

KANKAKEE COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Minutes January 13, 2020

The Kankakee County Soil and Water Conservation District held its regular monthly board meeting on Monday, January 13, 2020. Chairman Jeff O'Connor called the meeting to order at 7:45 am. Present were Directors Jeff O'Connor, Dave Peters, Jim Frogge, and Larry Kirchner, Associate Director Ed Brown, Resource Conservationist Emilie Janes, Conservation Assistants Crystal Sauder and Dakota Behrends, and District Conservationist Trenton Rader. Absent were Director Alan Wissmiller, Administrative Coordinator Linda Settle, and Associate Director John Settle.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: O'Connor made and Kirchner seconded a motion to approve the agenda. Motion Passed five to zero.

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

SECRETARY'S REPORT:

Minutes of October 21, 2019 Board Meeting

TREASURER'S REPORT:

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

CORRESPONDENCE: O'Connor visited Van Drunen Farms and talked to them about their conservation practices. Van Drunen Farms is starting to look into more direct conservation practices on their farmland.

OLD BUSINESS:

NRI Approval – Janes stated there are no current NRI reports.

PFC Cost Share – Janes stated the FY 2020 District Operations Funding was released but we have not received it yet. The FY 2020 Partners for Conservation Cost-share Funding is usually released around the first of the year, but we are still waiting to hear when it will be released.

Behrends stated there are four main areas for cost-share practices that would line up with the needs of the farmers in our District: cover crops, strip till, well sealing, and pollinator

establishment. She stated she will be creating a list of well drilling companies to contact in the future to let them know about our cost-share opportunities. It was discussed to have the average cost list and cost-share rates laid out by the February Board Meeting, and to be voted on at that meeting. Behrends and Janes will look into land requirements for participating in certain cost-share programs and finding well drilling companies in the county.

Grants – Janes stated we were awarded the Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Grant Foundation for Hawkins Park. She stated Sauder and herself attended the Limestone Township Park District meeting in December. Janes has been corresponding with Larry Haigh from Herscher High School about growing and planting native plugs for Hawkins Park. The next steps on the project will include meeting with Trevor Edmonson to begin planning of the grant project, Larry Haigh to discuss plug growing, and having Rebecca Osland from the AISWCD come down for a site visit. Janes also stated written into the grant are surveys to report an increase in biodiversity at Hawkins Park. She said Sauder will be the main one covering the insect surveys at the park.

Behrends and Janes stated the District was awarded the Cover Crop Champions Grant after the last board meeting. The goal of the grant is to reach at least 150 farmers and 10 certified crop advisors. She stated Janes and herself have started the weekly training webinars. O'Connor and Janes will be going to the in-person training in Moline at the end of February.

Janes stated there are currently three grants in the works. The K-12 Pollinator Schools Grant with Bourbonnais Elementary School District is due on January 16th. The grant application is almost complete, she's just waiting for Jim Duggan to respond with some missing details for the grant, and then she will submit it. Janes stated Sauder is continually checking on the Communityworks Grant and the Greenhouse Matching Grant applications and that they should both be opening soon.

Education & Outreach – Behrends stated her Winter Workshop was a success with 11 guests and 5 presenters at the event. Sauder went over the 2019 Outreach Report for the District. She stated they presented at over 43 events this past year, reaching over 2,290 people directly. Sauder discussed the 2019 website/social media analytics for the District's pages. There have been 3,503 visits to the website since starting it in July 2017. The top five-page visits include the Home Page, the District Events, H. Hungerford Conservation Kits, Sales, and Contacts for Soil and Water Issues pages. The Facebook page has increased in likes over the past year, and the Instagram account has doubled in its first year. It was discussed to create a Twitter account for the District as a better way to reach farmers in the area.

Sauder stated the 2020 Conservation Kits are now live. The District is offering a new Nature Journaling and Illustration kit this year to reach both art and science students. Sauder mentioned the website is up to date with the updated application and flyers. The applications

are due on May 1, 2020, to be reviewed at the May board meeting. Janes stated there is a goal to award 5 Conservation Kits this year, with a budget of \$2,500.

Janes stated Sauder and herself met with Bourbonnais Township park District and Olivet Nazarene University on January 6, 2020 to discuss and plan the Community BioBlitz. The dates of the event were decided on during the meeting. The event will take place from August 28, 3pm until August 29, 3pm. BTPD is creating an ad to go in the middle section of their events book that is mailed to Bourbonnais residents. Janes stated she is working on inviting professionals and groups to the event to host events throughout the days.

Janes stated herself, Sauder, and Behrends met on January 10 to review the Annual Plan or Work and put a 2020 Focus List and short-term plan with due dates together.

Sales – Sauder state the dates are set for the Native Plant Sale, the Fish Sale, and the Tree and Shrub Sale for the spring. The order forms and information for the spring sales are updated and posted on the website.

Peotone Airport – Janes stated there is nothing new about the Peotone Airport, but is regularly checking their website.

Annual Financial Report – Janes stated the Annual Financial Report is due February 25th. Smith, Koelling, Dykstra, and Ohm, P.C. is finishing up the report soon, and the District will have it to review and approve at the February 10th board meeting.

NEW BUSINESS:

Newsletter – Behrends stated the Annual Winter Newsletter is almost complete. Behrends is still waiting for a couple different reports from sponsors to finish the newsletter.

Drainage District Meeting Agenda – Janes stated the Drainage District Meeting will be on March 26. _____ is creating the agenda for the event. Janes asked if the board had any suggestions on topics and speakers for the event to let her know.

Training – Behrends stated she was chosen for the ALOT program (Agriculture Leaders of Tomorrow). She mentioned she will be out of the office on Tuesdays, and some Wednesdays for the two months. Behrends went over the different topics they will be covering in the training sessions.

Janes stated she would like Sauder to enroll in the Tallgrass prairie Ecology Course by the Morton Arboretum in March. The course will cover different types of prairies, animal and plant

communities within the prairie, and strategies on restoring prairies. Janes believes it will be beneficial for Sauder to have training on this with the different habitat projects they are applying for. She will submit the training to the IDOA for funding.

2020 Intern – Janes suggested the hiring of a part-time intern for the summer to be responsible for the conservation survey, the transect survey, and reorganization of CSP/EQIP folders. It was suggested to switch from having the farmers fill out the conservation survey to filling out a S.T.A.R. field form instead. Peters made and Frogge seconded the motion to have an intern for the summer and starting the solicitation process.

REPORTS – In addition to printed reports, if necessary

RC Report – Nothing additional

AC Report – Nothing additional

Cons. Asst. Reports – Nothing additional

DC Report – Rader stated repayments are on hold due to the writing of new rules from the 2018 Farm Bill.

FSA Report – Janes stated CRP signups are taking place now and she has the cut off dates in the office.

Committee Reports – None

The next regular District Board meeting will be February 10, 2020 at 7:30 am.

Peters made and Frogge seconded a motion to adjourn. The motion passed five to zero. The meeting adjourned at 9:35 am