

**MINUTES**  
**ORANGE COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT**  
**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**  
**September 21, 2020**

The **MEETING** was **CALLED TO ORDER** by the Chairman at 9:09 AM. Directors J. Wright, P. Ruskiewicz, P. DeBlock and G. Constable along with K. Sumner, T. Ferry and C. DeGroot (SWCD) were present at the office. A. Armlin-Sorgen (NRCS) joined remotely.

**2020-9-1 Ruskiewicz made the Motion, DeBlock seconded, to approve August's Board Meeting Minutes as written. All in favor.**

**ACTIONS TAKEN BETWEEN MEETINGS** – There were some bills paid that were already added to the list of Bills for Board Approval.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

- The bank statements and collateral agreements are available for review at the District office.
- The District received a letter from the New York State Soil and Water Conservation Committee acknowledging receipt of the final report for our round 20 grant.
- The District sent a letter to Green Farmland clarifying some of the last minute details on the next phase of the flood project.
- The District sent a letter to Steve Cruz regarding a possible Fee Waiver on his no-till bill. The District has not heard back from Mr. Cruz.
- We received a letter from County Executive Steve Neuhaus appointing John Wright to the At-Large position on the Board and a copy of the Legislature's Resolution which formalized it.
- The District received a memo from the New York State Association of Conservation Districts regarding their virtual fall annual meeting and some other updates.

**FINANCIAL REPORTS** – Financial reports were reviewed. Sumner mentioned that the District has an unobligated fund balance of ~68,000.00. Most of the receipts that the District has been counting on to get to the end of the year have come in. There are still a few payments we are waiting for from the state. Ruskiewicz inquired about the no-till receivables. Sumner said that it looks high because one receivable was for approximately \$2,000.00.

**2020-9-2 DeBlock made the Motion, Wright seconded, to file August's 2020 Financial Report for audit review. All in favor.**

**BILLS FOR BOARD APPROVAL** – The list of bills was reviewed by the Board. Ruskiewicz inquired about the bill from Rebecca Pry Illustrator & Designer. Sumner explained that the District received \$2,500.00 as part of an Environmental Benefit Payment Settlement Agreement for violations that occurred in the Moodna watershed. The District is holding this money for the Moodna Creek Watershed Intermunicipal Council and they are using it for a variety of educational kiosks. As their designer does the work, the District pays her directly until the money is used up.

There was a brief discussion on a bill Sumner is asking for Board approval to pay. The bill is from Dean Ford in the amount of \$800 for mowing property owned by Green Farmland. This is the area where we're going to be putting the dirt from the next phase of the flood project. Sumner had asked Green Farmland to mow to area but they said they were too busy. The project contractor said if it wasn't mowed it would be difficult for him to chisel plow it.

**2020-9-3 DeBlock made the Motion, Ruskiewicz seconded, to accept the Bills to be Paid including the bill from Dean Ford in the amount of \$800.00. All in favor.**

**Grant Update Reports** – There has been no activity to report on the ag grants.

## **INTERAGENCY REPORTS**

**Armlin-Sorgen (NRCS)** – NRCS has 14 contracts for EQIP for 2020 that were all obligated. And are still taking applications for the second round of EQIP for 2021.

## **STAFF REPORTS**

Written staff reports were emailed to Board Members prior to the Meeting for review.

**C. DeGroot (SWCD)** – DeGroot attended a webinar taught by Jennifer Hanson from the New York State Employer Education Department. DeGroot mentioned that there's going to be New York State Retirement payroll paperwork that will need to be filled out every month online. Hanson advised that the District have a Standard Workday Resolution For Employees approved at the Board Meeting.

**T. Ferry (SWCD)** - The Conservation Skills Workshop was last week via webinar and there were some good topics.

**Farm Service Agency** – The CFAP 1 (Coronavirus Food Assistance Program) ended on September 11, 2020. CFAP 2 starts today and has some extra crops added to it and changes to livestock. Staff have a training on CFAP 2 this coming Wednesday.

