

Ross Soil & Water Conservation District  
Board of Supervisors Regular Meeting  
Wednesday April 12, 2023  
Ross County Service Center  
Conference Room D

**MINUTES**

**CALL TO ORDER**

The board of supervisors met at the Ross County Service Center in conference room D. The meeting was called to order at 5:33 p.m. by presiding officer, Chairman Brice Acton.

District Supervisors present and in person: Brice Acton, Nancy Ames, Billie Helterbrand, and Pam Snyder  
District Supervisor not present: Philip Gray

District staff present:

JT Flowers, Engineering Tech  
Ben Givens, Engineering Tech  
Bob Neal, District Administrator  
Tabby Sharp, Engineering Tech

Professional Staff present: ODA Specialist Cody Hacker

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were no public comments.

**PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES**

Supervisors reviewed the previous meeting minutes. Hearing no corrections, the chair moved to approve by unanimous consent approval of the previous meeting minutes as presented.

**REPORTS**

**TREASURER'S REPORT**

The administrator presented details of the April treasurer's report listing bills paid and bills to be paid. The financial obligation report amount is \$95,588.08. The administrator included a breakdown of OFSWCD Partners Meeting Conference expenses with the report. The bottom-line cost to the district was \$2,620.32 for the conference. Pam Snyder moved to approve the treasurer's report and pay bills in the amount of exactly \$60,625.66. Nancy Ames seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

**REPORTS OF COMMITTEES**

**Education Committee:**

The administrator reiterated the increase in our education and outreach presence reporting on the successful Ag Drone workshop spearheaded by Greg Rouse with over 50 attendees. Two schools, Huntington and Southeastern, will each bring 3 teams to Envirothon. The district will supply the EZ Up tent and the Gator the day of the event. Envirothon staff t-shirts are being offered for sale. The staff has requested \$50 in t-shirts. Having already authorized participant t-shirts, the administrator requested the board also authorize staff t-shirts. Nancy Ames moved the district pay for the t-shirts. Pam Snyder seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

There were several other active education and outreach projects in March:

- JT presented at Mount Logan Preschool
- Tabby conducted a field demonstration for the Clover Bees 4H Club

- Pam and Bob attended the FFA meeting and committed to sponsoring fair award ribbons
- The tree sale pickup went smoothly with zero no-shows - only shorted 5 bundles of pines

There are several projects coming up in April, many in May, and more for the rest of the year:

- Pump House Earth Day - April 15 - 11a-6p - with Ross garden clubs but no Chillicothe Garden Club
- Greg is presenting with ARS about the UAV growing season drainage mapping research last year - the presentation is at the Ohio Academy of Science Annual Meeting at Edison State Community College in Piqua, Ohio on April 15th. Pam Snyder noted the significance of presenting to this prestigious academy.
- Huntington 6th grade at Butler Springs
- Unioto Middle School - Classroom presentations on May 11
- ODNR Wildlife - May presentations with Amy Fitton at Tar Hollow & Southeastern at Tar Hollow
- Frankfort Library - Literature for summer pollinator program
- Ross County Fair - August 7th - August 11th
- Woodlands - August 29th Place Based event at Jesse Daily's on Trego Creek Road with OSU
- FFA Career Day - September 12 event with Farm Bureau
- Annual Meeting education award

#### **Policy Committee:**

The administrator noted he would be proposing a change to employment policy E-3-A during budget discussions later in the agenda.

#### **ADMINISTRATOR REPORT**

The administrator presented his written report and stated for the record:

##### **FOR THE RECORD**

Thursday March 2, 2023 - Received notice Anthony Drummond LAEPP Cancelled

Sunday March 5, 2023 - Cash Basis report public notice ran in Chillicothe Gazette

Monday March 6, 2023 - Ben at Deerfield Trustees meeting concerning Egypt Pike Pond

Monday March 13, 2023 - Ben attended Commissioners meeting concerning Patrician Drive

#### **ODA REPORT**

Supervisors reviewed the ODA monthly update and heard from Cody Hacker who reminded supervisors about the Form 11 state funding request and the Annual Plan of Work (APW) are due in May ahead of a June 5th deadline. Cody invited the district to ADP training discussing investment and budget matters.

#### **STAFF AND SUPERVISOR COMMENTS**

The administrator noted Ben Givens' upcoming 7th anniversary on April 19th.

