighted recent grant activity in red ink to bring attention to recent updates. Sumner informed the Board that moving forward he will update the total cash match for the various grants monthly on the grant report. Sumner reminded the Board that if there is more of a local match to the State funds requested, it helps us with our ranking when applying for competitive grants. Sumner noted though that it is important to keep track to prevent overspending. Sumner reported that the District has almost \$100k committed to the local cash match for these projects. Sumner noted that these projects typically happen over a two-three-year period so there is luckily no rush for payment. However, we need to keep these commitments in mind to make sure that we have enough in the reserve to match these local cash match. Sumner noted that there has been some delay from the State when it comes to turnarounds on contracts and grant payments. Since the State is heading into the 'Blackout Period', due to the state budget reviewal, the State will not be processing payments for the next few months. Sumner expects that the District will receive contracts for the Climate Resilient Farming grants and the opportunity to request advance payments in the next few months. Cheney mentioned that the District could always request an advance payment from the County.

INTERAGENCY REPORTS

FSA: DeBlock stated that FSA is currently working on issuing funds from Emergency Relief Program applications. DeBlock explained that if a producer experienced crop loss between 2020-2021 that they qualify for payment. DeBlock noted that although the work is done through FSA, the IRS is ultimately the agency that provides the funding.

NRCS: Velez-Juarbe introduced Bartow as the new Natural Resource Specialist at NRCS's Middletown branch. Velez-Juarbe mentioned that there may be two additional employees hired this year in Middletown. Velez-Juarbe stated

that they have seven preapproved projects for EQUIP under the Act Now program. These include high tunnel, forestry, irrigation, and management plan applications. NRCS has an additional seventeen projects that they need to finish ranking by 3/1/24. DeBlock asked Velez-Juarbe to explain what a typical NRCS forestry project looks like. Velez-Juarbe explained that producers need a forest management plan which NRCS helps provide funding for. Technical service providers draft the plan which indicates what practices the foresters will be doing on the property. Velez-Juarbe stated that such practices include tree planting, thinning, and invasive species control. Once it is approved by NRCS, the producer sends in another application. These projects are cost shareable and there is no minimum amount of forests needed to qualify for funding.

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

STAFF REPORTS

Written staff reports were emailed to the Board prior to the meeting for review

M. Held (SWCD)- Held submitted her staff report via email to the Board prior to the meeting. Held noted that she is still waiting to hear from the State regarding close out materials and contracts that were submitted a few weeks earlier. Per Held, there is still one farm that needs to complete soil testing in CRF Round 6. Regarding CRF Round 7, Held received an updated plan and quote for the Wright Family Farm project which the District is reviewing.

E. King (SWCD)- King submitted her staff report via email to the Board prior to the meeting. King reported to the Board that she oversaw many yearly submissions to the IRS and SSA since the last board meeting. King worked with Sumner to update the 2024 salary table. Recently King began working with Sumner and Held on several new projects. King confirmed with a NYS Retirement employee that the District no longer needs to pay a projected invoice for Travis Ferry that they received in 2023. King has it in writing that there is no balance on Ferry's account and that the District is not expected to pay the projected invoice.

K. Sumner (SWCD)- Sumner submitted his staff report via email to the Board prior to the meeting. Review "Old and New Business" for further information.

Before beginning his report, Sumner noted the challenges of keeping up with all the on-line reporting and related technological quirks, and that King has been very diligent in this regard. Using the Ferry NYS Retirement bill as an example, we received conflicting information about this bill from NYSLRS and could have ended up paying around \$5,000 un-necessarily if King had not pursued the matter until we finally got the 'in-writing' notice King mentioned in her report.

