

Hubbard County Soil & Water Conservation District

Friday, March 10th, 2023, at 9:00 am

Hubbard County Soil & Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors met at the office with a Zoom option available.

Office Address: 603 Central Avenue North, Suite 100, Park Rapids, MN 56470.

Members present: Heidi Anderson-Thomas, Chair
Don Rettinger, Vice-Chair
Lynn Goodrich, Secretary
Don Sells, Treasurer
Marcel Noyes, PR&I

Others present: Crystal Mathisrud, District Manager
Jake Shaughnessy, Water Resource Technician
Brandon Spain-Brist, Forest Resource Specialist
Claire Hansen, Community Conservationist
Jody Peek, NRCS Team Lead
Tom Krueger, County Commissioner
Kim Valentine, Bookkeeping

Absent:

Chair Anderson-Thomas opened the meeting at 9 am. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

MINUTES

The agenda was updated with the date and additional correspondence items. Motions for technician wage increases were separated for clarity. Information on SWAG monitoring devices was added to the agenda, as well as summer intern hire line items for motions. Public input was moved to the beginning of the meeting which will be continued in future meetings.

A motion was made by Supervisor Sells to accept the agenda as modified. Seconded by Supervisor Noyes. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. Motion carried.

MINUTES

It was suggested to add that notes are available upon request for staff reports.

A motion was made by Supervisor Goodrich to accept the minutes as amended. Seconded by Supervisor Sells. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. Motion carried.

PUBLIC INPUT

Tom Krueger, Hubbard County Commissioner: Volunteers are needed for extension committee members. You will need to reside in Districts 1 or 4 to join. They meet 4 times a year. There are 4 candidates who have filed for the District 4 County Commission position. The league of women voters will have forums likely in the Laporte and Akeley area. Voting dates are May 9th for the primary, and August 8th for the final election of the remaining two candidates. The county approved the ADA and Title VI Highway Department Policies that are required to receive federal funding for road projects. A bid was received by a local construction company to do the work on the courthouse to be completed this summer. They also approved an investment policy for the county. The county generally has about \$12 million on hand in reserves. They are looking to balance investing locally and seeking high safe returns. They hired an investment firm to seek the best areas for investing. There was a discussion with the Board about no net gain of tax forfeited land, purchase of land, and conservation opportunities.

DISTRICT CONSERVATIONIST

Jody Peek: NRCS Team Lead presented on behalf of District Conservationist, Dan Pasternak. The report is available upon request.

TREASURER'S REPORT

February Financial Reports: Supervisor Sells noted that we may want to reinvest the CD from Citizens to Northview (13mo at 4.06%) or potentially Morgan Stanley (6mo at 4.75% or 11mo at 4.76%). There is currently \$254,000 in the savings account. Kim mentioned that the operating account had too much money to be not gaining interest. She noted that \$75,000 would be a reasonable amount to add to an investment. When the \$50,000 CD matures, it would be good to reinvest into another CD and potentially combine it with the \$75,000 for a total of \$125,000 invested. There is an additional CD expiring in September that will be addressed at a later date. **A motion was made by Supervisor Noyes to look at Morgan Stanly or other banks for higher interest rates and authorize Crystal to conduct that transaction. Seconded by Supervisor Sells. Affirmative: All.**

Opposed: None. Motion carried.

Kim reported on the financials. A system is being implemented to track accrued comp time. This will be able to track where the time is being spent so it can be invoiced properly. It is important to keep track of where all hours are spent with notes of what was done. HCSWCD has roughly 700hrs of admin available per year based on our billable rates, but we can invoice admin hours to our grants to prevent losses. Tree sales are going great and coming in every day. The invoicing and time tracking will be set up through QuickBooks to allow for easier invoicing to grants and eligible expenses. Kim and Crystal are exploring using QuickBooks to also do payroll to tie together all the bookkeeping. Kim is creating the manual which is continuously changing as we transition and improve systems. The financials are presented to the Board for filing.

Consent Agenda: The Beach Drive grant needs to be paid out now that the Enbridge funds arrived. The Beach Drive project will be paid in installments, this payment being \$18,000. The auction items purchased for \$1,200 included: desks, a truck, an enclosed trailer, and computer monitors. **A motion was made to approve the consent agenda by supervisor Noyes. Seconded by Supervisor Sells. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. Motion carried.**

OLD BUSINESS

Strategic Planning: A new meeting date of Wednesday, April 26th at 9 am is tentatively scheduled with a backup Friday, April 28th at 1 pm. The plan and budget will be reported to the county this summer. Crystal recommended changing the structure to 1) Resources, 2) Community, and 3) Team. We may also want to switch to a 3yr plan for strategic planning with a review each year.

