

Jennings County Soil & Water Conservation District

November 28, 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 6:32 a.m.

Board Members

Brad Ponsler
Dan Megel
Matt Branham
Kevin Morin

Staff

Becca McClellan
Deanna Jackson
Andy Ertel

Associate Board Members

Kameron Garlitch

Partners

Jennifer Kipper

Reading of the Minute

Dan Megel made a motion to accept the October 2023 minutes as submitted, with a second from Matt Branham. All were in favor.

Financial Report

Matt Branham made a motion to accept the financial report as submitted, with a second from Kevin Morin. All were in favor. Becca reported that CD rates at German American Bank were at 5.1% APR. After discussion Dan Megel made the motion to take \$80,000 from the savings account and put it into a CD with the best rate. Kevin Morin seconded the motion, and all were in favor. Becca will see which CD carries the 5.1% APR and open the CD.

Correspondence

IASWCD emailed a notice that they were restructuring dues. "Together, the board examined the budget and losses accumulated over the past few years and determined that IASWCD needed to reevaluate its dues structure." Jennings County SWCD's dues will be increased from \$2,000 annually to \$3,788.18 annually, effective date was not mentioned in the attachments. Becca reported having a landowner past due on an invoice that was due 10/19/2023 for the Brillion Seeder that was rented back in July of 2023 after several attempts reaching out to the landowner and not receiving payment, she drafted a "Small Claims Letter" to send to the landowner as the next step. She will mail that via certified mail today.

Ongoing/Old Business

Annual Meeting Follow Up – Becca reported that she has reached out to Emily Peterson, Jennings County Extension ANR, for a list of speakers and topics that we can choose from, she has yet to hear back. After discussing, the Board would like to find topics that will cover Category 1, Category 3B and Category 6 licensing (covering pesticides, soil fertility and/or pest management). Becca received quotes from Rolling Pin and Tailfeathers. Deanna reached out to Tevin Schultz and will be emailing his quote by the end of business today. Kameron is reaching out to Mark Biehle for a quote as well. Dan Megel made a motion to charge \$10.00 per ticket with a second from Kevin Morin, all were in favor. Advertising for the Annual Meeting will be done through social media, the local newspaper, radio, CCSI and possibly running a Facebook ad. The District will continue to invite and provide free tickets to: Commissioners, County Council Members, City Council Members, Mayors, Judge, State/Federal Representatives, Press/Media (1 per entity), Speaker(s), Staff and 1 guest and Supervisors and 1 guest.

IASWCD Annual Conference Registration – Becca made reservations for Deanna to attend the annual conference in January. Becca and Deanna will go up Sunday afternoon and Matt will go up Monday. No one else is able to attend.

CWI Grant Update – Becca gave an update on the feedback received on our CWI Grant. A teams meeting was held on November 20th with Becca, Maria Fisher and Laura Fribley. The comments received are listed below:

Positive Comments:

- Good information on unfunded EQIP (there were 19 applications and 13 went unfunded) and showing interested producers.

Negative Comments:

- Goals not being measurable. To fix make goals measurable, *“We are going to reach out to x number of producers through...”* *“We are going to have x number of newsletters, social media posts, field days etc...”*
- Address specific issues/problems and how the grant will address it – be specific.
- Several comments on in-kind match (cash match is preferred not required) other districts were putting in significant amounts of money (\$10k).
- How much in-kind match/time people would be putting in and what they would be specifically contributing. Be more specific in this area.

Statewide Comments:

- Avoided funding partial grants.
- Wanted more measurable goals.

Recommendation: work on improving Goals and Match sections for next year’s CWI Grant Application.

Vernon Fork of the Muscatatuck Watershed Update – Andy reported that the Steering Committee met on November 15th Kathleen Hagan attended this meeting and helped answer any questions. Andy and Heather are nearly finished with their watershed plan and are submitting pieces to IDEM at a steady pace. Implementation cannot start until the watershed plan is approved by the EPA. There was discussion that we could apply for round two of the 319 grant in 2024 in hopes to be awarded funding in 2025. The next Steering Committee meeting is scheduled for January 25th at 1:00pm (Jennings County Public Library). Matt stated that the January Steering Committee meeting would be longer than usual and asked if the District would provide snacks and beverages for attendees. Dan Megel made the motion to spend \$50.00 on snacks and beverages with a second from Kevin Morin. All were in favor.

New Business

Capital Improvement Plan Form for 2025 – Becca reported that the Auditor’s office emailed each Department Head a Capital Improvement Plan Form that needed to be filled out and turned in by November 30th. Capital includes land, improvements to land, building improvements, vehicles, equipment, etc. that have a lifespan of at least one year. The 2-in-1 Billion Drop Seeder (\$25,000) will be added to the form. Becca will complete the form and submit to Auditor’s by the deadline.

Friends of Conservation Candidates and Conservationist of the Year Candidates – After years of selecting recipients of these awards it has become harder and harder to find candidates who have not been previously awarded Friends of Conservation/Conservationist of the Year in the past. We will continue to work on selecting candidates in the future, but this year we will recognize Beth Steiner and Ralph Cooley for their years of conservation education. Ralph and Beth will

each be awarded a Jennings Co. SWCD jacket at the annual meeting – a motion made by Matt Branham to purchase jackets with a second from Dan Megel. All were in favor.

America The Beautiful Grant Update – Becca gave an update that we did get funded for the ATB Grant. Dawn Slack is meeting with the grantors on December 5th to discuss how the grant will be awarded, timeline, paperwork and administration. Dawn is working to set up another meeting with the participating District staff to review and finish timeline, discuss needs for each county and how to proceed.

Mileage Forms – Brad, Kevin, Dan and Matt have completed their mileage forms for 2023. Becca or Deanna will reach out to Jimmi and Tom for their forms. Kameron declined receiving mileage payment for 2023.

New Employee – Matt Branham made a motion to make Deanna Jackson the Fiscal Officer, replacing Kelly Kent with a second from Kevin Morin. All were in favor.

Matt Branham made a motion to remove Kelly Kent from all banking accounts/credit cards and replace with Deanna Jackson with a second from Kevin Morin. All were in favor. Matt Branham also made a motion to make Deanna Jackson Board Secretary effective immediately with a second from Kevin Morin. All were in favor.

Termination of Employment/New Hire of Employment – Kelly Kent had given her resignation letter to the Board at last month's (October) meeting stating her last day would be November 3, 2023. This was later amended that she could remain "employed" through November 26, 2023 to be able to use her remaining sick leave. Deanna Jackson's start date was November 27, 2023.

Jennifer Kipper – NRCS District Conservationist
Written Report

Becca McClellan – SWCD
Written Report

Deanna Jackson – SWCD
Written Report

Andy Ertel – 319 Grant Education Coordinator
Written Report

District Policy

Sexual Harassment Training – All Staff and Supervisors/Associate Supervisors present at this morning's meeting had taken and signed the Sexual Harassment Training. Becca will send a copy to Laura Fribley and Nicci Lucas.

Strategic Plan

Claims

Kelly Kent had prepared a packet (including a Financial Report and October's Board Meeting Minutes) for the Board members to review and sign. Becca gave this to Brad Ponsler before the adjournment of the meeting.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Matt Branhan with a second by Dan Megel at 8:01AM.

Minutes taken by Becca McClellan.

Minutes approved by:

Chairman

Vice-Chairman

Member

Member

Member