OLD & NEW BUSINESS

Floodplain Bench Phase 4 South— Sumner noted that decent working conditions allowed for the culverts to be installed. If the landowner signs off on the road conditions being better than prior to the project, then there should not be additional expenses incurred. Sumner reminded the Board that the District did not plant all the trees this year, but in hindsight it was for the best due to the poor weather conditions. Sumner will assess the survival rate and other factors in the spring and then decide if it is prudent time to plant more trees. The County surveyors are working now on the post project map and once that is completed it will be sent to Barton & Loguidice, B&L, Engineering to calculate the quantities.

Floodplain Bench Phase 4 North- Sumner met with the landowner and the farmer to discuss 2024's flood project. Per Sumner, it was a good meeting overall. Considerable discussion took place regarding how the landowner would be compensated for the floodplain bench project. Since there are approximately 16 acres affected (from the outside of the bench to the center of the river), this is a substantial matter. The landowner indicated he would be amenable to a

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Conservation Easement on the area as opposed to an outright sale of the area (which would involve the extra expenses associated with a subdivision). Sumner summarized to the landowner payments we made on past phases of the project. Given the amount of time that has elapsed since we researched comparable sales initially (in 2016), it is probably prudent to update that research. Cheney suggested that Sumner speak to Paul Riley, from the Office of Real Property. The Office of Real Property assisted the District in estimating comparable land values in 2016. Sumner will reach out to Wiley to see if they can assist. Cheney believes that there is a process the Board needs to go through and that the Board needs to utilize the information regarding the appraisal to make an educated decision.

DeBlock suggested that while Real Property gathers the information to update Walter's appraisal that they also do Chip Lain's. Sumner reported that the District has not brokered a deal yet with Chip Lain for the southside of the river from the Phase 4 South project. Sumner does not know how much that deal will cost.

The landowner gave the District permission to cut trees despite not having a formal agreement yet on the purchase price. Sumner informed the Board of the risk associated with not coming to an agreement with the landowner first and potentially incurring the expenses of the tree removal should a deal not be struck. Brian Ford has agreed to be a sponsor of the project which means that he would hire the contractor and the District would reimburse him in the future. Brian Ford has signed the contract, and the contractor is ready to go. A contract is also needed between the District and the farmer, stating specifically that the District will reimburse him. The template that was referred to when drafting this contract was previously reviewed by Richard Hoyt. Sumner brought the tree cutting contracts today for the Board to review and sign. Wright asked Sumner to discuss the bids the farmer received for the tree removal. The District requested proposals from three contractors: CEC Excavating, Gurda Landscaping, and Jeff Sniffen Construction. Sumner reported that Sniffen Construction did not return a proposal, Gurda Landscaping quoted \$62,500, and CEC Excavating quoted \$37,500. Due to the positive experiences with CEC Excavating in the past, Sumner does not think there is any reason to pass over the low bid. Additionally, Sumner asked the contractors for an alternate bid for only half the project only because he was unsure if the District would have enough funds to complete the Phase 4 North project. Sumner believes that it is more cost effective to do the whole project rather than half of the tree cutting.

Sumner wants to get the full Phase Four North Construction project out to bid ASAP so potential contractors will not have their summer schedules booked already.

2024-2-4- Wright made the Motion, DeBlock seconded, to endorse the farm's decision to accept the low bid from CEC Excavating and sign the contract with Brian Ford. All in favor.

Sumner stated that the trees need to be cut down by 3/31/24, but that they can be processed afterwards. Sumner stated that CEC should start work this week once they are informed of the Board decision.

*Sumner and Wright both signed the contract with Brian Ford.

Quaker Creek- Sumner provided the Board with an update on the farmers in the Black Dirt who are undertaking a project on Quaker Creek. Sumner noted that the farmers are continuing the work on their own. Sumner reminded the Board that the farmers asked, via Rob Schreibeis, if the District would be willing to restart the Celery Avenue Ledge Lowering Project. Sumner reported that he did not hear anything concrete from Schreibeis as to whether the County would help fund the project. This information would be beneficial for the District to know prior to the District giving B&L the go ahead to spend money on reviving the permit application. Sumner noted that Schreibeis is currently speaking to County representatives. Moving forward, Cheney will contact Schreibeis to obtain updates on the progression of the project. Schreibeis wants Sumner to visit Quaker Creek and see the farmer's progress so far. Sumner admitted that he is ambivalent as to whether he should see the project or not since the District is not formally involved. The Board unanimously advised that Sumner does not go out to the site where the farmers are digging out the ditch. The Board advised against this to avoid any false claims that the District condones this project.

