

St. Lawrence County Soil and Water Conservation District
1942 Old DeKalb Road, Canton, NY 13617
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES
For June 19, 2009, 10:00 AM

Board Members Present: Robert Andrews, Jr. (Chairperson), Ed Hadlock (Vice-Chair), Clark Decker, and Tom Grow.

Board Members Not Present: Dave Martin (Treasurer), Fred Morrill, and Tom Nichols.

Staff Present: Dawn Howard (Manager), Katie Maloney (Technician), and Raeanne Dulanski (Secretary).

Guests Present: Astor Boozer, NRCS State Conservationist; Eric Swanson, NRCS Acting Watershed Team Leader; Jim Pullano, NRCS DC; Steve Lanthier, SWCC; and Clark Putman, FSA CED.

I. Call to Order at 10:08

II. Introductions

III. Minutes of the Previous Meeting: May minutes were **approved**.

IV. Treasurer's Reports: May Treasurer's report was **approved**.

V. Reports

A. SWCC - Lanthier

1. Less money was put into the EPF than was originally thought. The SWCC is hoping to be able to pay the Part A reimbursements with that money. SWCC should know by the end of next week if those payments will be able to be made.
2. Most construction projects related to the NPS grants have been put on hold for this year. Lanthier reported that he does have one or two projects that are going to continue knowing that they may not be reimbursed from the state anytime soon. Most other farmers decided to put any projects on hold until milk prices improve and they are ensured that they will get their state funds. Swanson asked if earlier rounds of the NPS grants are still getting their money. Lanthier said that it does not matter what round the projects were in. There are no funds to pay for any of the rounds. SWCC is working on what to do with round 15 projects, whether to throw them out or use them. The problem is that the projects are going to be sitting so long that farmers may not want to still participate. Some may do things on their own, others may not have the funding to do the project and other farms may not be in business anymore.
3. Lanthier reported that he has a few Districts that are in financial distress. He has one District which may not make it through the year. Decker asked if they had let NYACD know that they are in trouble. Lanthier said that he does believe that they have.

4. The SWCC has created a prioritized order for the payment of vouchers. The priority is Part A, Part C, Year 4 AEM, Year 5 AEM and then the projects. \$1.8 million is needed to pay for Part A to all Districts.

B. FSA – Putman

1. In three months time \$1.866 million in MILC payments has gone out to about 250 farms. May's price was about \$1.30 cwt with June and July expected to be \$1.90. The average blend price for May was \$11.23 cwt. Forecasted prices do not hit \$15 cwt until June 2010. MILC had a 2.98 million pound cap In St. Lawrence County, three farms have capped out in three months. Lewis County had a farm that made the cap in eight days.
2. CWT program took out over 100,000 cows. 14 farms in NY participated. Last numbers show that the herd size has decreased by 30,000. If CWT had not taken the 100,000 cows out of the herd, it would have increased by 70,000.
3. Acreage reporting has started and DCP sign up deadline is August 14.

C. NYACD – Decker

1. Judy Littrell has been calling the Department of Budget to try to get funds put into the EPF.
2. Plans are moving ahead for the annual meeting in October. They are trying to keep costs down for everyone.
3. Districts that are having hard times have been asked to call NYACD. NYACD is trying to work something out so that these Districts can get their funds as soon as possible to keep them going.
4. Brad Rogers and Judy Littrell have had meetings with Astor Boozer.
5. Next Division 3 meeting will be another teleconference on July 23rd.

VI. SWCD Reports

A. Forestry – Howard, Earl not present

1. Earl and Howard have a resolution for the Board of Legislators regarding continuing the NYSOPRHP grant to maintain the 515 miles of snowmobile trails.
2. Earl and Fred Morrill have been working on a resolution for the Board of Legislators to decrease the amount of timber harvested to a more sustainable amount and reestablish the county land improvement fund.
3. Discussion on invasive species, particularly the Emerald Ash Borer and the Long Horn Beetle ensued.
4. Met with county Attorney and county Administrator about the Adopt a Trail Policy and were informed that the District needs additional liability insurance.

