

KANKAKEE COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Minutes July 12, 2021

The Kankakee County Soil and Water Conservation District held its regular monthly board meeting on Monday, July 12, 2021. Chairman Jeff O'Connor called the meeting to order at 8:38 AM. Present were Directors Jeff O'Connor, Jim Frogge, Alan Wissmiller, Larry Kirchner, and Ed Brown, Grant Writer Emilie Janes, Resource Conservationist Crystal Sauder, Outreach Coordinator Maddie Hansen, and District Conservationist Trenton Rader. Absent were Administrative Coordinator Linda Settle and Associate Director John Settle.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: O'Connor made and Kirchner seconded a motion to approve the agenda with the addition of laptop and software added to new business. Motion passed five to zero.

CONSENT AGENDA: O'Connor made and Kirchner seconded a motion to approve the consent agenda pending the changes to the secretary report. Motion passed five to zero.

SECRETARY'S REPORT:

Minutes of June 21, 2021 Board Meeting

TREASURER'S REPORT:

Approval of Time and Travel
Approval of Financial Report
Approval of Bills

CORRESPONDENCE: N/A

OLD BUSINESS:

Staff Time Off – Hanson shared she is attending the State Fair in August and wants to use her earned vacation and personal hours, even though she is still in her probationary period. Board allowed her to use her earned vacation and personal hours for the state fair before her probationary period is over.

NRI Reports – Watkins shared she has updated the NRI application and has a printed copy for the Board to review. After reviewing the new application, Watkins will change the "parcel tax number(s)" to "county identified parcel identification number (PIN)" throughout the document. After these changes are made on the document, Watkins will send to the County Planning Department for them to distribute the new form. She will also update the website to have the new form listed.

PFC Cost Share – Watkins shared we need to approve the 2021 practices and rates for cost-share in order to start distributing. Filter strips and water control structure practices were removed from the list Watkins shared. Conservation Cover is removed from the list as well, but Sauder will look into if urban land is eligible for cost-share, and if the District could fund their own urban conservation cover program. The rate for the cover crop cost-share was written wrong and will be kept at 50% cost-share up to \$40 per acre, with a max of \$1,600 per landowner/operator. The target is to fund 17 farmers to hit max dollars spent. The District will also offer 1 year extensions to last year's participants. Well decommissioning cost-share rates for hand dug wells are 75% cost-share not to exceed \$400 and drilled wells are 75% cost-share not to exceed \$750. O'Connor made and Frogge seconded a motion to approve the FY22 cost-share rates with the approved changes mentioned. Motion passed five to zero.

Grants – Watkins shared the District should be hearing back from the Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation on or around July 13th on if the we were awarded the grant or not. The Conservation Champions grant is due August 6th. It is formerly known as the Cover Crop Champions Grant that we were awarded previously. They have increased the reward to \$15,000 total to encourage cover crop adoption. Watkins and O'Connor shared their vision of showing the importance cover crops have in increasing infiltration by using soil meters to show the percent saturation in fields with and without cover crops. A meeting is in the works to meet with Abigail from the IL Soybean Association about the grant project.

Education & Outreach – Hanson shared Sauder and her lead an Ecosystem Scavenger hunt in Heldt Park with around 15 children in attendance. Hanson is also working on planning several agriculture events and field days for this upcoming winter and following summer. Funds from the Conservation Champion Grant and the GDDF grants will help fund these events. Sauder is working on planning a habitat workshop for this winter with USFWS, Pheasants Forever, FSA, NRCS, and SWCD. She will be scheduling the event for the beginning of December 2021. Sauder will also be planning a pond management field day. It was decided to push the date back to Fall 2022.

S.T.A.R. – Hanson shared there is a new S.T.A.R. form out for Crop Year 2021, as well as a new phone app. The app will be a convenient way for participants to submit their applications electronically. Hanson and Sauder have filled out the license agreement and will submit it pending Board approval. O'Connor made and Frogge seconded a motion to approve the participation and submission of the Crop Year 2021 license agreement. Motion passed five to zero.

RCP – Watkins shared there was a great turnout at the Pembroke open house on June 23rd. There were over 70 attendees with 30 registered for RCP interest. At the open house, Watkins discussed organizational hierarchy of government agencies,

becoming an FSA customer, farm and tract numbers, and soil health. Moving forward, Watkins will be planning another community event once the RCPP guidelines become clearer in order to offer additional details.

Ag Impact Fees – Watkins shared she has sent emails to Farm Bureau about starting Ag Impact Fees. She needs to follow up with Emy from the Conservation Fund about a phone call she had with Kane County. She will also be drafting a letter to send to the County Planning Department.

NEW BUSINESS:

Budget – A Committee meeting was held at 7:48 AM before the Board Meeting to discuss the FY22 Budget. After viewing the different staffing scenarios, a couple different questions were brought up. If awarded the GDDF grant, what are the hour requirements their foundation classify as full-time? Watkins will be reaching out to the County Planning Department about the progress of the wind farm. The Board decided to finalize the budget at the September board meeting, and then submit to the IDOA by September 15th.

Certificate of Deposit – Watkins shared the best rate the Bank of Bourbonnais has for a Certificate of Deposit. Because of the low interest rate, the Board decided it would be best not to open a Certificate of Deposit on \$50,000 due to only yielding \$100 after 12 months.

Life & Disability – Sauder shared about Life and Disability is available to full-time employees and was wanting to discuss adding the coverage to current staff plans. The bills are sent quarterly. The Board tabled the discussion until August's meeting. Sauder will be looking at surrounding District's policies

Kankakee County SWCD Mission and Vision – The Board decided to leave the Mission and Vision statement the same for now. Watkins will start looking for key words to include in the update down the road.

Policy Update – Sauder and Watkins will be updating and identifying new policies to present to the Board at the next meeting. Email retention policies, remote work policies, and office closure policies are a few that will be researched. The discussion was tabled until the next meeting.

Staff Training – Watkins shared Hanson will be completing an Excel Online Course through KCC and will be starting the AgLearn courses for becoming a Certified Conservation Planner. All employees will be attending weekly NRCS trainings to learn more about different programs and applications.

Laptop and Software – Watkins shared the different software subscriptions. She will be consolidating the antivirus software for the different laptops to only Norton Antivirus. Zoom subscription will be switched to an annual rate and our Adobe Premiere Video Editing Software will be canceled. A 3rd District laptop is needed but the Board is looking for a cheaper option. Hanson will research current District laptop software and send to Wissmiller. Adding GIS software was tabled until next month.

REPORTS – in addition to printed reports, if necessary

RC Report – Nothing additional

AC Report – Nothing additional

Outreach Coordinator – Nothing additional

Grant Writer – Nothing additional

DC Report – Rader is finishing 2021 CSP obligations. CRP awards will be done by September. The increased rates and additional acres will make for a busy time for him. Illinois is starting to create more virtual training opportunities for those completing the Certified Conservation Planner training program.

FSA Report – Watkins shared FSA is finishing their acreage reporting that is due by July 15th.

Committee Reports – None

The next regular District Board meeting will be held on August 9, 2021 at 7:30 AM.

Frogge made and Wissmiller seconded a motion to adjourn. The motion passed five to zero. The meeting adjourned at 10:22 AM.