

Ross Soil & Water Conservation District  
Board of Supervisors Regular Meeting  
Wednesday December 13, 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 5:32 p.m. by the presiding officer, Chairman, Brice Acton.

District Supervisors present and in person: Brice Acton, Nancy Ames, Philip Gray, Billie Helterbrand, and Pam Snyder.

District staff present and in person: District Administrator, Bob Neal and District Technicians, JT Flowers, Ben Givens, and Tabby Sharp.

There was one guest present: David Glass, candidate for Ross County Commissioner.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

David Glass addressed supervisors, stating, if elected commissioner, he would listen to and support the Ross Soil and Water Conservation district.

**PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES**

Supervisors reviewed the previous meeting minutes. Philip Gray moved to approve the November minutes as presented. Nancy Ames seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

**REPORTS**

**TREASURER'S REPORT**

The administrator presented details of the December treasurer's report listing bills paid and bills to be paid. The financial obligation report amount is \$98,309.60. Pam Snyder moved to approve the treasurer's report and pay bills in the amount of exactly \$40,672.86. Philip Gray seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

**REPORTS OF COMMITTEES**

There were no reports.

**ADMINISTRATOR REPORT**

The administrator presented his written report. A discussion ensued about office space challenges facing state and federal partners. The administrator concluded his report stating for the record:

- Tabby Sharp reached her third-year service anniversary on November 9th. Under policy, Beehive settings now reflect Tabby is accruing 6 hours of annual leave each pay period plus 4 hours of annual leave at the end of the year.
- During the budget meeting with Ross County Commissioners on November 13th, the administrator:
  - Furnished letter to Commissioners under ORC 325.19 (F) to state the district vacation carry over policy and holidays
  - Furnished Auditor with 2024 Pay Rates Letter
  - Furnished Auditor with 2023 Fringe Benefits letter
  - Furnished Auditor with the annual EEOC survey

- On November 13th, the administrator sent the updated inventory sheet to CORSA insurance agent Eric Braunlin.
- On November 16th, the administrator signed the updated 2024 lease agreement and sent it to commissioners.
- On November 22nd, the district completed the 2023 Ag Easement monitoring report which was sent to ODA on November 28th.
- On December 6th, Brice Acton took the oath of office for his term beginning January 1, 2024. The oath was administered by Pickaway County Common Pleas Judge P. Randall Knece at the Area 5 OFSWCD meeting at 318 Tarlton Road in Circleville, Ohio.

#### **DC REPORT**

Supervisors reviewed the written report from District Conservationist Landry Roe. EQIP funding is expected to nearly double. The first half of CSP payments have been made. And there will be at least 85 CRP re-enrolls in 2024.

#### **FSA REPORT**

CED Katy Roush reported the FSA now has access to service existing CRP contracts.

#### **ODA UPDATE**

Supervisors reviewed this month's ODA update and two other documents: a state match policy memo and the 2024 "resources and reminders" memo.

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

Supervisors and staff discussed the search to find a vehicle to replace the red truck. The administrator reported on procedures advised by County Administrator Brad Cosenza. State law was recently updated to increase the threshold for requiring a bidding process to \$75,000. Provided district policy # 22-2020 is updated accordingly, the district can buy without bids any vehicle under \$75,000. For purchases above that amount, the district can utilize Ross County's membership in the Ohio Buys program (the state contract referred to in policy # 22-2020). The red truck can be traded in or sold through the county's "GovDeals" account. Ben Givens presented literature on four models that should meet the district's needs: an SUV that could pull the drill. Staff consensus is to purchase a Chevy Tahoe. Brice Acton moved to authorize the staff to trade in the red truck and purchase a vehicle not exceeding \$75,000 after trade in. Billie Helterbrand seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

#### **OLD BUSINESS**

##### **CAREER DAY**

Supervisors reviewed two entries submitted for the FFA t-shirt design contest. Education chair Pam Snyder remarked neither entry represented the theme "diversity in ag careers." Philip Gray moved to extend the deadline to February 29, 2024. Pam Snyder seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

##### **TREE SALE / FISH SALE / NEWSLETTERS**

The administrator reported on the tree sale, recommending the district again participate in the group buy with Athens SWCD. Details are expected later in December. Last year's process was successful and more efficient than trying to find more costly suppliers. Costs include \$125 for a state nursey license.

Fender's Fish Hatchery has designated Tuesday April 30, 2024, as our fish pickup day. Wholesale prices from Fender's remain the same as last year except for an increase on the price of largemouth bass from \$1.00 to \$1.20. Upfront costs are minimal and the district has provided this pond-stocking service to residents since the 1950's. The district has asked the Ag Society for use of the fairgrounds on pickup day.

The administrator noted most of the cost for these projects will be for two newsletters to publicize the sales. There was some discussion about the need to upgrade to an electronic newsletter.