B. Technician's Report – Maloney

1. Maloney reported that she has seven CNMP's waiting to be completed. Waiting for Year 5 AEM authorization before much work is started.
2. Maloney was able to help with the WRP Contribution Agreement and with Safety Day preparations.

C. Secretary/Assistant Treasurer – Dulanski

1. Dulanski reported that Ag Values are still coming in. Three from Gouvernuer are currently in the office waiting to be done.

2. 467 5th grade students participated in the June 9 and 10 Safety Days. It is believed that Cooperative Extension will be doing this program next year.
3. Information was sent yesterday to the county for the annual county audit. We have not heard anything from them yet.

D. Manager's Report – Howard (Appendix A)

1. Howard reported that Steve Lanthier's area has changed. He now has Jefferson and Lewis Counties and lost Saratoga.
2. The County's Ethics law will have a hearing on July 6th.
3. DEC's open burning law was revised and is out for comments. An outdoor wood burning furnace law will be out for comment soon.
4. New CAFO rules out and come into effect in July.
5. Judy Wendt was the Board of Legislator's RC&D representative and then the alternate. Alternate Bill LaPoint became the representative. Judy has now stepped down from RC&D.
6. RC&D's next meeting will be at the Power Authority in Massena on June 30th. Howard invited the Board to attend.
7. Two DANC drainage loans have been approved.
8. DEC's Landowner Grassland Management program applications are available to any landowner interested in that program. August 1 is the deadline.
9. Howard reported that she had been working the DEC ag complaint reimbursements and now estimates the amount to be around \$8,000.00.
10. Howard asked for permission to pay the suggested \$125.00 to the NYSCDEA for the SWCD commercial that will be aired out of Watertown. *Hadlock made a motion to pay the \$125.00 for the SWCD commercial. Grow second. Decker opposed. Motion Approved.*

VII. Old and New Business

A. Rent

1. Astor Boozer, NRCS State Conservationist stated that there is a great working relationship between NRCS and Districts across the country. He believes that the NRCS and District are more productive for conservation if they are working together. Both agencies have the same thought process, that conservation is a positive for the state.
2. Boozer has had discussions with Judy Littrell and Brad Rogers of NYACD and they have been relating some suggestions on what has been working and what has not been working.
3. Over all discussions about budgets have been a problem. There are lots of one people offices and three have been discussions about closing offices. He does not want to do that. NRCS has been looking at efficiencies and working on developing an efficiency plan.
4. Space needs to be looked at, ie how much there is and how it is being used.
5. Eric Swanson from Rensselaer County stated that Marilyn Stephenson had wanted to attend today's meeting, but was not able to do so due to a prior commitment.
6. The lease process has changed and now has to have GSA approval from Washington DC.
7. Andrews asked Boozer if we could still stay with the old system and have the Secretary's time count towards rent. Boozer stated that he believes that that option is

still available. Boozer said that if there is anyone providing any assistance to the NRCS that he wanted to be sure that it is captured.

8. Andrews stated that he was confused about TSPs. Discussion followed about TSPs. Boozer stated that a District can be a TSP as long as they are not collocated with NRCS.

9. Howard stated that the District was not so much concerned about being a TSP, as in being paid for 100% of our time. She asked for clarification on 50/50 Contribution Agreements. The SWCD is currently in their seventh such agreement and in the past were paid for only 50% of the time they invested. Per Marilyn Stephenson and the current agreement, it should be 100%. Boozer said that this was correct. Lanthier stated that this was not consistent with what is currently happening in other districts.

