

Ross Soil & Water Conservation District
Board of Supervisors Regular Meeting
Tuesday February 8, 2022
Ross County Service Center Conference Room D
Teleconference/Video Conference

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

With the Ross SWCD office continuing limited operations, the board of supervisors met in person at the Ross County Service Center in Conference Room D, by video conference, and by telephone conference under provisions of ORC 940.39. The meeting was called to order at 8:00 a.m. by Chairman, Brice Acton.

Supervisors present:

Brice Acton (in-person)
Mike Anderson (in-person)
Philip Gray (in-person)
Greg Ramsey (video)
Pam Snyder (in-person)

Staff present:

Ben Givens, Engineering Tech
JT Flowers, Engineering Tech
Bob Neal, District Administrator
Greg Rouse, GIS Coordinator
Landry Roe, District Conservationist
Cody Hacker, ODA Specialist

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

The administrator noted a \$23.07 adjustment to the January treasurer's report since Philip Gray declined mileage reimbursement to the winter meeting. Philip Gray moved to approve the January meeting minutes as adjusted and presented. Pam Snyder seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

REPORTS

TREASURER'S REPORT

The administrator presented details of the February treasurer's report listing bills paid and bills to be paid. The current financial obligation is \$68,408.93, significantly less since Chris Pancake's departure and payouts. Significantly higher amounts of deposits to the special fund include the commissioners' annual funding grant and a quarterly state match payment. Pam Snyder moved to approve the treasurer's report and pay bills in the amount of exactly \$39,466.58. Brice Acton seconded. Passed unanimously.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

There were no committee reports.

ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

The administrator expanded on his written report announcing his vacation request for the period August 3rd through August 12th. Recognizing the bad timing for this out of state family trip, the administrator advocated for starting the election at the banquet and requested the staff's help with fair week. Bob provided an update on the OSWCC report, Envirothon and LAEPP. Bob also noted Brice and Mike received their State Treasurer Annual Notice of Exemption from training. New supervisor Philip Gray received and signed for a copy of Ohio Ethics Law. The administrator signed the office lease that the commissioners updated with no changes. The district applied for and received our 2022 Nursery Dealer's License for the tree sale. The district applied for and received a Vendor's License to collect sales tax. And the administrator submitted a Contribution Agreement request for \$7,041 for Q4 2021 EQIP projects.

DC REPORT

District Conservationist Landry Roe reported EQIP was the current focus at NRCS with 25 new applications. There are still about 35 old contracts the office is still working on. There are 17 new CSP applications. Ben and JT have been surveying and designing new CRP waterway applications. Some producers have dormant seeding now as part of contract management. NRCS is working on a few Highly Erodible Lands (HEL) assessments. Sherill from Pickaway County is assisting FSA with no county director. Denice from Delaware County is acting Area 5 NRCS supervisor. Landry announced the Pheasants Forever biologist, Caleb Worley, has taken another job. Landry expects the position to be filled soon.

ODA UPDATE

State Specialist Cody Hacker reported good turnout at supervisor training and reminded supervisors and staff about the cash basis report due on March 1st and announced a grazing program with landowners.

STAFF AND SUPERVISOR COMMENTS

There were no staff or supervisor comments at this point.

OLD BUSINESS

ANNUAL MEETING PLANNING

Discussion began with the nominating committee tasked with recruiting 3 candidates for 2 open seats. Bob and Philip will organize a meeting. Cody Hacker provided a sample supervisor job description.

Supervisors reviewed a ranking of hours spent on cooperator projects in 2021 as a starting point for picking a cooperator of the year. Staff was directed to develop a list of possible awardees.

Supervisors discussed developing an educator of the year award. Brice remarked on a teacher at Adena who was featured in the Gazette and Zane Trace's Dennis Foreman who has been recognized by the World Wildlife Fund for his work tracking monarch butterflies. Pam Snyder added Envirothon to the discussion. That event should be a good way to re-connect with FFA, schools, and especially academic clubs who could be more likely to participate since Envirothon topics may not necessarily follow regular curriculum topics or timing.

Supervisors discussed finalizing the annual meeting date. The administrator noted this date should be convenient since it is after the fair and before the harvest. Meetings have been held around this time for the last five years, but staff remarked September was more common in the past. Brice Acton moved to finalize the annual meeting date as August 18, 2022. Philip Gray seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Discussion continued about possible venues and catering. We have reserved the service center conference rooms at no cost. The multi-purpose building at the fairgrounds would serve as a central location and allow for large displays and demonstrations. Philip Gray will research the fairgrounds.

NEW EMPLOYEE SEARCH

Supervisors reviewed proposed changes to employment policy section 3A concerning employee pay. The current method was deemed insufficient to address inflation and a newly competitive job market (Ross SWCD Minutes January 2022). The administrator presented a draft policy that addresses these concerns.

There was a long discussion about the ramifications of abandoning the GS scale. The district has enjoyed a lack of employee turnover attributed to the predictable raises the GS scale provided. Discussion included the fact that at some point supervisors and administrators stopped considering cost of living.

Engineering Tech JT Flowers remarked that the GS scale showed commissioners the district is following a recognized system to justify pay increases. This perception is important since district increases can be higher than increases in other county departments.

