

KANKAKEE COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Minutes December 13, 2021

The Kankakee County Soil and Water Conservation District held its regular monthly board meeting on Monday, November 10, 2021. Chairman Jeff O'Connor called the meeting to order at 6:20 PM. Present were Directors Jeff O'Connor, Jim Frogge, Larry Kirchner, Ed Brown, and Alan Wissmiller, Resource Conservationist Crystal Sauder, and Grant Coordinator Emilie Watkins. Absent were Assistant Director John Settle, Administrative Coordinator Linda Settle, and District Conservationist Trenton Rader.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: Brown made and Frogge seconded a motion to approve the agenda with the addition of adding Mid-year Evaluations and Christmas Bonuses. Motion passed five to zero.

CONSENT AGENDA: Kirchner made and Brown seconded a motion to approve the consent agenda as presented. Motion passed five to zero.

SECRETARY'S REPORT:

Minutes of November 10, 2021 Board Meeting

TREASURER'S REPORT:

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

CORRESPONDENCE: N/A

OLD BUSINESS:

PFC Cost Share – Sauder shared there are 12 cost-share projects approved to date. Two projects were canceled due to unfavorable cover crop planting conditions and one project potentially pushed back to spring because of the bad weather. Sauder and Watkins will be submitting final cost-share reports to the IL Department of Agriculture by December 31, 2021. Priority will be to spend all of FY2020 funds before dipping into FY2021 funds.

Grants – Watkins shared Linda Settle, Sauder, and Kirchner met with SKDO to figure out how to report the financial side of the grant funds in QuickBooks. Kirchner shared we will start creating different classes in the books for GDDF grant recording purposes. This will allow the District to select different classes when creating paychecks and can later create reports to show how the grant funds were used. The check for \$50,000 from the Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation grant arrived at the office 12/13. The

fund is hiring an intern to work on impact fee research and would be a great asset to the Kankakee County outreach committee. Watkins has a phone call scheduled with Emy Brawley on 1/14 to discuss grants, easements, and impact fees.

Watkins shared the District was awarded the Conservation Champions Grant for \$14,250 from the National Wildlife Federation. She submitted the first invoice to NWF. Sauder, O'Connor, and herself attended five webinar trainings and there will be a two-day virtual training after the new year. Watkins is working with ISA to set up on-farm trials and is sourcing remote soil sensors. Watkins found Soil Scout Soil Sensors for the on-farm trials. The total for eight sensors, four bases, and two years of cloud access comes to \$11,220. In the grant proposal, there was a budget of \$5,000 for the sensors originally planned for. Watkins is proposing the District to contribute \$2,000 of our funds to help purchase the soil sensors and for Soil Scout to provide \$4,200 as an in-kind donation. The Board decided to table the discussion until the next Board meeting.

Education & Outreach – Sauder shared the Livingston County SWCD reached out to her about if the District would participate in the Evirothon this spring. The participation would need county classroom participation and help on the day of the event. The Board discussed that staff should hold off on promoting the Evirothon for a year due to staffing and a high workload.

CREP – Watkins shared SWCDs may transfer current and future CREP easements to IDNR or they may opt to continue CREP monitoring but must perform enrollment activities. She shared a CREP contract draft for fee schedules and details on the enrollment process, as well as the current CREP easement information. After discussion on the enrollment process, it was decided the District would like to transfer our easements to the IDNR and monitor future and current easements. Frogge made the motion to transfer current and future easements to the IDNR and agree to promote and monitor future and current easements. Brown seconded the motion. Motion passed four to zero. Kirchner abstained from the vote due to being a CREP easement holder.

Conservation Coordinator Job Posting – Sauder shared they received 20 applicants for the Conservation Coordinator position and herself, Watkins, Brown, and Frogge interviewed 6 candidates. After discussion and reviewing the top candidates, O'Connor made and Frogge seconded a motion to offer the Conservation Coordinator position to a candidate with a salary of \$40,000, a review in June, and insurance after 60 days of employment. Motion passed five to zero. Start date will be January 3rd if accepted.

Watkins Title – Watkins shared she looked through many job titles across several conservation organizations. "Grants Coordinator" and "Special Projects Manager" were two titles that stood out and hit buzz words on her daily work. Kirchner made and Frogge seconded a motion for Watkins to use both "Grants Coordinator" and "Special Projects Manager" based on the task she is working on. Motion passed five to zero.