Grazing Workshop Recap – The grazing workshop went well overall. There was good feedback about the location, presenters, and food. The food cost was higher than usual. A suggestion was made to look into other options such as the West 40 for a venue that does catering to simplify planning and reduce costs.

FWF Update – Supervisor Goodrich requested that the Eastern Hubbard County Fire Gambling Board donate \$1,200 to underwrite the Headwaters Science Center’s presentations. His request was approved. The next steps in FWF planning include creating schedules and organizing volunteers.

Crow Wing IWIP Planning Update: The planning grant has been approved by BWSR. There will be a meeting for committees later this month. All SWCDs are represented on the Policy Committee, but info from the Counties and their Environmental Services staff is still needed. There will be a schedule of regular monthly meetings for each committee. Those will be ready at the end of this month or the beginning of April. An email newsletter will go out monthly with updates for those interested. The total grant was \$244,000 and we receive 50% upfront, 40% after, and 10% after completion of the grant.

Action:

2023 COLA Increase applied Feb 19th for all staff 8.7%: A motion was made by Supervisor Noyes to approve an 8.7% COLA increase for all staff, effective the February 19th pay period. Seconded by Supervisor Goodrich. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None.

Jake and Brandon’s merit-based increase for a 2-year full-time anniversary and excellent performance/growth of 4.3% also take effect Feb 19th (first day of the first pay period after anniversary dates). **A motion was made by Supervisor Sells to approve a 4.3% increase for Jake and Brandon effective the February 19th pay period. Seconded by Supervisor Rettinger. Affirmative: All.**

Opposed: None.

NEW BUSINESS

Lobo’s FSP Event March 30th: The next forestry event will be at Lobo’s Bar and Grill at 5 pm. This will be hosted by Clearwater SWCD and Hubbard SWCD. A targeted mailer was sent to area residents and RSVPs will be needed for the event.

WCA Workshop: Brandon is doing a wetland workshop in conjunction with County ESD. This will be targeted toward area contractors and residents. It will be at the Northwoods Bank.

SWCD Auction Items: Covered above.

Action:

SWAG New Monitoring Device Order: \$8500 is available in the budget, and \$7900 is the final quote for the device. The remaining funds can be shifted to supplies and equipment or to travel and staff time. This model accepts more parameters and will be easier to use for interns. **A motion was made by Supervisor Sells to approve the purchase of the monitoring device in the amount of \$7,950 plus shipping up or to the amount of \$8,500. Seconded by Supervisor Goodrich. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None.**

LSP Team Contracts — Receiving bids: The Crow Wing Watershed Landscape Stewardship Plan is funded in part by the planning grant, and Gary Michael has committed to paying the other half of it. The contract hasn't come through the system for Crystal to sign yet. We cannot begin the work with the BWSR funds (\$13,000) until the DNR funds (\$13,000) are prepared. Mitch Brinks (\$16,000) and Bethany Chaplin (\$7,500) from Crow Wing will do the writing and potentially Dan Steward or Lindberg Ekola for the remainder (\$2,500). **A motion was made by Supervisor Noyes to accept the bids for the contracts with Mitch Brinks and Bethany Chaplin, subject to review by the county attorney and documents provided. Seconded by Supervisor Goodrich. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None.**

CWRIWIP Planning Team Contract: Hiring an experienced writer and facilitator will help move the process along.

- i. Moriya Rufer: Houston Engineering former writer for other top plans in the state. She attends meetings, writes the plan, and reviews. Her quote is \$136,500. She is from the area and knows it well. A request for the project to proceed with her in the event she no longer works for Houston Engineering will be included.
- ii. Tad Erickson: Tad sits in on all the steering team meetings. He facilitates and attends committee meetings. He helps compile information and keep things moving in the event of extended discussion. There is a price break for the area he is working with. The quote is for \$10,358. The timelines proposed in the bids fit with the SWCD timelines.

A motion was made by Supervisor Sells to approve the contract for Tad Erikson as the facilitator for the CW1W1P pending review by the county attorney and inclusion over control of timing. Seconded by Supervisor Noyes. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None.

A motion was made by Supervisor Sells to approve the contract for Moriya Rufer as the plan writer for the CW1W1P pending review by the county attorney and inclusion over control of the timeline and approval of her to carry the contract or be replaced in the event of her leaving Houston Engineering. Seconded by Supervisor Noyes. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None.