Brice requested JT Flowers join the policy committee to prepare a new draft that addresses the issues raised in the discussion and include supervisor input to incorporate job performance metrics.

Supervisors reviewed proposed job descriptions for Ag Engineering Tech and Urban Engineering Tech. Input from staff made it clear urban duties require much less time than cooperator projects. Consensus is for Ben to assume the duties in the Ag Engineering Tech job description with the newly hired employee eventually assuming the urban maintenance duties as part of an entry level role. Brice suggested a universal job description, moving away from specialization specific job descriptions. The administrator will work on a draft and research supervisor suggestions for competency testing.

WILDLIFE SPECIALIST AGREEMENT

This item was tabled again since Brice has yet to receive the document he needs to sign.

INVENTORY

The administrator requested a motion for inventory housekeeping. Brice Acton moved to approve disposal and deletion from inventory of the old Gator and approve an updated inventory sheet with new Gator now processed into county inventory. Mike Anderson seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The administrator noted publishing for supervisor review the Tim Givens MOU and an updated policy # 12 passed at the January meeting. Both documents address inventory storage.

OFSWCD PARTNERSHIP MEETING

Supervisors discussed attendance at the federation partners meeting. Bob will be on two panels on Monday morning. Philip Gray will attend the legislative breakfast and other Tuesday sessions.

NEW BUSINESS

WATERSHED MANAGER QUESTIONNAIRE

Supervisors discussed a questionnaire from ODA Watershed Manager Chris Pancake, seeking supervisor and staff observations about watershed impairments, causes, and fixes.

Watershed Name: **Region 4 Scioto**

1. What is/are the primary program(s) that your organization is involved in? Ex. (Home Sewage Treatment System (HSTS), CRP, EQIP, Urban, etc.)

CRP - EQIP

2. What do you believe are the major water quality impairments in the watershed? And region?

Logjams, livestock (cows in the creek), sediment, septic runoff, parking lot runoff, streambank erosion

3. What are the most commonly accepted BMPs that you see implemented? (Ex. No-Till, Nutrient Management, Waterways, Rotational Grazing, Wildlife, etc.)

Waterways, No-till, rotational grazing

4. What barriers are present that you believe prevent BMP implementation?

Lack of education, no grant or cost-share funding, cover crops are hard to seed early enough without expensive equipment

5. Are there any other watershed groups or stakeholders that you think may be of my interest in planning a regional watershed plan?

Agencies like extension and farmer's associations, Heidelberg National Center for Water Quality Research, county development (commissioners)

6. What is/are the main cause(s) for the water quality impairments?

Livestock, sediment, flooded fields

7. How do you believe we can move towards cleaner water and less impaired streams?

Education - promoting 4R's and soil testing, funding for cover crops

8. Does your organization have any goals that it is currently working towards?

No

The administrator will report these results to the watershed manager.

OUTREACH

PUMP HOUSE EARTH DAY FESTIVAL - PHEASANTS FOREVER BANQUET

The administrator advised supervisors about two outreach opportunities. The Pump House Earth Gathering Festival on April 23rd is a city event where we have partnered with garden clubs to have a display. The district pays the \$25 fee and provides the EZ-Up tent. Another opportunity is with a partner organization. The Deer Creek chapter of Pheasants Forever is holding a banquet on March 5th. A \$150 sponsorship package includes publicity and tickets. Philip Gray expressed an interest in attending. Mike Anderson moved to authorize an outreach partnership with the Chillicothe Garden Club at the Pump House Earth Day festival. And approve a \$150 advertising sponsorship at the Deer Creek Pheasants Forever annual banquet. Pam Snyder seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

DRONE REPORT

The Administrator presented a report prepared by Bob and Greg Rouse. The presentation reviewed the history of the drone program, its current state, and new technology called Real-Time Kinematic (RTK) that could revolutionize topographic surveying and revitalize the Tile Mapper product. The NRCS area office has expressed an interest in surveying projects in other counties which would be a revenue source through the contribution agreement process. Supervisors discussed other potential for the technology as a new labor saving and efficiency tool. Staff will research a purchase initially estimated over \$6,500.

TIMBER HARVEST PLANS

The district received two THP/NOI forms in January and JT has inspected both sites. The ODNR plan had no problems, but JT was waiting for an answer about a stream crossing on the Pixelle plan. Philip Gray moved to accept staff recommendation and approve the ODNR Timber Harvest Plan submitted in January. Mike Anderson seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

CORRESPONDENCE

No correspondence was received last month.

ANNOUNCEMENTS • CALENDAR

2/28 OFSWCD Partners Meeting Breakout Presentations
3/1 OFSWCD Partners Meeting Legislative Breakfast
3/1 CEBCO Health Screenings
3/1 Cash Basis Due
3/5 Pheasants Forever Banquet
3/8 March Board Meeting

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Philip Gray moved to enter executive session to discuss compensation of employees. Brice Acton seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Supervisors entered executive session at 10:57 a.m.

Supervisors returned from executive session at 11:26 a.m.

ADJOURNMENT

At the conclusion of business, Philip Gray moved to adjourn. Brice Acton seconded. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

Pam Snyder, Secretary

Brice Acton, Chair

Robert Neal, Administrator

Date