10. Decker told Boozer that the rent for this building that was presented to the District (at the current rate of \$23.50 a square foot) totaled just under \$25,000/year. He also stated that if the \$3,000 per computer per year that was added on that would be an additional \$9,000 for the District. He asked if the \$3,000 per computer is an accurate number and if that cost will be assessed to the District. Boozer replied that he has also heard \$3,000 per computer. This amount is coming from Washington for support of computers. There has not been anything definite heard about this cost, but it is being talked about. He would like to not have that cost passed on, but it might have to be. This cost is going to be required not only from Districts, but from all USDA agencies, NRCS, FSA and RD. They will be assessed the fee for all computers in their offices.

11. Boozer also stated that there are going to be two NRCS employees located in this office, Pullano and the new Biologist coming in July. Boozer stated that the District would only be paying for space that they use.

12. Howard asked if Boozer is aware of any other costs that maybe coming in the near future that the District currently is not aware of, such as costs associated with link pass. Boozer stated that he does not know of any other costs at this time.

13. The fact that the Canton Service Center is looking at negotiating a 10-year lease was brought up. Decker expressed the District's concern about signing onto a 10-year lease. Boozer stated that he did not believe that the District would sign onto the lease. Lanthier stated that the District cannot legally sign onto a 10-year lease. NYS District Law prohibits Districts from signing into long term agreements. The District can only do one year at a time.

14. Andrews stated that he is concerned with what staying could do to the District financially. He stated that there is a good staff currently with the District and in order to keep a good staff, you have to pay them. It has always been his motto that if the staff "does good by us, we will do good by them". Boozer stated that he does not want to have the District move out of the building. We have the same focus, but he does not have a cookie cutter answer to this problem.

15. Howard reiterated to Boozer that we need an amount. The questions was asked last February. We need to know how much NRCS is expecting the District to put in towards the rent before anything else can happen. The amount will be used to compare with costs of moving or to formulate a contribution agreement to cover the cost to stay. Howard had sent an amount that she felt was fair (the amount reflects the current square footage that the District occupies) to Marilyn Stephenson for review. Boozer stated that he would follow up with Stephenson about the amount. He realizes time is of the essence. Howard offered to make a copy of the email that was sent to Stephenson so Boozer could review the amount.

16. Andrews expressed his satisfaction with today's conversations and thanked Boozer for traveling to Canton to attend this Board meeting. Andrews also found it encouraging that NRCS is willing to work with the District. Boozer stated that he is going to try to make it around to all the Counties and meet all the Boards. Our invitation just made this meeting happen sooner. He believes that it is good to have these meetings and to be able to sit down together so we can explain and discuss situations. Both sides do not have to agree, but they can agree to disagree and move forward. Boozer also acknowledged that timing is going to be the hardest obstacle, but he hopes over time that we can pull these things back together. He will get the information to us so that we can have a base to know what to do.

B. Staffing

1. Andrews wanted to be sure that Boozer realized the current staffing in the Canton field office. There is currently only one NRCS staff, Jim Pullano, in the office and not less than three years ago there had been three staff members here, working solely on St. Lawrence County projects. Andrews believes that this is making an extremely large workload for Pullano. Pullano stated that he does receive regular assistance from the watershed staff.

2. Decker and Andrews both stated the St. Lawrence County is geographically very large and has 1400 farms. There is a very large workload here. Boozer said that he is looking at staff and wants the staff where the work is. He is going to be looking at how many employees each county has and the amount of work that is located there. In the early 1980s, Boozer reported that there was about 1,500 NRCS employees in Texas and currently there are about 600. He also stated that he is aware of the distance across the county and that it is inefficient to expect people from out of the county to travel here and then out in the field in another part of the county.

3. Boozer thanked the Board for the invitation to the meeting and the opportunity to have a discussion with them.

VIII. Correspondence: Mail Folder available for Board review.

IX. Announcements: None.

X. Time and Date of Next Meeting: July 16, 2009

XI. Meeting Adjourned: 12:20 PM

Robert Andrews, Jr., Chairperson

Date

Raeanne Dulanski, Secretary/ Assistant Treasurer

Date

Attachments: Appendix A