**K. Sumner (SWCD)** – Sumner gave an update on the Mill Street erosion site, which he has reported about previously. It's a very tall, dangerous slope, next to the Moodna Creek in Cornwall, in which he has been trying to drum up some interest in addressing. There's a County road at the top of the hill that would be threatened if the slope moves back any further. At first, the County was saying that if it was up to them they'd probably just move the road rather than fix the slope. But it sounds like they're starting to get more of an interest in trying to do something more permanent. Sumner has had a couple of exchanges with the DPW Commissioner about moving that forward. Recently the County Emergency Management Department sent out a notice about some hazard mitigation grant funding that's available. Sumner has tried to explore funding with the emergency management department and hasn't gotten too far. But he thought if the DPW contacted them they might be a little bit more responsive. There's usually substantial funding and it seems to fit the definition of an impending hazard.

Sumner wanted to discuss a no-till user with the Board. This user has used the equipment before and has often been late paying and tries to avoid paying interest charges. This user used the equipment last year and as of a week ago, when he called to use it again, he had still not paid his bill from last year. He was told he had to pay his late bill including the interest before he could rent the equipment, which he did. Normally, somebody that's a year behind on paying their bill would be made to prepay before they use it again. Discussion followed regarding the Fee Waiver. It was decided that after he is done with the equipment, a bill will be sent to the user along with a form he can sign certifying that he derives his primary income from farm products. But we will also emphasize that people that don't pay their bills until the next time they want to use the equipment will in the future be required to pre-pay or will be made ineligible for the equipment.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

**Bench Phase 3, Area 1 Project Update** – The project has started. There was some prep work last week - some mowing and some mobilization and they're starting full tilt down there today. The DEC's been notified and the District has been in communication with the landowners. If the weather holds out for us and we don't get winter coming really early we should be in good shape there.

**Bench Phase 4 Update** – The District is hoping to receive funding from Round 5 of the Climate Resilient Farming grant, which is going to support Phase 4. The governor has still not authorized formal notice of those awards so we're in a holding pattern on that. Sumner had hoped that we could get our environmental consultant started this fall on the wetland delineation work, because it gets more difficult to do that after the plants aren't there to identify. But the District has to front the money for

that. Depending on the cost, we might be able to move forward. Sumner is trying to reach the consultant but has not heard back yet. Discussion followed.

**2020-9-4 Wright made the Motion, DeBlock seconded, to pay Griggs ERS Consultants up to \$5,000 for land delineation field work. All in favor.**

**Celery Ledge Project** – Nothing new to report.

**Carbon Farming Project Update** – This contract is between New York State and Dutchess County Soil & Water and is being held up for state funds. Dutchess SWCD vouchered for 90% of the total project amount. Sumner was told by our Albany people that it's in queue for payment this month. He has not heard yet if they received it, but we're being optimistic and hoping it's going to happen. So Sumner went ahead and submitted a reimbursement request to Dutchess County for ~\$74,000.00. \$7,000.00 of that was for staff time and the rest was mainly advance money on the construction projects that we're supposed to be doing.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

The District's 2021 Annual Plan of Work was reviewed by the Board.

**2020-9-5 DeBlock made the Motion, Ruskiewicz seconded, to approve the District's 2021 Annual Plan of Work. All in favor.**

The Directors Training Plans were reviewed and approved by the Directors in attendance. There was discussion on Director attendance at Board Meetings.

The Standard Workday Resolution for Employees was presented for Board approval.

**2020-9-6 Ruskiewicz made the Motion, Constable seconded, to approve the Standard Workday Resolution for Employees. All in favor.**

The next **MEETING** is scheduled for **Monday, October 19, 2020 at 9:00 AM.**

**2020-9-7 The Meeting adjourns at 9:57 AM on a Motion by DeBlock, seconded by Ruskiewicz. All in favor.**

Minutes Prepared By:

Christine DeGroot, Secretary to the Board

### **C. DeGroot Board Meeting**

#### **Activities August 13, 2020 – September 17, 2020**

- We currently have \$253 cash awards on the rewards credit cards.
- Typed last month's Board Meeting transcript.
- There is a new system for paying the monthly health insurance payments. Online training for Health Benefits Administrators was on 8/24/20.
- A new bank account was set up for AEM Year 16 at M&T Bank.
- 9/10/20 - Attended a webinar taught by Jennifer Hampson, NYSLRS Employer Education Dept. on how to fill out the monthly NYS Retirement payroll paperwork online. We should be getting our user ID and password to log into the NYS Retirement system soon. Additional forms to "opt out" were signed by Sumner and DeGroot (still need one from O'Dell). A Standard Work Day Resolution for Employees needs to be approved by the Board. Hampson stated that the District will be required to have the "opt out" forms and Resolution on file when we are audited by the Comptroller's Office.
- Organizing computer files.
- 9/15/20 - Participated in the NYS Comptroller's webinar (archives).
- 9/16/20 – O'Connor Davies online data risk management training.
- Submitted Claims for Payment for the AG NPS RD 20 Farm Runoff Control Grant and the Ag NPS RD 22 grant.