Sumner asked the Board if they want B&L to begin the permit renewal process. B&L quoted the District \$3,000 to restart the permit application. Per Sumner, the permits are submitted to the DEC and are good for three years. Sumner is unsure whether the District needs to renew a Corp of Engineers permit which only lasts for a year. Sumner reminded the Board that he is unable to file the permits needed due to his current workload. Cheney asked Sumner where the funds would come from to pay for B&L. Sumner explained that on paper the District would take it out of the Part C account. Sumner noted to keep in mind that the Part C fund can cover the \$3,000 expense, but that there is additional money committed to other projects. Sumner estimated the Celery Ledge Project would cost between \$50,000-\$500,000. The wide estimate factors in unfavorable weather conditions, a stop work order issued from neighbors, etc. These are all factors that a contractor takes into consideration before settling on a deal. Sumner stated that Schreiber is aware of the projected \$500,000 project cost.

Sumner reported that under previous administration, the Town of Wawayanda gave their approval for the Celery Ledge Project. Construction would occur primarily from the Wawayanda side of the Creek since there is easier access to the river. Sumner and DeBlock discussed previous pushback from the Town of Goshen regarding this project. There have been previous concerns that knocking the ledge out would lower the water table and affect crop growth. Sumner explained previous testing that collected data from the Creek and 300ft into the field using piezometers. The findings revealed that the water level in the Creek is independent to the water table level in the adjacent fields. Per Sumner, removing four feet of the rock ledge will still leave a substantial rock ledge and a ponded section of river will still occur upstream from the ledge site. Sumner believes that the project will have modest impact on flooding, but will help more when it comes to drainage. Sumner and DeBlock agreed that it is important to remove the trees further down the Creek and stop people dumping off Filomena Drive. Sumner reiterated that the District applied twice to the Climate Resilient Farming grant, but was denied both times. Sumner does not see the Celery Ledge project ranking high in the CRF ranking process as is, but having the permits and approved design could help our ranking. Sumner noted that the CRF program does not take rolling applications. Cheney proposed that the District negotiate with the County about including a commitment of County funding in our application to the CRF grant. The Board agreed that receiving payment from both the CRF grant and the County would be ideal.

2024-2-5- Wright made the Motion, Cheney seconded, to pay the \$3,000 to B&L to begin the permit application for the Celery Avenue Ledge Lowering Project. All in favor.

Discussion of Denial Letter from NRCS- Sumner expressed his dissatisfaction with the reasons listed in the letter from Blake Glover, the NRCS State Conservationist. Glover stated that *“The District does not have control over the bridge that is required to be replaced for the actionable alternatives to be viable.”* The bridge in question is the Oil City Road Bridge which is upstream from the project, and in conjunction with the raised Oil City Road profile acts like a dam. Glover claimed that the bridge needs to be replaced since the capacity of the bridge opening is less than the capacity of the floodway that the District is proposing to build. Sumner and the Board remarked that if the bridge were to be replaced it would likely increase the likelihood of flooding. The ‘finding’ that this bridge would need to be replaced in order for the proposed flood mitigation project to be viable seemed very questionable. Sumner questioned why NRCS agreed to even sponsor this investigation in the first place since they contradicted themselves regarding the District’s ability to express eminent domain. Initially, NRCS instructed the District to prepare to exercise eminent domain if the farmers don’t accept the appraisal offer, only for NRCS to rule that the District does not have the power to exercise eminent domain.

