

KANKAKEE COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Minutes April 13, 2020

The Kankakee County Soil and Water Conservation District held its regular monthly meeting Monday, April 13, 2020 virtually through Zoom. Chairman Jeff O'Connor called the meeting to order at 7:27 am. Present were Directors Jeff O'Connor, Dave Peters, Jim Frogge, and Alan Wissmiller, Associate Director Ed Brown, Resource Conservationist Emilie Watkins, and Educational Coordinator Crystal Sauder. Absent were Director Larry Kirchner, Associate Director John Settle, District Conservationist Trenton Rader, and Administrative Coordinator Linda Settle.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: Frogge made and Peters seconded a motion to approve the consent agenda. Motion passed four to zero.

REORGANIZATION OF BOARD:

Election of Officers: Wissmiller made and O'Connor seconded a motion to keep the officers the same as the previous year – O'Connor Chairman, Frogge Vice Chairman, Kirchner Treasurer, and Wissmiller Secretary. Motion passed four to zero.

Appointment of Associate Directors: Peters made and Frogge seconded a motion to keep John Settle and Ed Brown as Associate Directors. Motion passed four to zero.

Restructure of Committees: O'Connor made and Wissmiller seconded a motion to leave the structure of the committees as is. Motion passed four to zero.

CONSENT AGENDA: O'Connor made and Peters seconded a motion to approve the consent agenda. Motion passed four to zero.

SECRETARY'S REPORT:

Minutes of February 10, 2020 Board Meeting

TREASURER'S REPORT:

Approval of Time and Travel

Approval of Financial Report

Approval of Bills

CORRESPONDENCE: Watkins stated that Mike Budd from US Fish and Wildlife Service contacted our District to remind us about their Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program. The program works with private landowners to conserve wildlife habitat through technical and financial assistance on pollinator plantings, invasive species control, shallow water habitats, tree plantings, etc.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Partners for Conservation Cost-Share – Watkins stated that Behrends created promotional material for three cost-share options that were approved: well sealing, cover crops, and strip-till/no-till. The District's cost-share webpage has been updated with the ads. There is still over \$3,000 left to spend from FY2019 Partners for Conservation Funds for this upcoming year. Watkins also stated the District has not received the FY2020 cost-share funds.

Grants – Watkins stated that she and O'Connor have completed the webinars and the in-person training for the Cover Crop Champions grant in February, as well as held a meeting with the Champions. The Women in Ag event is pending due to COVID, with the dates for the Ag Service CEU event scheduled sometime early to mid-August. The Benoit Aerial Field Day is scheduled for August 25th. Watkins is currently working through previous emails from Behrends to take over Cover Crop Champion planning efforts. A meeting with O'Connor, Watkins, and the Champions will be set up in the future to regroup.

Sauder and Watkins have been in contact with Rebecca Judd, Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation Program Officer, discussing the impacts of COVID on their ability to complete grant requirements. Public outreach events have been put on hold for Hawkins Park due to COVID. Sauder stated Trevor Edmonson is compiling a list of trees and shrubs to order from Possibility Place, and she will place the order as soon as the list is completed. Sauder will also begin pollinator and plant surveys in May 2020.

Sauder stated there are three possible grants the District could pursue or be a partner on. The CommunityWorks Grant was submitted in the beginning of March by the Limestone Park District with Kankakee County SWCD and Limestone Library as partners. The NACD Technical Assistance grant is due on June 1, 2020 and could be used to cover a potential new hire's salary and/or training costs. O'Connor talked about NRCS's Conservation Innovation Grant. The AISWCD and University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign is pursuing this grant for funding on researching nutrient management. Districts around the state could be potential partners on the grant to find farmers in their county to participate in the research. Funding from the project would help cover district staff if there is participation in that county.

Education & Outreach – Sauder stated most of their march events were either postponed or canceled. Watkins contacted Midland States Bank if it was possible to do a take-home Earth Day activity due to already having the seeds and supplies at the office. Several summer events are pending. The Perry Farm BioBlitz with Bourbonnais Township Park District, Olivet Nazarene University, and Kankakee County SWCD is still scheduled for August 28-29th.

There was a discussion on if the District should still do events this summer if the stay at home order is lifted. Sauder and Watkins are going to investigate offering programs and activities online through YouTube and/or Facebook. The District can also host online webinars to offer programs online, but still respecting the stay at home orders.

Sauder said she has not received any Conservation Kit applications. She would like to postpone the due date to June 30th to get educators plenty of time to apply while juggling with having to switch to online learning. The applications would be reviewed at the July 13, 2020 board meeting.

Sales – Sauder stated that fish, tree, and native plant sale pickup dates are still taking place as scheduled. Special precautions have been set for when the customers pickup their orders, and they have been notified.

2020 Intern – Watkins stated she received one 2020 Intern application from Adam Schott. She notified Adam explaining the internship is on hold due to COVID-19, but will contact him if the District is able to proceed with the internship this year.

NEW BUSINESS:

NRI Approval – Watkins recommended a letter of do not oppose to be written for NRI case #2020-01. Peters made and Wissmiller seconded a motion to approve a letter of do not oppose for NRI case #2020-01, a request for a zoning change from A1 to A1 to build a single-family home 4 miles east of Grant Park. Motion passed four to zero.

Budget Update & Meeting – Watkins stated the District Operations Funding is on the “short list” from the Comptroller. It is expected funds will be delayed due to COVID. Watkins stated a date for the FY2021 Budget Meeting needs to be set. It was decided to push the Budget Meeting back until June and may need to be done electronically.

Behrends Employment – Watkins stated she received a letter of resignation on 3/21/2020 from Dakota Behrends. Her final day of work was on 4/3/2020 with an exit survey to be carried out in the future. Staffing decisions moving forward will be put on hold until all consequences related to COVID-19 are fully realized. Watkins also stated Employee Evaluations are scheduled for June 2020. Next month, approval is needed for the final FY2021 and the Annual Plan of Work revisions.

REPORTS – In addition to printed reports, if necessary

RC REPORT – Nothing additional.

AC REPORT – Nothing additional.

DC REPORT – Watkins stated that the USDA Service Center is closed to the public due to the COVID pandemic, but NRCS and FSA are working in the building. Rader is working on upcoming program due dates and new online tools.

FSA REPORT – None.

COMMITTEE REPORTS – None.

The next regular District Board meeting will be May 11, 2020 at 7:30 am.

Peters made and Frogge seconded a motion to adjourn. Motion passed four to zero. The meeting adjourned at 8:33 am.