#### **OLD BUSINESS**

##### **ANNUAL MEETING**

The administrator reported some progress on the annual meeting in these areas:

**Speaker** - put out feelers for a water panel

**Program** - Mike Allering is not available, Patti Cavendar is no longer catering, waiting on a quote from Ric McConnel, in contact with BFI Catering. Supervisors reviewed BFI Catering's menu selections that are plated and served starting at \$14.

**Election** - Confirmed Ryan Kline's membership on nominating committee

**Awards and Annual** - no progress

**Report** - no progress

**NEW BUSINESS**  
**FFA LOGO CONTEST**

The administrator reported we have not received any t-shirt logo contest entries. The education committee extended the deadline until May 5th. JT will forward info to the new Southeastern contact.

**LAEPP RESOLUTION 2023-01**

Kelvin Putnam is applying to the 2023 Local Agricultural Easement Purchase Program (LAEPP). The district is the local sponsor and supervisors are asked to pass a resolution to support the application. Pam Snyder noted Kelvin has applied before. Brice stated his understanding is that Kelvin has different parcels in separate application years. Brice reviewed how the program works to preserve farmland forever and spoke about strategies landowners can use to optimize potential funding in the competitive ranking process. Brice addressed questions about solar and eminent domain. Staff and supervisors advised on current easements from previous initiatives. Pam requested the district maintain a list of yearly applicants. Nancy Ames moved to approve Resolution 2023-01 in support of the Kelvin Putnam LAEPP application. Seconded by Billie Helterbrand. The motion passed unanimously.

**ANNUAL PLAN OF WORK**

Supervisors and staff reviewed a draft the administrator prepared for the Annual Plan of Work (APW), looking at each page of the report color coded with last year’s predictions, last year’s actual numbers, and next year’s predictions. Education and Outreach have been combined into one goal. Pam inquired about the Beehive APW template and Cody Hacker explained some advantages the recent rollout offers.

**PRELIMINARY BUDGET**

The discussion began with the administrator requesting a policy change to modify Employment Policy # E-3-A-2022 Employee Benefits Salary Schedule and Pay Adjustments. The administrator proposed the policy should be changed because “step 1” has become unnecessary. The original intent was to determine a starting point but the phrase “use employee’s current salary to determine GS grade and step” is not defined and no method was established. The policy outlines a reliable method for salaries to keep up with inflation; while the GS grade and step chart only looks backwards, has shown to be lower than the CPI, and will never quite match actual salaries. The proposed changes include language to consider the GS pay tables when inflation drops. The administrator recommends the most practical and straightforward way to calculate salary increases is to start with the employee’s current salary. Nancy asked if we were required to follow GS which we are not. Billie Helterbrand offered insight on the intentions behind use of the GS scale years ago, acknowledging the GS scale’s recent inability to keep up with inflation and the job market. Supervisors will be asked to update the policy at the May meeting.

Turning the discussion to the budget itself, the administrator presented an interactive → spreadsheet to calculate salaries and plug in different possible budget line-item figures.

Ross SWCD Pay Policy Calculator				Budget			Comments	
5.0%	2.0%	0.0%	Change A2-A3-A4 values change below	Revenue 2022	Appropriation 2023	Request 2024		
COLA Increase				State Grant	\$ 218,820.00	\$ 215,942.00	\$ 228,250.00	\$275,000 * 83%
County Increase				Wildlife Grant	\$ 17,500.00	\$ 17,500.00	\$ 20,000.00	\$2,500 increase
Market Increase				County Grants	\$ 250,000.00	\$ 275,000.00	\$ 300,000.00	Request \$25K more
				REVENUE	\$ 486,320.00	\$ 508,442.00	\$ 548,250.00	Total Revenue
				Salaries	\$ 259,860.40	\$ 310,419.20	\$332,467.20	equals cell D58
				PERS	\$ 35,132.99	\$ 43,458.69	\$ 46,545.41	14% of salaries
				BWC	\$ 2,506.28	\$ 4,656.29	\$ 4,987.01	1.5% of salaries
				Insurance	\$ 78,074.05	\$ 99,395.76	\$ 106,353.46	7%
				Medicare	\$ 3,571.86	\$ 4,501.08	\$ 4,820.77	1.45% of salaries
				Travel	\$ 5,703.56	\$ 6,500.00	\$ 5,500.00	Amount spent in 2022
				Advertising	\$ 1,652.57	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 2,500.00	Same as 2023
				Repairs	\$ 2,380.59	\$ 3,500.00	\$ 2,500.00	Amount spent in 2022
				Services	\$ 4,234.61	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 2,500.00	Same as 2023
				GIS	\$ 23,662.80	\$ 15,000.00	\$ 15,000.00	Same as 2023
				Rent	\$ 21,519.00	\$ 21,519.00	\$ 21,519.00	Same as 2022-2023
				CORSA	\$ -	\$ 4,000.00	\$ -	No longer line item
				Training	\$ 5,052.89	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 3,000.00	\$1000 less
				Supplies	\$ 998.89	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00	Same as 2022-2023
				Equipment	\$ 22,668.75	\$ 7,000.00	\$ 6,000.00	\$1000 less - New Plotter
				Education	\$ 1,929.10	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 3,000.00	Same as 2023
				EXPENSES	\$ 466,948.34	\$ 532,950.01	\$ 557,692.85	
				GAIN (LOSS)	\$ 19,371.66	\$ (24,508.01)	\$ (9,442.85)	
				<b>2024 TOTAL SALARIES</b>		<b>\$332,467.20</b>		
				2023 Salaries		\$310,419.20		
				2024 Increase		7% \$22,048.00		
				Total 2024 Payroll w/Benefits		<b>\$495,173.85</b>		

