



Cortland County Soil and Water Conservation District

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www.cortlandswcd.org

SWCD...established to promote the conservation and wise use of our county's natural resources

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Tuesday, December 12, 2023

ATTENDING: Eugene Wright, Chair
James Murphy, Treasurer
Tracey Evanick, Vice-Chair
Amanda Barber, Manager
Melissa Rutter, Fiscal Officer
Ian Downes, Conservation Aide
Linda Jones, Director
Beau Harbin, Director
PJ Emerick, SWCC/NYSDAM staff
Erin Kurtz, NRCS
Emma Beavers, NRCS

A. MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER by Chairman Wright- 12:03 p.m.

B. REVIEW OF MINUTES:

Motion by Murphy to approve the minutes of the regular board meeting held on November 12, 2023 as written. Seconded by Evanick and carried 3-0.

Beau Harbin and Linda Jones entered the meeting at 12:06 p.m.

C. FINANCIAL REPORTS: Including income and expenses for November. Presented for payment Abstract 11-23 for Vouchers 238-23 to 265-23.

Motion by Evanick to accept the November 2023 financial reports and approve the payment of bills presented on Abstract 11-23 in the amount of \$137,851.77. Seconded by Murphy and carried 5-0.

Break for lunch and PJ Emerick Board training/presentation "The History and Future of Conservation Districts"

D. REPORTS:

- 1. SWCC-** Report is appended to minutes. PJ also discussed performance measures.
- 2. SWCD-** Report is appended to minutes. Barber discussed the deposition she was subpoenaed to attend which took place at the same time as last month's Board meeting. The deposition concerned the Economy Paving stormwater management lawsuit.
- 3. NYACD -** Report is appended to minutes. They submitted their 2023-24 Officers and Division Representatives list and a "Save the Date" for Legislative days (March 4 & 5, 2024). Wright discussed the 2023 Annual Business Meeting that he attended on Oct 25. Three resolutions were discussed, all passed at the meeting.
- 4. NRCS-** Erin updated the board on staffing levels, programs (EQIP, CSP), and contracting.
- 5. SLWAP –** None submitted.
- 6. USC-** None submitted.

7. **CORTLAND COUNTY LEGISLATURE** –Harbin reported that the County Finance Committee discussed and approved the joint Homer/Preble LYL Taxing District for 2024, to be submitted to the Legislature for final approval. The County Strategic Plan update is being pushed forward by the Ag/Planning/Environmental Committee. The County will again have representation on the DEC Open Space Committee, as DEC wants to create a State Park in Cortland County.

Beau Harbin left the meeting at 1:15 p.m.

E. CORRESPONDENCE:

1. **OLSENWIK** – resignation was shared with Board members.
2. **4-WAY PARTNERSHIP** – MOU received.
3. **NYCD** – email regarding veto of Stream C bill.
4. **CORTLAND CSD** – Thank you note for Conservation Field Days.
5. **SWCC** – AEM Rd 18 award announcement - \$420k funding awarded.
6. **SUFFOLK SWCD** – Re: National Envirothon 2024 – will be held in Cortland. Has asked the District to coordinate/suggest tours for advisors.
7. **NACD** – received 2022 annual report.

F. OLD BUSINESS:

1. **Lake District**- Contracted with Anchor QEA for the lake management plan audit; awaiting their signature. Also awaiting the final bill from LYL Preservation Society for management activities.
2. **2024 Budget** - County approved a partial use of ARPA funding for staff (engineer) budget gap (\$20,000/year) for the next 3 years.
3. **Personnel** – Engineer job description has been approved by Civil Service. Position is being advertised via various sources.
Ian Downes filled the Conservation Aide position that was vacated by VanWagenen. Barber requested approval to extend Downes’ appointment for three months.

Motion by Murphy to extend Downes’ appointment to 3/30/24. Seconded and carried 4-0.

Wright Appointment - Barber mentioned that Wright’s Grange appointment to the Board expires this year, and that the Grange would be reaching out to Wright regarding his continued appointment. Wright stated that he would decline another appointment, Barber requested that Wright stay on in an advisory capacity. Jones will check on appointment procedures.

