

St. Lawrence County Soil and Water Conservation District
1942 Old DeKalb Road, Canton, NY 13617
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES
For May 21, 2009, 7:30 PM

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

Board Members Not Present: Dave Martin (Treasurer) and Tom Grow.

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

Guests Present: Jim Pullano, NRCS DC.

I. Call to Order

II. Minutes of the Previous Meeting: April minutes were **approved**.

III. Treasurer's Reports: April Treasurer's report was **approved**.

IV. Reports

A. NRCS – Pullano (Appendix A)

1. Board was provided Pullano's report to review and comment on.
2. Pullano discussed this month's civil rights topic.
3. Pullano reported that there are numerous applicants for EQIP, EQIP-Forestry and the new EQIP-Organic. EQIP sign up deadlines have passed except EQIP-Organic, which is June 12th. Andrews asked about how many applications Pullano has received. Pullano reported about 78 applications to date in St. Lawrence County and that a Watershed Team approach will be utilized to process them.
4. Pullano stressed that the NRCS wants to continue the partnership that has been built in St. Lawrence County and across the State, and that NRCS management fully supports the partnership and is open to suggestions to maintain the partnership effort. The NRCS would like to work with the District to formulate a plan that would allow the District to continue being co-located. They would like to try to work out a Contribution Agreement to cover the rent of the District in addition to re-negotiating space. Morrill asked if a Contribution Agreement could be developed to cover 100% of the rent. Pullano and Howard said they believe so but that NRCS management makes the ultimate decision. Maloney reminded the Board to think about the number of hours that it is going to take from the staff in order to "work off" the rent. Discussion about hours followed. Nicholas informed the Board that NYACD has sent an email out stating that Judy Littrell and Brad Rogers have a second meeting with the State Conservationist, Astor Boozer.
5. The Board thanked Pullano for his presence at the Board meeting and Andrews expressed the Board's appreciation and respect for Pullano and his continued work for the residents of St. Lawrence County.

B. NYACD – Nichols

1. Nichols restated that Judy Littrell and Brad Rogers of NYACD have a meeting with Astor Boozer coming up, and that he is going to ask for a meeting with Boozer also. Nichols would like to talk about how he feels that he was misinformed when he was told that the NRCS would not be taking positions away from St. Lawrence County. Nichols can not see how NRCS can think that one person can possibly be the Watershed Team Leader for the area of St. Lawrence County to Long Island. Pullano stated that the positions have not been taken away from St. Lawrence County. The two positions that were housed in the Canton field office are listed as vacant, not necessarily cut, and that staffing is based on budgets and an overall staffing plan. In the near future a biologist will be housed in Canton which will serve the county and the two watersheds. He also reminded the Board that the St. Lawrence County/Lake Champlain Watershed Team is available for assistance in St. Lawrence County and has previously assisted in many tasks and will continue to assist especially in processing EQIP applications.

2. Howard stated that she would like to clarify the way that a Contribution Agreement works. She had always believed, and had described to the Board at prior meetings, that a Contribution Agreement had the District completing 100% of the work, but being reimbursed for only 50%. Marilyn Stephenson, the Watershed Team Leader recently informed Howard that this description is incorrect. A Contribution Agreement has the District completing 50% of the work and NRCS completing 50% of the work, and the District being paid for a 100% of the work that they complete. Morrill asked to review past Contribution Agreements that the District has entered into with NRCS. Howard said she would get those to him. Howard also explained that this 50 % reimbursement is why the District had looked into becoming a TSP (Technical Service Provider) so that the District could receive 100% reimbursement for all work that was completed. Howard was unsure of what other requirements that there may become to be a TSP if the District did decide to leave the Service Center.

3. Andrews reminded the Board that we want to make sure that the Public continues to have access to the State/Federal Programs that are available if we remain co-located or move to the Martin House.

4. Decker suggested that a letter be written about the District's situation ie why we have gone looking for another space (because the District is concerned about being able to cover the rent) and that NRCS is the one that presented the figures to us about space and cost. Andrews said to send it to Boozer and CC Stephenson. Nichols said it would be better to send it to Stephenson and CC Boozer. The Board decided that they would rather talk to Boozer face to face, so they would like to send an invitation to Boozer to come up to a Board meeting to discuss the rent situation and NRCS staffing. The Board decided that they would like the meeting at the earliest convenience of Boozer, and they would be willing to do a day meeting. Howard was asked to draft an invitation and send it to the Board for comment before sending it out.

C. AFPB – Andrews

1. Andrews will be going to the Board of Legislators to invite some and demand others to come to the August 24th farm visit. Andrews invited the Soil and Water District Board to attend if they would like.

2. Ag Plastics – Howard informed the Board that Blake Putnam, the Recycle Ag Plastics Program Coordinator will be moving to St. Lawrence County. If the DEC

money for the program runs out and no new money is received, then the program will be completed in August.

