

Ross Soil & Water Conservation District
Board of Supervisors Regular Meeting
Tuesday June 14, 2022
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 8:33 a.m. by presiding officer, Chairman, Brice Acton.

District Supervisors present in person:

Brice Acton
Mike Anderson
Philip Gray
Greg Ramsey
Pam Snyder

District Staff present:

Ben Givens, Engineering Tech
Bob Neal, District Administrator
Greg Rouse, GIS Coordinator

Professional Staff present:

Landry Roe, NRCS DC
Kate Sowards, FSA CED

APPROVE AGENDA

Pam Snyder moved to approve revising the agenda, adding LAEPP to old business and adding Water Well Testing to new business. Philip Gray seconded. New information about these topics had surfaced since the agenda was published. The motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

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

REPORTS

TREASURER'S REPORT

The administrator presented details of the June treasurer's report listing bills paid and bills to be paid. The current financial obligation is \$75,663.47. Philip Gray moved to approve the treasurer's report and pay bills in the amount of exactly \$28,253.82. Greg Ramsey seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

Education - General

The administrator reported on numerous school presentations in May by Julie Kyle and an entire week's worth by JT Flowers. JT and Julie will also participate in 4-H judging in July.

Education - Farm Bureau & FFA Ag Day September 13th

NRCS Soil Scientist Brian Cooley will prepare a demonstration for the soil pit. The administrator noted the board may need to hire a contractor to dig the pit. The requested drone demonstration is under development. Pam Snyder noted the event falls at the same time as the September board meeting.

Education - OSU Extension Woodlands Workshop September 10th

The district has pledged to participate as a fall workshop.

ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

District News

- New Pheasants Forever Wildlife Biologist - Garrett Caudill
- Plug Sale Report - 2,432 plants
- Audit - Currently compiling documents for state auditor
- Water Test Station - JT and Ben replaced pump
- Busiest month for no-till drill - 10 reservations

For the Record

- Submitted preliminary budget to commissioners on May 20th
- Cody submitted Form 11 to OSWCC on May 11th
- Cody reviewed Internal Program Review on May 20th

DC REPORT

District Conservationist Landry Roe reported EQIP dominated activity at the NRCS in May. There were at least 9 contracts (many are forestry) totaling \$135,000. The area office will assist with CRP mapping. This summer's number of CSP re-enrolls currently stands at around 200. There are about 40 mid contract management (MCM) assessments due before this summer's drive-thru signing events. Landry expressed appreciation for Ben's work on designing waterways.

FSA REPORT

Ross County Farm Service Agency (FSA) County Executive Director (CED) Kate Sowards informed supervisors the FSA is compiling reports of weather damage for a possible disaster declaration. Steve Riley is running for re-election to the county board which is seeking a nominee for the other open seat. Kate distributed the latest newsletter and reported on the Emergency Relief Program (ERP). Kate announced policy changes handling CRP, including dates are now required on burn permits, producers are now required to report CRP seeding dates, and contracts that have not been completed in 3 years now require a letter to the county committee requesting an extension.

ODA REPORT

State Specialist Cody Hacker was unable to attend the meeting but issued the ODA monthly update.

WATERSHED REPORT

Region 4 Watershed Manager Chris Pancake was not able to attend the meeting.

STAFF AND SUPERVISOR COMMENTS

Greg Rouse reported on the new RTK drone use, already flying 1200-1500 acres. Greg is also examining a pricier PDF software subscription (\$1500/year) that should improve the look, feel, and usefulness of the final map product delivered to producers.

Brice Acton reported a conversation with Ross County Park District Director Joe Letsche. Their district just added a 100 acres to Kinnikinnick Fen. Greg Rouse has flown the acquired property to locate existing tile. The park district remains open to other partnership ideas.

OLD BUSINESS

ANNUAL MEETING PLANNING

“Celebrating our Past and Protecting our Future”

Supervisors discussed nominating committee deadlines: due diligence due June 17th and July 1st to find three candidates. Supervisors confirmed the succession planning theme for the annual meeting along with the 75th anniversary. Brice Acton suggested contacting the Wright & Moore Law firm. Philip Gray will seek resolutions from publicly elected officials.

EMPLOYEE SEARCH

Tabled at this point until after a later executive session.

At 9:51 a.m. Brice Acton excused himself from the meeting. Philip Gray assumed presiding officer duties.

LAEPP UPDATE

Greg Rouse presented information recently received from the ODA office of Farmland Preservation. That office informed the board about the Application Processing Reduction Plan (APRP) that allows a local sponsor to borrow against a portion of their current LAEPP funding, increasing the amount available to make offers. The amount of funding for Ross County was initially projected at \$129,555. By tapping other unused funding portions from around the state, that figure was updated to approximately \$155,000. The APRP increases the amount to just over \$167,000. Based on scoring, one Kelvin Putnam project has been assured funding and an offer of \$80,759 has tentatively been accepted. This leaves approximately \$74,000 to make an offer to Brice Acton. APRP would bring the amount to \$86,000.