Kankakee River Basin RCPP – Watkins shared the Indiana RCPP proposal overview and a list of Illinois contacts herself and Emy Brawley compiled. Watkins and Brawley created a partner list and sent introductory emails to 38 local organizations. She shared many individuals expressed interest and had additional contacts to add.

Heritage Solar NRI Report – Sauder shared the Board needs to decide on a payment amount for the new NRI acres being added to the Heritage Solar Project. There are 1,550.8 acres being added to this new NRI application from the previous NRI report completed in May. The total final project area, using full parcels, covers 3,935.13 acres. The current NRI policy requires a new application and fee when a change is made to the project, as well as using full parcels. The Board decided the payment for this application will be based off of the current NRI policy. The total final project area, using full parcels, comes to 3,935.13 acres and a fee of \$59,351.95 for the report. Sauder shared there is a public information session about the solar project on December 15th at the Bonfield Grade School from 6:00-8:00 PM.

Director Elections – Sauder shared Brown, Kirchner, and Wissmiller are up for election this coming year. The elections will be held before the Annual meeting on February 14th at 7:30 AM. O'Connor made and Kirchner seconded a motion to hold elections in-person for Ed Brown, Larry Kirchner, and Alan Wissmiller on February 14th at 7:30 AM before the Annual Meeting. Motion passed five to zero.

NEW BUSINESS:

AIMA Review – Watkins shared the Agriculture Impact Mitigation Agreements are completed for each renewable energy Special Use Permit and are between the IDOA and the solar facility owner. The AIMAs include standards and policies for construction, maintenance, repairs that include drainage tile, and deconstruction of the solar facility. Each AIMA must be filed with the County and are made a condition for any Special Use Permit. With Heritage Solar submitting a new application, a new AIMA will be required.

FY21 Annual Financial Report – Sauder shared the FY21 Annual Financial Report was completed by SKDO and needed approved before being submitted to the comptroller. In the future the Chief Financial Officer should be changed to the Treasurer of the District. Sauder will complete and notarize the 3/5 vote form and return to SKDO for submission to the Comptroller and County Clerk's Office.

Mid-year Evaluations and Bonuses – O'Connor made a motion to approve an end of the year bonus of \$1,000 to Emilie Watkins, \$800 to Crystal Sauder, and \$400 to Linda Settle. Wissmiller seconded the motion. Motion passed five to zero.

Payment for AC Accrued Vacation and Personal Time – Sauder shared Settle would like her accrued vacation and personal time paid out. Kirchner made and O’Connor seconded the motion to approve the payment of 19.25 hours of Settle’s accrued vacation and personal time. Motion passed five to zero.

AISWCD Annual Meeting – O’Connor shared not enough counties were present for a quorum. A virtual meeting may take place later to try to reach a quorum. The AISWCD wants to change the percentage of what counties pay the association due to funds increasing this year from the State and so the AISWCD can have a full-time lobbyist. In years past the percentage of dues the district pays is 3% and the AISWCD would like to change the percentage to 5%.

2022 Board Meeting Schedule – Sauder shared the dates for the 2022 Board Meeting Schedule. She shared the June 20, 2022 Board Meeting fell on a day when the office is closed for a Federal Holiday and would need to be moved to a different date. It was decided to move the June Board Meeting to June 13th, 2022, which is the second Monday of the month.

REPORTS – in addition to printed reports, if necessary

RC Report – Nothing additional

AC Report – Nothing additional

Grant Writer – Nothing additional

Outreach Coordinator – Nothing additional

DC Report – Sauder shared she has been helping Trenton Rader with CSP payments. They are working through the list of the farmers who would like paid in 2021 in order to get those payments finished before the deadline.

FSA Report – CED Shannon Murphy is on maternity leave December through March. Karen Boehrnsen will be the acting CED while Murphy is on maternity leave.

Committee Reports – Nothing additional

The next regular District Board meeting will be held on January 10, 2021 at 7:30 AM.

O’Connor made and Wissmiller seconded a motion to adjourn. The motion passed five to zero. The meeting adjourned at 9:07 PM.