Fish & Wildlife Management Board – Popoli had been the representative. Barber will find out when the term is up and ask a current District employee to serve as a representative. Jones offered to check with the county on status.

G. NEW BUSINESS:

1. **Seedling Program**- Barber requested approval to utilize Meadowview as the supplier for the 2024 seedling sale as quoted for \$18,541. After reviewing the RFP responses, Meadowview is the only

one that can provide the required diversity and a guaranteed delivery date.

Motion by Murphy to use Meadowview as the seedling supplier for 2024. Seconded and carried 4-0.

- 2. Notary Prep Class Contract-** Barber requested approval to sign contract with Alfred Piombino to supply a Notary Exam Prep Class on 12/13/23. The CDEA will cover the cost for District employees to attend, the District will charge non-SWCD municipal employees a fee for attending.

Motion by Jones to authorize Barber to sign Notary Exam Prep Class contract and sign check to pay for the class tomorrow, amount depending on number of attendees. Seconded and carried 4-0.

- 3. 2024 Salaries/Insurance Rates-** Barber requested approval for 2024 starting salaries as presented to the Board. See attached.

Motion by Evanick to approve 2024 starting salaries as presented. Seconded and carried 4-0.

Insurance Rates – Barber requests approval to set the employee health insurance rates per pay period as provided by the county, with slight modification for single coverage due to rounding: Traditional Plan: \$89.42, PPO Plan: \$80.48.

Motion by Murphy to set the health insurance rates as presented. Seconded and carried 4-0.

Medicare Insurance Offset – Barber requested approval to continue in 2024 the Medicare cost offset/discount for County health insurance premiums for retirees that are on Medicare. This follows the existing County policy for retirees on Medicare.

Motion by Evanick to continue the Medicare premium offset in 2024. Seconded and carried 4-0.

- 4. Building Security** – Due to recent incidents in the building, the Grange is exploring increasing/changing security. It was suggested that the Grange's insurance company be contacted regarding their protocol on changes or increases.
- 5. Comp Alliance** – Barber requested approval to renew the Workers Compensation coverage with Comp Alliance. Options for a 1, 2 or 3 year renewal were discussed at a price \$11,938/year. This is a decrease from 2023 rates.

Motion by Jones to lock in the Comp Alliance rate for 3 years at \$11,938/year. Seconded and carried 4-0.

- 6. BMP Verification Contract** – Barber requested approval to sign the USC BMP Practices Implementation Agreement for 2024 BMP Verification activities.

Motion by Jones to authorize Barber to sign the USC agreement in the amount of \$5,000 for verification work completed 10/1/23 – 8/31/24. Seconded and carried 4-0.

7. **AEM Base Reallocation** - Barber explained that the Round 17 AEM Tier 4 funding is currently allocated to 3 farms: Northland, VanPatten and Barber. Recently, Northland has decided they are not proceeding with their respective project (currently allocated at \$45,543). Barber requested approval to allocate available AEM Tier 4 C/S funding in the amount of \$45,360 to the following farms that have implemented fall cover crops: John Diescher, Paul Fouts, Dennis Hartnett, John Huizinga, Blaine Keller, Leon McUumber, Tom VanPatten, Austin Beck

Motion by Murphy to withdraw Northland and add the list of 8 fall cover crop farms presented to the Round 17 AEM Tier 4 Cost Share Program. Seconded and carried 4-0.

8. **National Envirothon** – The District received a letter from the NYSCDEA and NYS Envirothon Committee requesting a funding donation for the National Envirothon in the amount of \$3000. Barber would like to table this until after budget modifications are completed.

Motion by Murphy to table the authorization of a donation of \$3000 for the National Envirothon until after budget modifications are completed. Seconded and carried 4-0.

H. NEXT MEETING: January 9, 2024, 12:00 pm. Staff will be presenting.

I. ADJOURNED at 2:10pm.

Eugene E. Wright, Chairman of Board