## TF September Board Meeting Activity Summary

- Currently taking webinars for the Conservation Skills workshop. Topics include livestock watering, cropland/overland flow, and soils. Webinars are still informative, but definitely more difficult than attending the classes in person.
- Spent some time working on AEM Tier 4 implementation project farms. Working on a composting facility plan.
  - Spent some time doing some Tier 5b reviews of previously completed projects.
- Pulled Japanese knotweed with Kevin at our W. Main St. trees for tribs site.
- Continued to coordinate no-till rentals with Ron
  - Corn planters are done for the year
  - Both seeders are out, had some maintenance issues that need correcting now, others can likely wait until the off-season.
- Some soil group worksheet requests have been coming in. I've been conducting all these remotely, having the requests mailed in with payment and then emailing the completed worksheet to the owner. We request that they send us an email stating the worksheet is correct, instead of signing it. We can still do it via mail if needed as well.
- Helped Kevin layout stakes for bench phase 3 with GPS.

## Report to the Board

September, 2020      KMS

### OLD BUSINESS

#### a. Wallkill Flood Projects

1. Phase 3, Area 1 Contract – Work on this contract has started. NYSDEC has been notified, per permit requirement. Emails to property owner, Green Farmland, to clarify final arrangements went unanswered for several weeks. Letter was mailed to them, return receipt requested, on 9/11. County Attorney's office copied. As of 9/14, they have responded and it appears that there are no issues that will be immediately problematic. I am expecting them to submit an invoice for rental of 10 acres per Agreement we entered into with them in February.
2. SAM Grant – No new information available.
3. Climate Resilient Farming Round 5 Grant – The Governor has still not authorized release of the results that were accepted by NYSSWCC in April. If this award comes through, it will allow us to begin studies, permitting and design for 'Phase 4' of the Benching work in 2021, with an optimistic construction start date in 2022. A letter introducing the proposed Phase 4 work to affected landowners was included in this month's outgoing correspondence. I am exploring starting wetland delineation work this fall since if the fieldwork isn't completed before winter it could delay the schedule by months. This would require us 'fronting' funds in advance of CRF 5 confirmation/contract.
4. No new information or progress on Celery Ledge project.

#### b. Hudson Valley Carbon Farming Project (HVCFP)

1. We submitted a progress report and reimbursement request to Dutchess County SWCD on 9/14. The request was for \$74,353. Of this amount, \$7,212 was for staff time. As noted last month, our most recently updated projected 2020 budget includes \$10,000 in staff time support from the HVCPF, so we are 'on track' to meet this projection assuming DCSWCD receives the advance they requested and issues payment on our reimbursement request. The balance of the request is mostly advance funds on construction projects/BMP's, with a small amount for direct expense reimbursement.

### NEW BUSINESS

- a) Our Annual Plan of Work for 2021 is due at NYSSWCC by November 1<sup>st</sup>. Timely preparation and submission of this document is included in the Performance Measures report, so there are potential fiscal impacts if we do not comply. A draft of the 2021 APW was emailed to the directors on 9/11. We can approve the APW at the September meeting or wait until the October meeting. We will probably hold on submission until later in October in case there are any late developments that might warrant changes to the APW.

- b) I distributed draft Director training Plans at the August Board meeting. Assuming they are acceptable, we can note in this month's minutes that the Plans were reviewed and accepted by the directors.
- c) Chris will explain this NYS Retirement document.

#### Other Items

I have reported over the last several months on the close-out procedures for three Ag Nonpoint Source grants. Two of the three final reports have been accepted by NYSSWCC. Projects in the third grant were visited by NYSSWCC staff on 9/4. The final report has been submitted and I expect it will be accepted/approved soon.

We are awaiting results of the Round 26 Ag Nonpoint Source grant proposal reviews to see if our proposal was funded. The ranked list was accepted by the NYSSWCC voting body on 9/16, but it is not being released.