Federal Flood Control Project- Sumner informed the Board that he mailed the town supervisors involved with the Walkkill River Federal Flood Control Project a maintenance agreement report a few weeks ago. Ruskiewicz reached out to Sumner and suggested that he schedule an in-person meeting since three new town supervisors were appointed since the last meeting. The advisory committee on the flood project is meeting on 3/1/24 at 9:00am. Sumner invited the Board of Directors to attend this meeting and meet the new supervisors. Sumner assumes that Cheney and Ruskiewicz will be there representing the County. Sumner did not invite anyone from the DPW even

though they are the formal administrator of the agreement. Sumner will invite Schreibeis to attend the meeting on 3/1/24. Sumner reported that he has not heard from the Town of Minisink, but the Town of Goshen and Warwick can attend. The town supervisor of Wawayanda has a conflict in her schedule, but Sumner recommended that she send someone else in her stead.

Sumner would like to leave the meeting with more flexibility on what the District can use the funding for. Sumner remarked that working with CEC Excavating, who has proven to be a very efficient, private sector contractor, has allowed the District to maintain the river at a lower annual cost compared to when the County used a DPW crew. Sumner noted that there were a few years where the District spent less than \$20,000 of the existing funds. Sumner would like to allocate funds towards repairing the riverbank where trees fall and pull a section of the bank into the river with it. Sumner ideally wants the supervisors to be receptive to more expenses so long as the District is on top of the standard tree removal practices. Additionally, Sumner would like them to agree on upkeeping the Pellets Island Project especially where the easements are.

Work Commitments & Projects- Sumner provided the Board with a summary of the twenty construction projects the District is currently working on. The projects vary in workload, but the responsibilities will be shared by Sumner, King, and Held. Sumner admitted that the District is very focused on the farm projects which makes it challenging to dedicate time to other kinds of programming i.e. education, environmental stewardship, and tree & shrub program.

Simpson Project- Sumner reported that he and Held visited Devin Simpson's farm in Deer Park a few weeks ago. Sumner informed the Board that Simpson previously had a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan, CNMP, done which was prepared by a private sector planner. The CNMP identifies potential projects and helps make it eligible for the District to assign funding. In addition to his bedded pack barn project, Simpson wants to address silage leachate control from his bunk silos. Sumner felt that we could manage the expenses for that through the AEM Round 18 funding. There is approximately \$200,000 available in Round 18. Sumner and Held confirmed that \$115,000 was allocated in January for Tier Four projects from Round 18 AEM: Minkus, Hoyt, Minkus. Sumner's cost estimate for the silage leachate control project is \$45,000 in state money. The \$45,000 does not include the landowner's contribution. Sumner asked the Board to approve adding the Simpson Project to the AEM Tier 4 funding for \$45,000.

2024-2-6- DeBlock made the Motion, Constable seconded, to approve adding the Simpson Silage Leachate Control Project to the AEM Tier 4 funding for \$45,000. All in favor.

Discussion of Envirothon Donation- DeBlock proposed donating \$1,000 to the 2024 National Envirothon Competition instead of the requested \$3,000. Sumner does not believe that Orange County is sending a team to the Envirothon Competition.

2024-2-7 DeBlock made the motion, Cheney seconded, to donate \$1,000 to the 2024 National Envirothon Competition held in NY. All in favor.

Reviewal of Policies- Per Cheney's request last month, Sumner distributed the District's policies with the Board members prior to today's meeting. Sumner asked the Board if they had any questions or concerns regarding the policies. Constable noted that there is a needed correction on the FOIL page which concerns updating the former office manager's email address. Cheney noted that under the Provisions of Employment the wording needs to be changed from 'personnel' to *Department of Human Resources*. Under the Public Relations & Employee Conduct section, it currently states that 'An employee should not engage in extensive private or political activities while on the job.' Cheney proposed changing political to *Private or Non-district Activities* so it is a broader definition. Cheney requested to speak to King or Sumner privately to discuss his additional changes. DeBlock advised King and Held to review the HATCH Act and understand that as an employee they cannot endorse a specific campaign or political party since their job benefits from public funds. DeBlock informed the Board that the County no longer has Election Day off, but instead has Juneteenth off. The Board gave approval for Sumner, King, and Held to decide what day to have off