3. The Farm Bureau's Day at the Farm will be on October 3.

V. SWCD Reports

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

1. Rent

a. Howard called Stephenson about rent on May 18 because she had not heard anything since 3/30 re scheduling their meeting. This is when Stephenson informed Howard about Contribution Agreements. When they were discussing what the District could do for Contribution Agreements, Stephenson informed Howard that WRP is not a priority.

b. Stephenson also said that the square footage that the District will have for rented space is negotiable. Howard did a quick figure and if the District pays for 150 square feet each for three people plus the amount of common space that we have to pay for, then the rent would still be very high, about \$18,000 (if the amount per square foot does not go up). We also learned the NRCS is still thinking about charging Districts for computer service. The number that we have heard is about \$3,000 per year per computer. They may still let us have one CCE machine for free. (Meaning the District would have to pay an additional \$9,000 per year for computers if this statement is correct.)

c. It was also discussed with Stephenson that some of the Clerk's time might be able to count for the rent.

d. Stephenson also discussed with Howard that the NRCS is working on getting more staff located in the Canton field office. The District staff is concerned that if NRCS starts filling position in the field office, then there may be less for the staff to do to work off the rent. Decker asked the question, if we sign a short-term agreement to work off rent and the lease is 5 -10 years long, what after that short-term agreement? The staff again expressed concern over the number of hours that will be needed to make the amount to cover rent.

e. Time frame – USDA lease is up in May 2010. Cooperative Extension said that there was no urgency from them for a decision. The staff would like to move in August, if a decision is made, as it would work best for the schedule of typical activities the District completes. The weather would be nicer than waiting until winter or next spring.

f. Andrews asked the Board if they all agreed that they did not want to make a decision about moving tonight, and they were all in favor.

2. Howard also reported that there is no DEC money for reimbursement for new water quality complaint investigations. She is going to call State Committee again and clarify if there is money to reimburse complaints that have been done before the last deadline.

3. AEM is probably going to have a Year 5, because it is the last year of the five year contract with the State. It is looking likely that another contract for AEM is going to be signed, meaning that there will not be an AEM Year 6.

4. NYACD emailed a letter for review by the Board for consideration to sign onto about EPF funds. (Appendix C). The Board reviewed the NYACD/Farmland Protection Board/Agricultural Nonpoint Source Program (ANSP) letter and decided

that they would like to sign. *Morrill made a motion to approve Andrews to sign the letter, Decker seconded and all approved.*

5. Decker stated that he learned that the NYACD may send another support letter for the EPF fund, one without the Farmland Protection Board, because we all support the fund; however, things like ANSP compete with others for the funds within the EPF. *Morrill made a motion to allow Andrews to sign the letter if Decker reviews the letter and approves of it's contents. Hadlock seconded and all approved.* Andrews pointed out that Farmland Protection funds go to areas with high populations and the only funds that rural areas get are from the Nonpoint Source monies.

B. Forestry – Howard, Earl not present

1. Andrews has been hearing good feedback about Earl's State of the Forest Address to the Board of Legislators. The reserve fund to start replanting the forest with more desirable stock after timber sales and to do improvements to roads is a good idea. He had forgotten that a fund used to exist. The County is going to allow the District to stop cutting the amount of its appropriation in timber sales. This is a good thing because timber prices have been low, resulting in having to cut a huge amount of timber to make that quota, or cutting an unsustainable amount of timber each year.

2. ATVs – Howard reported that Alex MacKinnon would like to have any Trail Coordinator position created to be a County employee and housed over at the County, possibly at Economic Development. With the discussions that Howard has had with MacKinnon, the Trail Coordinator would also be taking over the Snowmobile Grant. Howard informed the Board that the District is having trouble receiving the Snowmobile Grant attachments from the Snowmobile Association this year. We would like to establish a firm deadline for accepting this information for next year. A letter will be written and sent to the County as well as the Association. It would be unfortunate if the Association did not make it's money one year, but if that is what it takes to get the information more timely and completely, then that may unfortunately have to happen. The District is running out of ways to ask the Association without following through. Andrews stated that he would like to see a newly created Trail Coordinator position placed at Soil and Water. Morrill said that he would support the position in either location, and that he believes that Economic Development does a lot of good work for the County. Nichols would like to see the position at Soil and Water. Decker does not think that the District should push for the location of the position here. Hadlock would like the position to go over to the County. It was the consensus of the Board not to push for the Trail Coordinator position to be placed at Soil and Water; however, if the position is offered to Soil and Water, it will be considered.

Tom Nichols left the meeting at 8:53 PM.

C. Technician's Report – Maloney

1. Steve Lanthier was in Canton on Wednesday, May 20th to close AEM Year 4. All \$40,000 available was earned. Maloney expressed hesitation is starting Year 5 work until the money is a sure thing. The decision has been made to start work on only things that cannot wait, such as fieldwork.

2. Maloney has been able to work on the WRP Contribution Agreement.

3. Maloney has been doing the research on computer software for moving.

D. Secretary/Assistant Treasurer – Dulanski

1. Dulanski reported that the last month has been very busy. There have been an enormous amount of calls and people in the office with the end of EQIP sign-ups. The contact count that she has been keeping track of is over 1,300 (for both agencies) so far this year.
2. Ag Values continue to come in from Gouverneur. There are many people in the town that are upset over their assessments.
3. Dulanski reiterated that Snowmobile Grant information has been slow coming in. She has received the labor and groomer sheets from the Association and has been working through them.
4. Dulanski reported that the WRP Contribution Agreement for the annual monitoring has been moving forward. Maloney has been able to step up and take over much of the work on this project.
5. Dulanski has been working on updating the budget for a more current view to assist the Board with making the decision about moving.
6. Farm Safety has unfortunately not received as much attention as Dulanski would like to be giving to the program, but there are 2 Safety Days scheduled for June 9 and 10 this year. Discussed the possibility of not coordinating the program next year.

VI. Old and New Business – Rent. Moving Expense (Attachment D). The Board reviewed the handout regarding expected move expenses for this Fiscal Year.

VII. Correspondence: None.

VIII. Announcements: None.

IX. Time and Date of Next Meeting: June 18, 2009 at 7:30 PM, unless Astor Boozer accepts the invitation to a Board meeting and would prefer another date or time prior to the 18th.

X. Meeting Adjourned: 9:40 PM

Robert Andrews, Jr., Chairperson

Date

Raeanne Dulanski, Secretary/ Assistant Treasurer

Date

Attachments: Appendices A-D