Supervisors reviewed the spreadsheet assuming a current salary as a starting point before calculations and assuming a 5% CPI, a 2% county increase, a 7% increase in health insurance, a \$2,500 increase from the Wildlife grant, a \$25,000 increase in county funding for 2024, and a state match increase calculated at 89% of \$275,000 (2023 county funding). Cody Hacker later recommended using 83%. Pam asked how health insurance increases have been trending. Last year was a 7% increase. The year before was flat. Billie asked what happens if we are not fully funded by commissioners. The short answer (and short-term answer) is to tap reserve funds - unspent money from prior year unspent allocations. The administrator noted that combined salary and benefits are now just shy of a half-million dollars. The budget needs to be passed in May ahead of the June 1st county deadline for a preliminary budget.

### **INTERNAL PROGRAM REVIEW**

Brice invited the administrator to present the internal program review - hundreds of questions guiding the district about proper operations and policy with color coding to indicate where a rule comes from (state law, state commission rules, sunshine law, SWCD handbook, etc.). The review is due on May 26th.

### **TIMBER HARVEST PLANS**

Supervisors reviewed one Timber Harvest Plan submitted by the ODNR Division of Forestry for a timber harvest in Harrison Township. JT Flowers inspected the site and recommended approval. Brice Acton moved to accept staff recommendation and approve the ODNR Timber Harvest Plan. Pam Snyder seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

### **SPACE CASE**

Brice announced he is forming a district planning committee to study the long-term needs for district office, storage, and meeting/workshop space. Our USDA and ODA partners are struggling to find office space while a national initiative is leaving many federal leases up in the air. Despite the obvious benefits to all operations, co-locating with the USDA could be jeopardized. Members of the committee include: an SWCD board member, Chris Pancake (ODA), Nathan Rice (NRCS assistant state conservationist), Chris Bruynis (OSU Extension), and Ross County Commissioner James "Oody" Lowe. The goal is to figure out a way to keep all ag agencies side-by-side. Brainstorming included the possibility of building our own facility on county ground.

### **CORRESPONDENCE**

1. Ross County Solar LLC
  - Public Notice
  - Complaint Resolution Program
2. OFSWCD State Envirothon Appeal
  - Don Rehl Memorial Fund
  - Reeve's Rookies

Pam Snyder moved to authorize a \$100 donation to the Reeve's Rookies fund to support the state Envirothon. Nancy Ames seconded. Last year's donation was \$100 to the Reeve's Rookies fund. Brice noted this is a donation to the federation to which we already pay thousands of dollars in dues and hoped supervisors would consider that fact as our budget is trending toward negative territory. The motion passed unanimously.

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS • CALENDAR**

- 4/13 Dam Safety Training online
- 4/15 Pump House Earth Day Festival
- 4/17 Area 5 Policy Roundtable
- 4/18 LAEPP 2023 Deadline

- 4/22 Earth Day
- 4/24 Fish Sale Order Deadline
- 4/25 Envirothon
- 4/30 Stewardship Week
- 5/2 Fish Sale Pickup Day
- 5/10 May Board Meeting
- 7/31 Summer Supervisor School in West Chester

**ADJOURNMENT**

Hearing no other business, the chair moved to approve by unanimous consent to adjourn at 7:13 P.M.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Billie Helterbrand, Secretary

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Brice Acton, Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Robert Neal, Administrator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date