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and set the policy. After some discussion, the three decided to work Election Day and have the day after Thanksgiving off. Cheney proposed that the District take Juneteenth off and work Lincoln's Birthday. Cheney suggested that we strike the 'Orange County Government List of Holidays' and instead categorize it as the *District's Holidays*. Sumner stated that the Board can review the policies changes at the next Board meeting in March.

Sumner mentioned that the letter the Board sent to the State regarding Sumner's cover crop advisory certification is on the agenda for the State Soil & Water Committee meeting tomorrow. Sumner intends on attending the meeting tomorrow and will report back to the Board on the Committee's ruling.

Next meeting date: March 18th

ADJOURNMENT

2024-2-8 DeBlock made the motion, seconded by Cheney, to adjourn the meeting at 11:06AM. All in favor.

Minutes Prepared By:

Emily King, Secretary to the Board

February, 2024

Walkkill Flood Projects –

Floodplain Bench Phase 4 South – Culverts have been installed, and road repairs completed. We will ask the landowner to ‘sign off’ on the road conditions being as good or better than pre-project.

We did not plant all the smaller trees called for in the planting plan last fall, so we will be planning some additional plantings at some point. It may be prudent to see how the fall plantings fare before doing additional plantings.

County Surveyors have completed their field work for the ‘as-built’ and Conservation Easement survey. Tom Barry is working on map preparation. Once completed, we will forward the as built survey to B&L for calculation of actual cubic yardage excavated which may result in an adjusted final payment.

Floodplain Bench Phase 4 North

I met with the landowner and farmer who operates the land. We generally reached agreement on key aspects of the project. I want to discuss payments to the landowner for land consumed by the project with the Board. The farmer, Brian Ford, agreed to ‘sponsor’ the project (following the model we use for NYS-funded projects, the farmer will hire the contractor and we will reimburse the farmer). The landowner is agreeable with this arrangement.

We solicited tree cutting proposals on behalf of the sponsoring farms. I will review the proposals we received with the Board at the meeting. We hope to see that work start the week of 2/26.

Other Flood Control Items

Rob Schreibeis from CE office asked me if I wanted to view the work being done on Quaker Creek by a group of farmers.

Regarding the possibility of reviving the Celery Avenue Ledge Lowering project, do we want to authorize B&L to proceed with permitting?

Carbon Farming Project – Close out materials for DeBuck Controlled Drainage and Southway Compost Facility have been submitted to Ben at NYSSWCC. We are still waiting for feedback on the materials we submitted. We are getting concerned that we are getting close to the 60 day post-contract period by which many funding agreements require all close out procedures to be completed.

AEM Round 17 – We are waiting for feedback on project close out materials submitted. We have been told that review will not happen before the State’s ‘black out period’.

AEM Round 18 – Contract documents were received, signed, and returned to Albany. We have a 4th farm project we would like to fund from Round 18 Implementation funds. The farm is Devon Simpson in Deerpark. We will discuss in more detail at the meeting.

CRF Round 7 – Work Plan materials for all three projects has been submitted to NYSSWCC – awaiting contracts. All staff are working to advance these projects while we await funding.

NRCS – ‘PIFR’ for Wallkill Flood Control Measures

See Correspondence. I am not inclined to appeal or formally respond to the rejection of this project. But I note at least two very questionable aspects of the reasons provided for rejection of the project.

