



Cortland County Soil and Water Conservation District

100 Grange Place, Room 202, Cortland, NY 13045

Phone: (607) 756-5991 • Fax: (607) 756-0029

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

Monday, March 17, 2025

ATTENDING: Linda Jones, Chair
William McGovern, Vice-Chair
Tracey Evanick, Treasurer
John Phelps, Director
Jeremy Boylan, Director
Amanda Barber, District Manager
Melissa Rutter, Fiscal Officer
Shawn Murphy, NRC

A. MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER by Chair Jones – 1:03 p.m.

B. REVIEW OF MINUTES:

Motion by Phelps to approve the minutes of the regular board meeting held on February 11, 2025 as written. Seconded and carried 5-0.

C. FINANCIAL REPORTS: Including income and expenses for February. Presented for payment Abstract 02-25 for Vouchers 22-25 to 36-25.

Motion by Evanick to accept the February 2025 financial reports and approve the payment of bills presented on Abstract 02-25 in the amount of \$63,660.18. Seconded and carried 5-0.

D. REPORTS:

1. **SWCD**- Report was distributed and is appended to minutes.
2. **SLWAP** – No report submitted.
3. **NRCS**- No report submitted.
4. **NYACD** – No report submitted
5. **SWCC** – March 2025 report distributed and appended to minutes.
6. **Other Reports** – Evanick and Murphy reported on their visit to Albany on March 3 and 4 for Legislative Days. They met with seven representatives and/or their aides to educate and discuss the work that Districts do and issues facing the Districts.

E. CORRESPONDENCE:

1. **NACD** – Update regarding recent executive actions.
2. **Yates County SWCD** – Soil Health and Nutrient Management Workshop announcement.
3. **NYS Envirothon Committee** – Letter seeking volunteers for the NYS Envirothon being held at SUNY Cortland on May 28-29, 2025.

F. OLD BUSINESS:

1. **AEM Base Cost Share Reallocation:** Murphy explained that the current AEM Round 18 Tier 4 funds are allocated to three farms: Tuning Family Farm, Trinity Valley Dairy, and New Hope View Farm.

Recently, Trinity Valley has expanded their project scope and Cortland SWCD has applied for an AGNP 30 grant on their behalf. Additionally, New Hope View requested a project scope change from silage leachate enhancements at the heifer facility to improving access roads and loading pads for enhanced nutrient management efforts, and Whey Street Dairy has requested assistance with agricultural waste treatment enhancements.

Murphy requested approval to reallocate AEM Round 18 Tier 4 cost share funding as follows:

- Tuning Family farm – No change of current \$75,000 allocation.
- New Hope View Farm – Change in scope as indicated above, with corresponding change in allocation from \$100,000 to \$50,000 towards enhanced nutrient management efforts.
- Whey Street Dairy – Project added in place of Trinity Valley Dairy, with an allocation of \$75,000 towards their waste treatment system enhancements.

Motion by Phelps to make AEM Round 18 Tier 4 changes as follows: remove Trinity Valley Dairy, add Whey Street Dairy, and adjust the scope of the New Hope View project as explained by Murphy. Seconded and carried 5-0.

**** Murphy left the meeting at 1:26****

2. **Weed Harvester** – Barber reported that talks are still in progress for storage of the harvester.
3. **USC Wetlands Projects** – Barber reported that the District has two wetlands projects (Allen and Megivern) that currently require the standard 25% monetary contribution cost share from the landowner. Barber explained that although these projects are environmentally beneficial, they do not generally increase the property value, therefore, Barber requests a waiver of the landowner cost share requirement for these projects. Funding has been secured to pay the USC for the work through the DEC Special Finger Lakes Grant, as this project is outside of the USC watershed. The landowner will be required to sign an operation and maintenance agreement to preserve the project.

Motion by Evanick to proceed with implementation of the Allen and Megivern wetlands projects without requiring landowner cost share contributions. Seconded and carried 5-0.

G. NEW BUSINESS:

1. **Conservation Assistant Permanent Appointment** – Barber requests approval to permanently appoint Jake Lynch and Brandan Aschmutat to the Conservation Assistant titles.

Motion by Boylan to appoint Jake Lynch and Brandan Aschmutat to permanent status as Conservation Assistants. Seconded and carried 5-0.

2. **Authorization to Hire-** Barber reported that there is still an active eligibles list for the Conservation Assistant position. Barber has scheduled interviews for the two other interested parties on the eligible list that have not yet been interviewed.

Motion by Boylan to authorize Barber to hire from the eligible list for Conservation Assistant, pending result of scheduled interviews. Seconded and carried 5-0.

Additionally, Barber requested approval to hire two Conservation Aides for the summer season to primarily serve as buffer and/or boat stewards. Estimated pay for the Aide position would be between \$15.50-\$20 per hour.

Motion by Evanick to authorize Barber to hire two seasonal Conservation Aides for the summer to serve as buffer/boat stewards at a rate of \$15.50-\$20/hour. Seconded and carried 5-0.

2. **FOIL Policy** – The Board reviewed and discussed the existing FOIL policy. The Board concurred that there were no changes or edits to the policy needed at this time.

Motion by Phelps to approve the existing FOIL policy as written. Seconded and carried 5-0.

3. **NYACD** – Barber shared with the Board additional correspondence from the NYACD and NYSCDEA regarding the lobbyist issue. Further discussion was had and historical information was shared regarding lobbyists and their role in relation to Districts, NYACD, and NYSCDEA. Barber and Jones shared information from the recent NYACD Managers meeting that they attended. Jones and Boylan plan to attend the NYACD Board meeting on 3/24. Barber reiterated to the Board that the NYACD is the association for, and represents, the SWCD members of the Board.
4. **Board Training/Meeting Format** – Barber proposed the creation of a 3-ring-binder-type Board member book that would contain various material (i.e., minutes, Plan of Work, budget, etc.). This would be separate from the current blue folders provided to the Board each month. The Board discussed the proposal and the majority indicated that they did not want to proceed with the separate 3-ring-binder-type book at this time.
Barber discussed holding additional Board training on some of the existing policies and procedures, along with other training modules furnished by the SWCC. Jones requested a standing agenda item for Board members to report monthly on meetings, trainings attended or community needs. Barber mentioned that she would like to have a standing agenda item for staff reports as well, wherein each month a different staff member would give an update to the Board on their activities/projects.
5. **SWCC Managers Meeting** – Barber informed the Board that the next SWCC Managers Meeting is scheduled for June 11, 2025 at the Grange. Board members are invited to attend. Agenda to follow.

I. **NEXT MEETING:** April 8, 2025, 1:00 pm.

J. **ADJOURNED at 3:04 pm.**

Melissa Rutter, Board Secretary