Resolution to Submit NACD Proposal for the Forest Garden Pilot Project: A resolution is required for the submission of the grant to prove we have the support needed for the project. We currently have support from the City of Akeley, the City of Laporte, Laporte Lions, Akeley Laporte Food Shelf, UofMExtension, FFA/4H, Shell River Alliance, and expecting additional letters from the City of Nevis. This funding is federal in the amount of \$60,000 and covers staff time and supplies. **Supervisor Noyes made a motion to approve the Resolution Community Canopy and Forest Garden Pilot Project Resolution No. 2023-02 as submitted. Seconded by Supervisor Goodrich. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None.**

A break was taken at 11:07 am. The meeting resumed at 11:15 am.

Arvig Internet Quote: Brandon and Crystal reached out to internet providers for quotes. The current internet provider offered dedicated internet access, but it is too expensive. The current internet is \$252/month. The terms available for Arvig range from 12-36 months. **A motion was made by Supervisor Sells to change to Arvig's internet service for 36 months with the option of a \$10/month support fee if staff deems it necessary. Seconded by Supervisor Goodrich. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None.**

2023 Summer Intern Hire - SWAG/ Forestry and Office Organization: Interns were interviewed for the posted announcement. Recommendations were made to the personnel committee and there were two candidates that stood out. There are 3 likely contracts coming for DNR forestry proposals including the LSR small acre priority lakes forestry proposal, the tri-state forestry proposal, and a tree planting proposal, plus the family resort proposal. These are all tasks that Brandon may need assistance with. There are additional funds in SWAG,

MGLP, MHB Events, and the NACD grant. Both candidates are available to work evenings and weekends. An intern is expected to work 690 hours. Two interns paid at \$16.50/hour will total about \$23,000. The personnel committee finds they are both good fits and a great opportunity to accomplish tasks with the large workload. The Board recommends hiring both. They would both be available to begin working in April. **A motion was made by Supervisor Noyes to hire both interns at a rate of \$16.50/hr. Seconded by Supervisor Rettinger. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None.**

REPORTS ON MEETINGS AND PROJECTS

Board Chair's Report: Supervisor Anderson-Thomas attended legislative days. She met legislators along with Cass and later with Wadena SWCDs. There was one legislator that will not be supporting the SWCD funding legislation, the other 3 seemed interested in some capacity.

Supervisor Sells: He attended the Todd township meeting, on the 23rd he met with Crystal and the committee on the forest garden project, and next Thursday is attending the SWCD forestry meeting.

Supervisor Goodrich: He met with the personnel committee to interview interns and for Claire's annual review.

Supervisor Noyes: He attended the Mississippi Headwaters Board Meeting. He also connected with the City of Laporte, Lakeport Township, and Laporte Akeley Food Shelf to get letters of support for the NACD grant. He worked with Crystal to plan meetings with Kabekona, Garfield, and Steamboat Lake Associations for the EPA 319 grant. He reached out to the newly assigned board conservationist. He attended the Mississippi 1W1P where they discussed moving funds from HCSWCD for lakeshore projects if we don't use the funds. He noted we need to plan a meeting with a landowner on an ongoing WCA case. The Garfield Ice Racers have funding available and we should reach out in April if we have projects in mind. The tent setup for the Laporte Days nitrate clinic may change, we will need to bring a tent. Supervisor Noyes will be out until April for medical reasons.

Supervisor Rettinger: He met with the personnel committee to interview interns and Claire's annual review.

District Manager's Reports: District Manager Mathisrud's report is available upon request.

District Staff Reports: Staff's reports are available upon request.

CORRESPONDENCE

Grazing workshop producer survey and evaluation; carbon article, meat processing article, Hilltop Lumber Account Form, MN Lakes and River Advocates, NACD Farm Bill News Release.

Supervisor Anderson-Thomas made a motion to close the regular meeting and move into a closed session to discuss Claire's annual review. The motion was seconded by Supervisor Sells.

Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. Motion carried.

Chair Anderson-Thomas closed the meeting at 11:27 am, *per Statute 13D.05 Subd 3.(a)*. The meeting reconvened at 11:55 am.

A motion was made by Supervisor Rettinger to end the closed session and reopen the regular session. Seconded by Supervisor Noyes. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. Motion carried.

Claire's Annual Review: Claire was asked to continue her position, she accepted. **A motion was made by Supervisor Goodrich to increase the rate of pay to \$26.50 to take effect on the first day of the next pay period following her anniversary date. Seconded by supervisor Sells.**

Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. Motion carried.

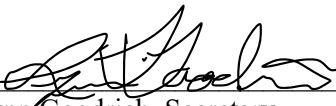
NEXT MEETING

April 12, 2023, Agenda Items:

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Supervisor Sells to adjourn at 1:21 pm.

APPROVED: April 12, 2023
Date

SECRETARY 
Lynn Goodrich, Secretary