



## 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

Tuesday, December 9, 2025

**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  
Shawn Murphy, NRC  
Emma Bland, Conservation Assistant  
Jen Doty, Farm Services Agency

**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 November 12, 2025 as written. Seconded and carried 5-0.

**C. FINANCIAL REPORTS:** Including income and expenses for November. Presented for payment Abstract 11-25 for Vouchers 227-25 to 241-25.

**Motion** by McGovern to accept the November 2025 financial reports and approve the payment of bills presented on Abstract 11-25 in the amount of \$69,908.12. Seconded and carried 5-0.

**\*\* Doty entered the meeting at 1:17 p.m. \*\***

**E. REPORTS:**

- 1. SWCD-** Report was presented by Barber. Copy was distributed and is appended to minutes. Barber mentioned that the NYSDEC tour of the projects done under the Eastern Finger Lakes Special Project grant was very successful.
- 2. USC –** No report submitted.
- 3. SLWAP –** No report submitted.
- 4. NRCS-** No report submitted.
- 5. NYACD –** November 2025 report was distributed and appended to minutes.
- 6. SWCC –** No report submitted.
- 7. Board Member Reports –** Jones thanked Barber and Shawn Murphy for the 11/7 field trip to District project sites. McGovern concurred that it was very informative, and they both recommended that the other Board members consider future field trips to get a first-hand view of the various District projects.
- 8. Staff Reports –** Bland delivered a presentation regarding the District's landfill monitoring program. She then fielded questions from the Board regarding the program.
- 9. LYLPRD Update –** Barber relayed that all bills for 2025 have been submitted for closeout.
- 10. Other Reports –** Eastern Finger Lakes Coalition (EFLC) October 2025 report.

**F. CORRESPONDENCE:**

1. **Homer Garden Club** - \$200 donation received.
2. **SLWAP** – Annual Meeting agenda (12/11/25).
3. **NACD/NYACD** – Updates on pending bills and Congressional/Executive actions.
4. **American Farmland Trust** – Email regarding agroforestry support availability.
5. **CDEA** – Agenda for 12/17/25 Managers’ meeting.
6. **Chesapeake Bay Program** – 2025 Watershed Agreement
7. **Senator Lea Webb** – Christmas card.

- G. FSA CONTRACTS:** Doty requested a signature on a CRP grassland re-enrollment. The new contract is for 15 years on a 38.6 acre parcel belonging to Bundy Creek Farm.

**Motion** by Phelps to authorize Barber to sign the USDA/FSA grassland CRP for Bundy Creek Farm as presented. Seconded and carried 5-0.

**\*\* Doty left the meeting at 1:33 p.m. \*\***

**H. OLD BUSINESS:**

1. **2026 Budget** – Barber relayed that the 2026 County budget passed, with the District’s allocated funding remaining level from the 2025 budget.
2. **AEM 18 Base Funding** – Barber reported that there are four approved projects still under construction; the AEM 18 Tier 4 contract requires that the projects must be completed by 12/31/25. It is uncertain at this time if the projects will be completed by that date and/or whether all of the funds allocated for these projects will be utilized. Barber requested approval to reallocate funds, if needed, amongst the four approved projects in order to maximize use of the available funds. In addition, in the event that there are additional funds that have not been utilized for the approved projects, Barber requested approval to allocate those funds for cover crops and/or fuel storage.

**Motion** by Phelps to authorize Barber to reallocate AEM 18 Tier 4 funds as needed amongst the four previously approved AEM 18 Tier 4 projects. Seconded and carried 5-0.

**Motion** by Phelps to authorize Barber to utilize available AEM 18 Tier 4 funds, if any, to fund soil health cover crop systems and/or up to 4 petroleum/oil products storage systems. In the event that storage system(s) are installed, completion would be no later than 12/31/25, with a landowner/District cost share of 25/75 percent per unit. Seconded and carried 5-0.

**I. NEW BUSINESS:**

1. **2025 Part B Project Addition** – Barber requests approval to add the tree planting at Westfield Park in Cortland to the 2025 Part B project in order to fully utilize the 2025 Part B funding.

**Motion** by Boylan to add the tree planting at Westfield Park in Cortland to the 2025 Part B project in order to fully utilize the 2025 Part B funding. Seconded and carried 5-0.