- 1) *“Sponsor does not have control over the bridge that is required to be replaced for the actionable alternatives to be viable. Prior to advancing, NRCS requires assurance that this bridge will be replaced by the owner (at the owner’s expense) to accommodate this project, and written assurance that the replacement will occur prior to the implementation of this Watershed Project’s start of construction”.*

This finding is foolish, in my opinion, since the Oil City Road bridge is upstream of all Orange County farm drainage. Even above the bridge, there is no farming – it is in the Refuge. In fact, the bridge opening more likely benefits farm drainage by acting like a controlled release, with floodwaters detained behind Oil City Road.

- 2) *“The Soil and Water Conservation District does not have the power of eminent domain or power to levy taxes. An eligible Sponsor that meets all program requirements will need to be obtained. “*

The issue of eminent domain was discussed early in the ‘PIFR’ process, and we were reminded by NRCS that would need to be prepared to exercise eminent domain if necessary. So it seems highly questionable that the rejection letter now states that we do not have the power of eminent domain. If we do not have this power, why was the project accepted for study in the first place?

I find it a shame that public dollars were expended on a study that produced such poorly arrived at conclusions.

Wallkill Federal Flood Control Project Maintenance

A meeting of the ‘Advisory Committee’ as defined in the Agreement between the County and four towns has been scheduled for Friday March 1st at 9AM. A report was sent previous to the meeting scheduling.

Projects Status List

I prepared a list of projects we are currently engaged with. We have approximately 23 construction projects and several other non-construction projects in play. The list includes status summaries and ‘next steps’ to facilitate all staff helping to move projects forward. This list does not include numerous project ‘close-outs’ that are currently in progress and that consume extensive amounts of time to satisfy NYS funding agreement requirements. This identified workload needs to be considered as requests for new projects are received.

Other

‘Sign Offs’ on Soil Health Practices – Our Letter is on the NYSSWCC Agenda for their February meeting (2/27).

Emily King

February 26, 2024

To the Board of Directors,

Shortly after January's meeting, I finished preparing the 1099 forms for our farmers and subcontractors. It took me a while, due to high user activity, but I successfully submitted the 1099 forms on the IRS's E-filing service. Additionally, I mailed the W-2 forms to the Social Security Administration, SSA. I registered with the SSA to file the W-2 forms online in the future. Throughout this process, I was able to contact other district office managers for help. A large email chain was created months ago for the district office managers which has proven to be very resourceful. I recently contacted the group to find out if any of the districts have a data breach policy that our district could adopt. I shared the ones I received with Kevin for review.

I spoke with a representative from the NYS Local Retirement System, NYSLRS, to confirm whether the District must pay a 2024 estimated invoice for Travis Ferry. Per the representative, there is no remaining balance on Travis Ferry's account and the District does not need to pay the estimated invoice. She explained that NYSLRS collects enrollee data from April – March of each year. In June of each year, NYSLRS provides the estimated invoice based on the monthly payments made between April – March to offer participants a chance to pay ahead of time. Lastly, I confirmed with her that Travis Ferry's retirement plan, through our district, was cancelled in June 2022.

Additionally, I mailed a letter to Susan Cabrera detailing her monthly health insurance payments. I received approval from Kevin prior to doing so.

I updated the 2024 salary budget and made appropriate adjustments based on our recent cost of living increase. I updated various folders/binders for 2024 and filed away documents from 2023. Over the course of the month, Ben Luskin reached out to Kevin and I with corrections to the Part A report.

February allowed me to gain more experience with providing farmers information regarding soil group worksheets. I corresponded with farmers via email and phone. I received valuable guidance from Mary and Kevin as to what questions to ask and how it works.

I created ledgers on Excel spreadsheets for the new CRF, AgNPS, and AEM Round 18 grants. Additionally, I updated the existing grant ledgers and subsequently the Dedicated Fund Summary.

I corresponded with our contact at Sidle Insurance to address a recent bill that conflicted with our adopted quarterly payments. I also obtained a copy of our workmans' compensation and disability certificate from Sidle Insurance which was needed for our AEM Round 18 submission. I closely monitored the District's checkbook balance and kept Kevin updated on it. Prior to receiving the County's 1st Quarter Appropriation check, I made internal transfers online to ensure that there were sufficient funds.

