

KANKAKEE COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Minutes March 8, 2021

The Kankakee County Soil and Water Conservation District held its regular monthly board meeting on Monday, March 8, 2021 at 7:00pm. Chairman Jeff O'Connor called the meeting to order at 7:40 pm. Present were Directors Jeff O'Connor, Jim Frogge, Larry Kirchner, Alan Wissmiller and Ed Brown, Resource Conservationist Emilie Watkins, Associate Director John Settle, and Administrative Coordinator Linda Settle. Absent were Educational Coordinator Crystal Sauder and District Conservationist Trenton Rader. Guest present was Hannah Wissmiller.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: O'Connor made and Wissmiller seconded a motion to approve the agenda with the addition of "Approval of FY2022 Annual Plan of Work" and "Sauder Schedule". Motion passed five to zero.

REORGANIZATION OF THE BOARD:

Election of Officers: O'Connor made and Wissmiller seconded a motion to approve the election of officers as follows – O'Connor Chairman, Frogge Vice Chairman, Kirchner Treasurer, Wissmiller Secretary, and Brown Director at Large. Motion passed five to zero.

Appointment of Associate Directors: O'Connor made and Kirchner seconded a motion to appoint John Settle as Associate Director. Motion passed five to zero

Restructure of Committees: O'Connor stated that we will revisit this topic at the March meeting.

CONSENT AGENDA: O'Connor made and Brown seconded a motion to approve the consent agenda as printed. Motion passed five to zero.

SECRETARY REPORT:

1. Minutes of January 11, 2021 Board meeting

TREASURER'S REPORT:

2. Approval of Time and Travel
3. Approval of Financial Report
4. Approval of Bills

CORRESPONDENCE: None.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

PFC Cost-Share – Watkins shared the District has around \$6,000 left of FY2020 funds to spend by December 2021, and that the FY2021 funds have not yet been released. When FY2021 funds are released, the District will receive \$24,159.00. This is due to a new means of allocating cost-share dollars, with additional dollars being rewarded to Districts based on usage and demand. The board discussed cost-share rates and multi-year contracts. Kirchner made and Frogge seconded a motion to offer cover crop cost-share in Fall 2021 at “at least” 50% cost-share up to \$20/acre with a max of \$1,600 per owner/operator. Farmers who entered into a 1-year agreement in 2020 to plant cover crops will be offered a contract extension for fall 2021 cover crops. Motion passed five to zero.

Grants – Watkins stated that she is finishing up the grant application for the Donnelley Foundation Chicago Land Region Land Conservation grant. This grant is due March 26, 2021. Watkins has been corresponding with organizations such as The Conservation Fund, The Wetlands Initiative, The Nature Conservancy, USFWS, Pheasants Forever, and American Farmland Trust about forming a conservation outreach group in Kankakee County. There has been a positive response from these organizations to participate.

Outreach & Education – Watkins shared that she and Sauder had a phone call with Kyle Burton from the Kankakee Valley Park District (KVPD) about summer outreach. The District will be providing nature-based classes for ~1st-4th graders from June-July 2021 at Bird Park in Kankakee. Watkins stated that KVPD will charge a registration fee for each session, and that K3SWCD will receive 70% of the registration fees. K3SWCD is capping registration at 15 children per session. Brown made and Kirchner seconded a motion to charge a registration fee of \$10 per child to cover District staff time and materials. Motion passed five to zero.

Watkins stated that Bourbonnais Township Park District reached out about hosting a 2021 BTPD BioBlitz at the end of August at Perry Farm. The District will be meeting throughout the summer to plan the event. K3SWCD and BTPD are working on offering additional events at Perry Farm throughout the summer.

Watkins stated that we have additional upcoming events, including a virtual Pond Webinar on March 11th, Conservation Kit applications, an Earth Day event at Cornerstone Coffeehouse on April 24th, and 3 activities planned throughout the summer at Heldt Park Outdoor Classroom in Grant Park.

S.T.A.R. Program – Watkins stated that the District collected 40 S.T.A.R. Forms for the 2020 crop year. The STAR raffle prizes were awarded to Martin Graf, David Surprenant, and Jed Siedentop.

Sales – Watkins stated that Sauder has been working on the spring 2021 sales. Tree and fish sale pick up will be on April 16th with the native plant sale pickup being June 5th.

RCP and Ag Land Easements – Frogge shared the information about endowment funds, liability of the Board approving an appraisal, clarification of legal services, and other information that he has researched over the past month. Frogge made and Brown seconded a motion that the Kankakee County Soil and Water Conservation District agrees to be easement holder pending satisfactory negotiation of the final agricultural land easement agreement.

NEW BUSINESS:

Approval of NRI Report & NRI Update – Watkins shared NRI Report #2021-01 for a 4.56-acre parcel being rezoned from A1 to A2 to build a single-family home in Norton Township. The LESA score for this project was 173.2, indicating a low priority for protection. O’Connor made and Kirchner seconded a motion that the Board “does not oppose” NRI 2021-01.

Watkins stated that she has received an NRI application for a ~1700-acre solar farm in Essex from Heritage Prairie Solar LLC. She and Sauder will be working on the HPS project in hopes of approving at the April board meeting.

State Funding Update – Watkins shared the following FY2021 funds update from Grant Hammer, AISWCD: *“Once they [IDOA] have all District grant agreements returned, they should be able to send the vouchers to the Comptroller. IDOA should be able to work with the Comptroller to get those funds released pretty quickly.”*

FY2022 Annual Plan of Work – O’Connor made and Frogge seconded a motion to approve the FY2022 Annual Plan of Work with the addition of “promoting and facilitating Agriculture Land Easements (ALEs) and other conservation easements in the county”. Motion passed five to zero.

Sauder Schedule – Watkins stated that Sauder will be altering her weekly schedule to work 36 up to 40 hours per week.

REPORTS – In addition to printed reports, if necessary

RC Report – Nothing additional

AC Report – Nothing additional

EC Report – Nothing additional

DC Report – None

FSA Report – None

Committee Reports – None

The next regular District Board Meeting will be May 10, 2021 at 7:30 am.

Frogge made and Kirchner seconded a motion to adjourn. The motion passed five to zero. The meeting adjourned at 9:08 pm.