- 2. Oneida Lake Watershed Coalition MOU** – Barber requested approval for Jones to sign the MOU for the District to become a member of the Oneida Lake Watershed Coalition.

**Motion** by McGovern to approve the MOU for the Oneida Lake Watershed Coalition to be signed by Jones. Seconded and carried 5-0.

- 3. Legislative Days** – Barber mentioned that the next Legislative Days is being held on February 9 and 10, 2026. Registrations are due December 12, 2025. There was discussion regarding which Board members were interested in attending. It was the consensus of the Board to generically register one Board member and two staff members, and to advise NYACD when attendee names are finalized.

- 4. Longevity/Certification/Director Payments** – Rutter requested approval to pay longevity, certification, and Director stipend/mileage as presented and as budgeted.

**Motion** by Elliott to approve to payment of longevity, certification, and Director stipend/mileage as presented and as budgeted. Seconded and carried 5-0.

- 5. 2026 Salary Increases/Health Insurance Premiums** –

**Insurance Rates** – The District is in receipt of the Cortland County 2026 health insurance rates, and Barber requests approval to set the employee health insurance rates per pay period as provided by the county, with slight modifications of the employee rates (as needed) due to rounding.

**2026 Salary Increases** - Barber requested approval for 2026 salaries as presented and as budgeted.

**Motion** by McGovern to approve the employee health insurance rates as presented, and to approve the 2026 starting salaries as presented. Seconded and carried 5-0.

- 6. Year-End Bill Payment Approval** –

**Motion** by Elliott to authorize payment of all year-end bills. Seconded and carried 5-0.

- 7. AEM Strategic Plan Review** – Murphy gave a presentation regarding the AEM Strategic Plan, its history, and how data trends and surveys are utilized to formulate and update the Plan for Cortland County. Murphy explained to the Board that the AEM Strategic Plan for the five-year period spanning 2026-2030 has been updated and introduced it to the Board for approval. Further discussion ensued and Murphy fielded questions from the Board regarding the 2026-2030 AEM Strategic Plan.

**Motion** by McGovern to approve the 2026-2030 AEM Strategic Plan as presented by Murphy. Seconded and carried 5-0.

- 8. AGNP 28 Extension Requests** – Barber requests approval to request a no-cost, one-year contract extension request for the AGNP 28 Ullrich HUA grant (C701499). The current grant contract expires 1/31/26. The grant extension amendment will allow for the project, which is underway, to be completed under an active contract.

**Motion** by McGovern to allow Barber to request a no-cost, one-year contract extension amendment

for the AGNP 28 Ullrich grant. Seconded and carried 5-0.

Barber requests approval to request a no-cost, one-year contract extension request for the AGNP 28 Ruschmann HUA grant (C701498). The current grant contract expires 1/31/26. The grant extension amendment will allow for the project, which is underway, to be completed under an active contract.

**Motion** by McGovern to allow Barber to request a no-cost, one-year contract extension amendment for the AGNP 28 Ruschmann grant. Seconded and carried 5-0.

- 9. Computer Upgrades** – Barber requested approval to purchase hard drives/memory upgrades for existing laptops. Cost NTE \$500.

**Motion** by Boylan to allow Barber to purchase hard drive and memory upgrades for the District laptops at a cost NTE \$500. Seconded and carried 5-0.

- 10. Landowner Contract Approvals – Ullrich, Ruschmann** – To align with the AGNP 28 NYSDAM extension requests (as outlined in item 8 above), Barber requested approval to extend the current landowner contracts for Ullrich and Ruschmann until July 2026, pending the NYSDAM approval of the respective contract extensions.

**Motion** by Boylan to allow Barber to extend the landowner contracts for Ullrich and Ruschmann to July 2026, pending NYSDAM approval of the respective contract extensions. Seconded and carried 5-0.

**\*\* Barber left the meeting at 2:02 p.m. \*\***

Emma Bland proceeded with her staff report (see Section E item 8).

Boylan mentioned the Flood Enhancement Bill and its potential effect on District projects. Jones suggested discussing the topic at the January meeting when Barber would be present to weigh in on the subject.

Jones proceeded with a quick NYACD update.

- J. NEXT MEETING:** January 13, 2025, 1:00 pm (Reorganizational meeting).

- K. ADJOURNED at 2:24 pm.**

---

**Melissa Rutter, Board Secretary**