Kevin, Mary, and I met to assign responsibilities and discuss the progress of several projects. I spoke with Richard Wieboldt this past week to gauge his interest in moving forward with his AgNPS Round 27 project. Wieboldt explained that he needs to consider the project expenses once more, but that he will let us know if he is still interested in a week or so. I left a voicemail with Robert Brady asking him to call me to discuss any additional requests he has for his access

control project. I contacted Shuback Farms to let them know that I have emailed vendors asking for a quote on a Hosereel Mounted Boom irrigator and the accompanying equipment.

I began working on the Hartford Insurance Company's yearly audit which is due March 5th. I created an Excel spreadsheet that includes the necessary data and an explanation for how I gathered this information. I contacted our subcontractors and requested a copy of their workmans' compensation certificate of insurance. I am waiting for a response from PKF O'Connor Davies, the audit firm the District uses, to find out what materials I can prepare for them and when exactly they are coming. As always, please feel free to reach out to me with any questions or concerns. Thank you for your time.

OCSWCD Technician Update

2/23/2024

Since the last board meeting, many more soil group worksheets have come in. We are nearing the end of the line and rapidly approaching March 1st (!!!). Between the soil group worksheets, there have been several grant updates.

CRF Update:

Round 6: There have been no recent updates in CRF round 6 since the last board meeting. I am still waiting for better weather to get the last of the soil testing accomplished.

Round 7: We have split into three parts to get a handle of all the Round 7 paperwork to be completed. Emily has been working on the materials for Kevin Shuback's equipment quotes. I requested an updated quote and plan from Brookdale Farm's Zoe Stapp regarding the change in the water source for John Wright's irrigation system – we have received the updated quote and plan reflecting the changes. Kevin has mostly taken the lead in the Crist Bros procurement documents, but I have been working to satisfy the AEM Tier 3 requirements for the farm.

HVCFP Update:

Drafts of closeout materials for DeBuck and Southway were submitted to AEA Ben Luskin for approval before final submission. It has been almost 2 months since we heard back from him on either of these closeouts, and we are approaching the 60-days-since-completion deadline. We have encouraged him to get back to us on the matter but have not received any guidance regarding critiques or changes to be made.

AGNPS Update:

Round 27: Contract End Date: March 2025

- Weibolt: Emily has reached out to assess landowner's intentions to complete compost shed and fuel tanks project.
- Soudant: We have mailed and called to inquire about his intentions to complete his barnyard and fuel tanks project but have yet to receive a response.
- Vellenga: Still need to determine LO's intention to complete stream crossing and silage leachate control project.
- Marty Lain: We are working to close out this project. I am currently collecting closeout materials (receipts, proofs of payment) with the help of the landowner and vendors. Once those materials are acquired, we can approach Ben about other closeout requirements.
- Chris Van Aken: From Kevin- Last LO interaction indicated he does not want to proceed. Given lack of O&M on barnyard project, it is probably best to consider this milkhouse wash water project cancelled.

Round 29: All farmers with signed SWCD/LO contracts have been submitted to Ben, who has submitted them for further processing. We're still waiting for a contract.

AEM Update:

Round 17: Round 17 closeout materials were submitted to Ben for review in early February. We submitted well before the blackout date which begins at the end of February, but this package has met the same fate as the Carbon Farming Project grant. Thankfully, we are not sitting on a ton of money for AEM Rd 17, so it is not a major loss to the district to not have these funds for some time.

Round 18: Materials for farmers in our Tier 4 track (Minkus, Minkus, Hoyt, and Simpson [if approved by the Board]) are being updated continuously to satisfy AEM and engineering requirements. We will need a motion to allocate Tier 4 funding to Simpson for his silage leachate control system.