Greg Ramsey made the motion to support the objective of farmland preservation and utilize APRP (up to \$13,000) for the purpose of improving the prospect of funding an additional LAEPP application. Philip Gray seconded. Supervisors centered their discussion on three aspects: maintaining transparency since a supervisor is an applicant, the benefits and pitfalls of what is essentially a loan and restricting the amount of any borrowing. Pam and other supervisors agreed that the spirit of the LAEPP and its goal to get farmland into a preservation program is the motivating force for this decision. Supervisors discussed setting a precedent by borrowing against future LAEPP funding. Both Pam and Greg expressed the sentiment that, knowing that money is out there, the board should do what it can to get property into LAEPP. And addressing concerns about how to restrict the amount of borrowing, supervisors learned that the amount is set by the state at one-third of the average of the last three years of allocations. Roll call vote: Acton, abstained (and not present); Anderson, yes; Gray, yes; Ramsey, yes; Snyder, yes. The motion passed.

At 10:31 a.m. Brice Acton returned to the meeting and returned as presiding officer.

NEW BUSINESS

MIDYEAR COLA/SALARY REVIEW

Tabled at this point until after a later executive session.

QUICKBOOKS TRAINING

The administrator reported researching Quickbooks and a desktop version is still available. Brice Acton noted the prevalence of cloud-based software subscription models. Greg Ramsey reported a positive experience upgrading to online Quickbooks, noting versatility and access to data in the field. Philip Gray moved to authorize ODA Quickbooks training and travel. Mike Anderson seconded. The administrator remarked ODA training should provide more information to determine what if any upgrade is appropriate to replace the 2017 desktop version. The motion passed unanimously.

**ROSS COUNTY FAIR
DISPLAY**

Supervisors discussed options for a presence at the Ross County Fair. Should we get our own tent or share space again with the county engineer? Philip Gray recommended staying with the engineer's tent this year, while Brice Acton noted staying with the engineer promotes the misconception that we are a county department. Pam expressed the need to concentrate more on the display and Greg echoed an "if not now then move next year" sentiment. Brice Acton moved to commit to continue the partnership with the County Engineer at the 2022 fair, planning staffing and displays for FSA, NRCS, and SWCD, while pursuing an independent location for 2023. Greg Ramsey seconded. Pam Snyder remarked on the need for more interactive displays. Kate Sowards stated the FSA can provide displays and staffing until 6pm. The motion was passed unanimously.

**ROSS COUNTY FAIR
EXPENSES**

The administrator reminded supervisors the district usually places the apparel order ahead of the fair. Philip Gray moved to authorize Ross County Fair passes and fair display expenses and the annual advertising apparel order. Greg Ramsey seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

FFA CAREER DAY EXPENSES

The administrator will seek authorization in the future for possible expenses for Ag Career Day, namely possible costs to dig a soil pit.

TIMBER HARVEST PLAN

There were no plans received in May to review.

WATER WELL TESTING

Philip Gray remarked that OSU Extension had contacted the Farm Bureau about the Health District's well testing plan. The health district reportedly tests well water for \$80. Supervisors discussed the merits of - and our possible role in - promoting this service. Philip will conduct more research.

EXECUTIVE SESSION - COMPENSATION

Brice Acton had requested the board review staff compensation under the recently updated employment policy E-3-A-2022 Salary Schedule and Pay Adjustments. Philip Gray moved that the board invite the administrator and enter executive session for the purpose of discussing compensation of employees. Greg Ramsey seconded. The motion passed unanimously and the board entered executive session at 10:53 a.m. The board left executive session at 11:17 a.m.

MIDYEAR COLA/SALARY REVIEW

Philip Gray made the motion, in order to address the challenging job market and unprecedented inflation, supervisors will increase employee 2022 salaries effective with the July 8, 2022, pay date based on this schedule: grant an 8.6% increase to employees earning under \$75,000 per year; grant a 5% increase to employees earning more than \$75,000 per year. Pam Snyder seconded. Supervisors remarked on inflation and how the job market is still tight. The motion passed unanimously.

EXECUTIVE SESSION - EMPLOYMENT

The district had been advertising for the open Ag Tech position in May and interviewed candidates. Philip Gray moved that the board invite the administrator and enter executive session for the purpose of discussing the employment of an employee. Greg Ramsey seconded. The motion passed unanimously and the board entered executive session at 11:20 a.m. The board left executive session at 11:29 a.m.

EMPLOYEE SEARCH

Pam Snyder made the motion to offer the Ag Construction Engineering Technician position to Tabitha Arnold at a pay rate of \$18.00 per hour effective with the July 22, 2022, pay date. Mike Anderson seconded. Supervisors remarked on the quality of Tabby’s resume and an effective interview. The motion passed unanimously.

CORRESPONDENCE

No correspondence was received in May.

ANNOUNCEMENTS • CALENDAR

- 6/20 Juneteenth Holiday - Office Closed
- 6/30 District Anniversary - First Supervisors elected June 30, 1947
- 7/4 Independence Day Holiday - Office Closed
- 7/5 Nominations Due (EL-1 and EL-3 Forms)
- 7/12 July Board Meeting
- 7/13 4-H Judging

ADJOURNMENT

Pam Snyder moved to adjourn. Mike Anderson seconded. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 11:35 a.m.

Pam Snyder, Secretary

Brice Acton, Chair

Robert Neal, Administrator

Date