



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, February 12, 2026

ATTENDING: Linda Jones, Chair
William McGovern, Vice-Chair
John Phelps, Director
Jeremy Boylan, Director
Timothy Elliott, Director
Amanda Barber, District Manager
Melissa Rutter, Fiscal Officer
Stacy Russell, Natural Resources Program Specialist

A. MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER by Chair Jones – 1:08 p.m.

B. REVIEW OF MINUTES:

Motion by Phelps to approve the minutes of the regular board meeting held on January 13, 2026 as written. Seconded and carried 5-0.

C. FINANCIAL REPORTS: Including income and expenses for January. Presented for payment Abstract 01-26 for Vouchers 01-26 to 16-26.

Motion by Boylan to accept the January 2026 financial reports and approve the payment of bills presented on Abstract 01-26 in the amount of \$103,456.12. Seconded and carried 5-0.

D. REPORTS:

1. **SWCD-** Report was presented by Barber. Copy was distributed and is appended to minutes.
2. **SLWAP** – No report submitted.
3. **NRCS-** No report submitted.
4. **NYACD** – January 2026 report was distributed and appended to minutes.
5. **SWCC** – February 2026 report submitted and appended to minutes.
6. **Board Member Reports** –Boylan announced that he is expecting to be appointed to NYACD's By-Laws Review Committee. He also discussed the NYACD District Director vacancies across the state. Boylan notified the Board that the District's request to extend the filing date for the 2025 Report of the Treasurer was granted by the NYS OSC.
7. **Staff Reports** – Barber reported on Legislative Days that she attended with Bland and discussed some of their meetings with the legislators. Barber then discussed the landfill regarding DEC-approved reductions in some PFAS monitoring and contingency monitoring, and potential new leachate monitoring requirements. Russell delivered a presentation regarding some of the projects she spearheaded over the last year including Parker, Irish Hill, and W. Scott Rd. She then fielded questions from the Board regarding these projects.
8. **LYLPRD Update** – None.

E. CORRESPONDENCE: None.

**** Russell left the meeting at 2:08 p.m. ****

F. OLD BUSINESS:

1. **County Audit** – Barber brought a copy of the 2024 County Audit to the Board for review. This audit includes the District as a component unit. There were no adverse findings in the audit in regards to the District.

Motion by Phelps to accept the findings of the 2024 Cortland County audit as it relates to the District. Seconded and carried 5-0.

2. **Project Collaboration MOA** – Barber reported that it was the County Attorney’s opinion that specifically sharing “personnel” as indicated in the MOA cannot be done. Barber will continue to work with NYSDAM and the NYS SWCC to find a solution.

G. NEW BUSINESS:

1. **2026 Budget/Staffing Discussion** – Since Russell is retiring in April, Barber is considering promoting Russell Smith and Shawn Murphy to fill both her Natural Resource Program Specialist (NRPS) position and a second (currently vacant) NRPS position. Current salaries for both would remain the same, as they are within the pay schedule range for the NRPS title. Barber reported that further conversations will be held with Smith and Murphy regarding the positions as they relate to duties, Civil Service testing, timing of promotions, and potential salary.

Barber requested approval to hire two new employees – incumbent(s) will be under the Civil Service title of either Conservation Assistant or Natural Resource Conservationist, depending on qualifications. Barber would like to hire one CA/NRC with a forestry background to serve as a Forestry Technician and one CA/NRC with an agricultural background to serve as an Agricultural Planner.

Barber then presented the 2026 Modified Budget for the Board to review to reflect proposed changes.

Motion by Phelps to approve the 2026 modified budget as presented. Seconded and carried 5-0.

Motion by Elliott to authorize Barber to post for two new technical positions – Conservation Assistant and Natural Resource Conservationist, incumbent title(s) to be based on qualifications. Seconded and carried 5-0.

2. **Auto CAD License** –

Motion by McGovern to approve the purchase of one AutoCAD license at a cost NTE \$4,500.00. Seconded and carried 5-0.

3. **State Reports Review** – Barber presented completed reports Parts A, B, and C, along with the Performance Measures report and the Annual Report for the Board to review. Discussion regarding the reports ensued.

Motion by Phelps to approve submittal of the completed state reports Parts A, B, C, Performance Measures, and Annual Report to the NYSDAM as required. Seconded and carried 5-0.

4. Program Payment Review –Barber discussed payment progression for several programs:

AEM Round 18 – Barber requested approval to modify the Tuning contract to reflect an increase in the contract sum up to \$94,985.32 due to changes in the design.

Motion by Elliott to modify the Tuning contract to reflect an increase in the contract sum up to \$94,985.32 due to changes in the design. Seconded and carried 5-0.

Cover Crops – Payment calculations are still in progress.

AGNP – Barber requested approval of partial payments for AGNP29 Randall and AGNP28 Ruschmann. Randall’s silage leachate portion of the project is complete, access roads are awaiting completion. The District is holding back a portion until the rest of the project is complete. Ruschmann’s BMP Implementation portions are completed, the project itself is not complete. The District is holding back 10% until the project is completed.

Motion by Boylan to authorize partial payment on the AGNP29 Randall project in the amount of \$533,846.52. Seconded and carried 5-0.

Motion by Phelps to authorize partial payment on the AGNP28 Ruschmann project in the amount of \$93,125. Seconded and carried 5-0.

5. CRF 6 Hicks Extension – Barber requested approval to request an extension on the CRF 6 Hicks grazing system contract due to changes in farm operators. The original contract expiration date is April 2026, and Barber would like to request an extension to September 22, 2027.

Motion by Phelps to approve a request for the CRF 6 Hicks grazing system contract to be extended to September 22, 2027, date subject to NYSDAM approval. Seconded and carried 5-0.

6. Russell Retirement – Barber submitted a letter from Stacy Russell announcing her retirement effective April 9, 2026.

Motion by Elliott to approve Russell’s retirement with regrets. Seconded and carried 5-0.

7. Annual Report – Barber requested approval to hire Delta Barber as a temporary Conservation Aide to assist in completing the public-facing 2025 Annual Report.

Motion by Boylan to approve contracting Delta Barber to assist in competing the 2025 Report for a flat-fee cost NTE \$500. Seconded and carried 5-0.

H. NEXT MEETING: March 18, 2026, 1:00 pm (rescheduled due to Water Quality Symposium).

I. ADJOURNED at 3:19 pm.

Melissa Rutter, Board Secretary