

Jennings County Soil & Water Conservation District
August 22, 2023
Board Minutes

The regular meeting of the Jennings County Soil & Water Conservation District was held at the USDA Conference Room. Brad Ponsler called the meeting to order at 6:37 a.m.

Board Members

Dan Megel
Tom Schneider
Matt Branham

Staff

Kelly Kent
Becca McClellan
Andy Ertel

Associate Board Members

Jimmi Berkey

Partners

Jenny Vogel

Reading of the Minute

Matt Branham made a motion to accept the July 2023 minutes as submitted, with a second from Tom Schneider.

Financial Report

Matt Branham made a motion to accept the financial report as submitted, with a second from Tom Schneider

Correspondence

No Correspondence

Ongoing/Old Business

Annual Meeting Follow Up – Kelly reached out to the First Methodist Church, Dennis Edens, to see if they would be willing to let us hold our Annual Meeting during one of their Saturday morning breakfasts. Dennis will get back with Kelly once he talks to their committee but didn't see an issue with doing this. We will need to designate a time to hold our election and can have paper ballots available for those in attendance to vote. A display will be put together showing our years accomplishments and a program with our financial report can be distributed. More details including a date will be forthcoming.

Election Committee – Dan nominated Matt Branham as Chairman for this years Election Committee, Dan Megel and Brad Ponsler will be on the committee. Tom Schneider and Kevin Morin are up for re-election/appointment.

Nominees – These are due by Dec. 1

CWI Grant Application Ideas – At the previous board meeting ideas that were discussed. Kelly reached out to neighboring districts to see if anyone would be interested in partnering on a CWI Grant application. Jackson County would like to, and their board asked that we work on the following for the application. Heavy Use Areas, Access Roads, Cover Crops and Hay/Pasture Plantings. Kelly pulled a previous grant that we had received funding on to get information for submitting. A meeting will be held later this morning to work out details and put together the application.

Matt was still waiting on a quote for the Fecon machine. Discussion was had about how would we handle the liability and repairs if we partnered on this with another county. After some discussion it was decided not to pursue this option at this time.

Becca reported that she reached out to ISDA employees, Laura Fribley and Jenny Rowland to discuss perimeter fencing and they didn't feel like it would be a funded project due to the liability. Jenny Vogel asked what they meant by liability and Becca replied that she wasn't sure and that she would follow up with them and report back to the board. Matt asked if we could include that in the cover crop grant. It will be discussed with Jackson County when we meet later today.

Soil Health Demonstration Field – The Soil Health agreement showed that this year there was to be 6 species planted in the Soil Health Demonstration Field. Andy stated that was the original agreement and if we were going to make changes he felt the board needed to vote on that. After some discussion it was agreed that Jenny Vogel would create a recommendation for a total of 6 species and Matt Branham plans to fly on the seed via drone. No changes were made to the original agreement at this time.

Watershed Update – The next steering committee meeting will be held on Tuesday, August 29 at the Jennings County Public Library. Andy reported that about 75% of the plan is in place.

2024 Budget Hearing – Becca reported that she had received an email from the auditor that the budget hearing had been scheduled for Monday, August 28TH. They have set aside 8:30 a.m. to 11:45 a.m., with 15-minute time slots to have each office present their budget to the council. Brad Ponsler typically attends, and Dan Megel was asked to be a backup. Dan agreed to do this and asked that the 8:30 a.m. time slot be requested. Since Becca needed to leave right after today's meeting, Kelly contacted Brad to see if that time would work for him, it would. Kelly then contacted the auditor and was told that the time slots had been filled and she was waiting to hear back from the County Council as to when they were going to set aside additional time to hear from the remaining offices that had not been able to fit in the original time slots. The time slots were only open allowing for only 13 offices to present that day. The auditor stated that she will let us know once she confirms an additional date of time for this.

New Business

Nicci Lucas – County HR Updates – Nicci attended our meeting to advise the board of some of the upcoming changes within the employee FSLA status per the Department of Labor. Some of these changes could affect the office but a meeting will be held with DOL to address these later. She also informed the board that there are some county employees who have not followed the county employee handbook and keeping their comp hours under 80 hours. With this they county may be forced to payout those employees and then enforce the policy. Currently the SWCD staff is staying under the max allotted hours. The county had also asked the staff to update their job descriptions. This was completed and turned into HR by the required due date. Since our office is under a separate board, she felt it was best if the board of supervisors reviewed these descriptions and signed off on them. The board agreed. Kelly asked if the staff should be reporting their time to the board at our monthly meetings just to have oversight and keep any of the issues that others in the county may be experiencing to a minimum. The board agreed.

Job Evaluations – Along with the update job descriptions, Kelly mentioned that performance evaluations were not being completed by the board and that is another issue that the Department of Labor may address at their upcoming meeting. After speaking with Brad Ponsler about this, Kelly has reached out to other districts inquiring about evaluations that they may use. Many do not, but the ones she has gathered will be shared with the board to give them guidance on creating a form to be used going forward. This information will be shared at the next meeting.

CREP Administering District

The district received a letter from ISDA seeking districts that might be interested in administering the funds from CREP. All of Jennings County is now eligible for this program since they have added the Muscatatuck Watershed. Previously

the only area of Jennings County eligible for this program was those in the Upper East Fork White Watershed. There will be a Q&A about this program and what work would be involved on September 7. Kelly advised the board that in speaking with Decatur Co. who already administers the Upper East Fork White Watershed that they feel like Jennings could handle the paperwork involved. This would include the counties of Jennings, Jefferson, Scott & Jackson. Tom Schneider made a motion that the district apply with a second from Matt Branham. All were in favor.

MUTC Request

The staff received a request from the Senior Environmental Compliance Manager, Jennifer Hughes, via email, asking if the district had any native seed that they would like to give out at the upcoming MUTC open house on Sep. 23. Currently the district did not have any seed for giveaway. Kelly asked the board to purchase some seed, baggies, and labels to promote the district at this event and get more native plants out in Jennings Co. Tom Schneider made a motion to purchase up to \$600 in seed for this project, with a second from Matt Branham. All were in favor.

Truck Repairs

The truck was due for an oil change, Kelly contacted Family Ford to have the oil changed along with diagnosing the intermittent wiper blades activating randomly. They changed the oil and said that the rear brakes needed to be replaced at a cost of \$500 and the Multi-Function Switch replaced at a cost of \$240. A quote was sought from Ron's Auto Service and came in at \$190 less. Tom Schneider made a motion to have the repairs completed at Ron's, with a second from Matt Branham. All were in favor.

Agency & Committee Reports

Jenny Vogel – NRCS DC

Written Report

Jenny's last day in the office will be August 25. Jennifer Kipper will be the acting D.C.

Becca McClellan – SWCD

Written Report

Kelly Kent – SWCD

Written Report

District Policy

Nothing New

Strategic Plan

Claims

Kelly has a packet prepared for review and the board members will need to sign these along with the Financial Report and prior months meeting minutes.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Matt Branham with a second by Tom Schneider at 8:07 am.

Minutes taken by Kelly Kent.

Minutes approved by:

Chairman

Vice-Chairman

Member

Member

Member