Brice Acton moved to authorize accepting payments for orders for the 2024 tree sale with supplier Athens SWCD; authorize accepting payments for orders for the 2024 fish sale with supplier Fender's Fish Hatchery; and authorize up to \$2,000 in pre-sale expenses including an ODA nursery license and the cost of two newsletters to advertise the sales. Billie Helterbrand seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

### **ENVIROTHON RECRUITMENT**

The administrator reported the Area 5 Envirothon will be held on Tuesday April 23, 2024, at Camp Oyo near Portsmouth. In recent years, to help recruit teams, the district has paid for registration and donated to offset transportation costs. Registration is \$30 per team. If every school participates fully, these expenses will total at least \$1,886.24. Brice Acton moved to authorize up to \$2,000 in registration fees and mileage costs obligations to recruit all Ross County high schools to participate in the 2024 Area 5 Envirothon. Pam Snyder seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

### **2024 CELL PHONE ALLOWANCE**

The administrator reminded supervisors that policy 28-2000 outlines personal cell phone use for district employees and provides for a monthly allowance amount, that should be reviewed annually. The thinking is that the reimbursement amount should be close to what it would cost the district to provide a phone. The administrator reported currently available business plans (prices are per month, per line):

Verizon - \$35

AT&T - \$45

T-Mobile - \$33.62

Spectrum - \$45

Discussion included the fact that all employee cell phone usage for district business is subject to public records laws. Pam Snyder moved to approve the amount of \$35 per month for employees receiving a phone allowance in 2024 under policy # 28-2000. Billie Helterbrand seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

### **EQUIPMENT STORAGE**

The administrator reminded supervisors that policy 12-2023 includes guidelines for storage of district equipment, specifically the no-till drill, Gator, and trailer. Since the county garage was destroyed, the district has had a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to pay Tim Givens to store equipment in his barn in Frankfort. The staff is satisfied with the convenience of the current location partly because the county garage is inaccessible after hours. I spoke to County Engineer Charlie Ortman. He says the garage is full - but he could make room for us. He recommended keeping our current arrangement if the board is okay with the reasonable storage fee. Philip Gray moved to update and approve the MOU with Tim Givens under policy # 12-2023 providing for storage of district equipment in the year 2024 and pay Mr. Givens a fee of \$599. Brice Acton seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Philip Gray moved to revise and approve the current MOU with Tim Givens providing for storage of district equipment in the year 2023 and accept a \$1 reimbursement from Mr. Givens establishing the 2023 storage fee at \$599. Brice Acton seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

### **HEIDELBERG WATER TEST**

Supervisors reviewed the matter of authorizing payments for the water test station along the Scioto River. Samples are shipped weekly and the district receives \$25 per week for collection. Philip Gray moved to approve receiving payments from Heidelberg University and the National Center for Water Quality Research in return for maintenance and monitoring of the water test station along the Scioto River including weekly collection of water test samples and shipping at Heidelberg's expense. Billie Helterbrand seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

## **2024 OFSWCD PARTNERS MEETING**

The administrator reported the annual federation partners meeting in Columbus has moved to a new location and will be held earlier than usual. Area Directors will meet on Monday January 22nd and general sessions and break-out sessions will be held Tuesday and Wednesday January 23rd and 24th. The location is the new Hilton at 401 North High Street across from the convention center. Parking should be better for those not staying overnight. Last year's expenses totaled \$2,620.32. This year, event registration is \$170 for a 2-day pass or \$100 for a 1-day pass. Hotel rooms are \$194 per night plus parking, meal expenses, and mileage. If all ten supervisors and staff were to attend both days, depending on who stays overnight, expense estimates range from \$4,400 to \$5,200 (less if not everyone attends). These estimates include \$200 to purchase an Envirothon silent auction item for the event. Brice Acton moved to authorize up to \$5,000 for registration, mileage, travel, lodging, meal, and parking expenses for supervisors and staff to attend the 2024 OFSWCD Partners Meeting in Columbus on January 22nd, 23rd, and 24th, and authorize up to \$200 to donate an item in the Envirothon auction fundraiser at the conference. Billie Helterbrand seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

## **2024 OASWCDE ANNUAL DUES**

Supervisors reviewed an appeal from the Ohio Association of Soil and Water Conservation District Employees. The organization provides informational events, TDP training, and offers a small college scholarship to children of members. Membership is \$15 per employee. Brice Acton moved to authorize up to \$60 to pay member dues for employees who join the OASWCDE in 2024. Philip Gray seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

## **2024 PURCHASE ORDER**

As part of the budget process, the administrator asked the board to approve a 2024 purchase order. Brice Acton moved to approve a 2024 purchase order authorizing spending to various vendors in amounts and spending categories stipulated in the 2024 special fund budget approved in October. Billie Helterbrand seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

## **2024 BOARD MEETING SCHEDULE**

Supervisors reviewed the 2024 meeting calendar. Brice Acton moved to approve the 2024 regular meeting schedule for the board of supervisors and direct the administrator to publish the required public notices that regular meetings will occur on the second Wednesday of each month at 5:30 p.m. Billie Helterbrand seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

## **JANUARY PREVIEW**

The administrator reminded supervisors the January meeting requires reorganization of officers and naming a nominating committee. The current office holders are Brice Acton, Chairman; Pam Snyder, Vice Chair; Billie Helterbrand, Secretary; and Philip Gray, Treasurer/Fiscal Agent. Several names were discussed as possible members of the nominating committee who will be tasked with finding candidates for two seats currently held by Pam Snyder and Philip Gray. There was some discussion about whether to end the election or begin the election at the annual meeting.

## **INVENTORY**

The administrator reported a change of a serial number on the inventory sheet. In the process of diagnosing problems with the RTK drone, the unit was shipped to the manufacturer and was replaced with an identical device. Serial # 0V27LB2002Y22Z replaces serial # 0V2DJ9VRA40012. Pam Snyder moved to approve updating the current inventory sheet to reflect a new serial number for the RTK drone. Billie Helterbrand seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Hearing no other business, the chair moved to approve by unanimous consent to adjourn at 7:22 p.m.

---

Billie Helterbrand, Secretary

---

Brice Acton, Chair

---

Robert Neal, Administrator

---

Date