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**Otsego County Soil & Water Conservation District**

967 CO HWY 33 – RIVER ROAD – COOPERSTOWN, NEW YORK 13326-9222 – PHONE (607) 547-8337 ext. 4

**OTSEGO COUNTY SWCD BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

Regular Meeting

Friday, June 25, 2021

Held in person at the office and GotoMeeting.com

**Members Present:**

Les Rathbun, Chair, Grange Rep.  
Meg Kennedy, Vice Chair, Cty. Rep  
Ed Lentz, Member at Large  
Michele Farwell, County Legislator  
Doris Moennich, Treasurer/Landowner (Late)

**Staff Present:**

Jordan Clements, District Manger  
Jessica Miller, Secretary/Assistant Treasurer

**Members Absent:**

Larry Roseboom Sr., Farm Bureau  
Helene Kraham, Ag Landowner

**I. Call to order:** Board Chairman, **Les Rathbun** called the regular meeting to order at 9:43 a.m.

**II. Approval of minutes:**

- Motion was made by **Farwell**, seconded by **Kennedy** to approve May's regular board meeting minutes, and special minutes after amendments discussed are made. Doris abstained. Motion Carried.

**III. Approval of Treasurer's Report & Bills to be paid**

A list of May's bills to be paid and credit card statement were provided to the Board in advance of the meeting.

- Motion was made by **Lentz**, seconded by **Kennedy** to approve May's treasurer's report. Motion Carried.
- Motion was made to approve May's bills paid was made by **Kennedy**, seconded by **Lentz**. Motion Carried.

**IV. District Secretary/Assistant Treasurer Report**

Jessica Miller reports the District completed 22 on farm site visits for BMP verification, and trees for tributary buffers were added also. The District should be reimbursed \$22,000 this



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year from USC for BMP verifications. Green Circle will be reviewing the first half of 2021 after July 1<sup>st</sup>. 2020 audit files were distributed to the board in advance of the meeting.

### **V. District Reports**

#### **Jordan Clements's Grant Updates:**

- Discussion on list of open grants, PJ and Scott are working on Otsego Creek Grant closeout. Unadilla account is closed out, need to close bank account. Calhoun Creek Grant is the next to closeout. Les Rathbun and Jordan Clements met virtually with auditors to begin review of two round 22 grants. The four remaining open grants are in different stages of completion.
- Otsego County Buffer- is pending work. CREP planting date deadlines are encouraging a practice change from riparian forest buffer to grass buffer. The fencing component of the project is done. Completed buffers have been paid out, the remaining have bid packets.
- Otsego County Buffer II- not moving forward due to high fencing costs due to the need for woven wire for sheep, may be a candidate for AEM tier 4. The other farmer in grant is strictly a crop farmer now.
- Lower Warton Creek Barnyard- covered barnyard has been paid out. Issue with HUA and engineering due to the barn being unstable.
- Otsego Buffer III- Trout Unlimited is involved, DEC, trying to work with partners. Due to changes in CREP the farmer share is short. May need an extension.
- CAFO- Milking herd sold. Made engineering payments.
- Calhoun Creek Waste Storage & Buffer Grant – Will be ready to closeout next once audit is done. Not expecting issues with closeout.
- Otsego Creek Watershed Manure Storage and Buffer project and Upper Schenevus Watershed Project- Auditors have asked for all documents for these two grants by June 30<sup>th</sup>. Auditors met virtually with Jordan and Les and thanked Jordan for providing documents to them. No timeline for completion given.



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- Upper Schenevus Watershed Project- if money needs to be returned we would have to make payments. Jordan doesn't want to approach landowner about this until after the audit.

### Grant Payment Checklist-

- Board discusses what supporting documents they would like to see before approval of a grant payment is made. Hope is to streamline the payment system so more eyes are on the projects and the closeouts will be easier in the end. Board reviews Monroe County SWCD's AEM checklist that was distributed before the meeting. BMP's implemented would be signed off by technician or engineer. A chart showing grant percentages for cost share and dollar amounts would be added into the checklist. NRCS contracts can be adjusted, and NRCS pays out once they have their NRCS engineer sign the as-builts, which can take weeks to months, and then the landowner is stuck negotiating with the contractor who wants to be paid. Which is why in the past the District would pay before NRCS to help the farmer out once the project was complete.

Michele Farwell comments that this is a discussion about risk, now Jordan doesn't want to take the risk paying first, now the Board is taking a risk signing a checklist before a payment is made. Meg Kennedy comments the District was mitigating, more projects were getting done because the District acted like a bank. Jordan Clements replies that if the District didn't cost share with NRCS, 50% of our projects would not have moved forward. Other Districts have paid before NRCS, and we can follow a checklist but we may lose farmer participation by waiting to pay farmers. In the past the District has written letters to banks for farmers to get loans to implement grant projects, direct payments to the bank can also be made. The Board asks Jordan to ask Monroe County SWCD for their procurement policy, and payout procedures. Waiting for FSA or NRCS to make 1<sup>st</sup> payment all depends on their workload. The checklist needs a table showing cost share percentages with the actual FSA or NRCS paid amount at the end, then add the two columns together. Discussion on how often payments will need to approved depends on activity and engineering. Discussion on making a payment resolution before payment is made, by special meeting, or email. Jordan was asked by the auditors if the District has a payout policy, but the District only has a procurement policy. The final closeout will be made much easier by having all the items in the checklist, and once all the items are included the Board could signoff on the payment checklist. The District will no longer be paying out on a grant before NRCS or FSA does.

- A **motion** was made by Farwell to adopt and require completed AEM checklist with table, and signature lines added before payments can be made, form also requires two board



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members signatures before approval of payment. Changes to checklist form made will be expected as policy changes and the form will be incorporated to a fuller policy. Motion seconded by Lentz All in favor. Motion Carried.

- Jordan invites newly hired buffer steward interns, John Fowler, and Devin Kiser to introduce themselves to the Board of Directors. They are working with Mark Kugler to maintain our buffers within Otsego County.

### Jordan Clements Monthly Report

#### 1. Ag Non-Point Closeouts:

- Currently working with PJ on the Otego Creek Watershed Manure Storage and Buffer project closeout.
- Getting requested documents to him.

#### 2. Forestry:

- Met with Dan, Ellen, and Melanie to discuss issue
- Finalized forestry contract.
- Working on sending bids out.
- Issue brought up at public works meeting about logging done at dozen dads. Replanting suggested.
- Education component needed.
- First aid training

#### 3. Resolutions for RND. 27 Ag Non-Point Source:

- Jordan stated that he would like a resolution to apply for two Ag Non-Point Source grants:
  - **Resolution #1:** A motion was made by Kennedy, and seconded by Moennich to pass a resolution in support of the Otego Creek Nutrient Management Project. Motion carried.
  - **Resolution #2:** A motion was made by Kennedy, and seconded by Moennich to pass a resolution in support of the Lower Butternut Creek Nutrient Management Project. Motion carried.

#### 4. Tax Issues:

- Jess received letter from IRS stating she owed nearly \$20,000.00
- Chris received letter stating he owed \$200.00

#### 5. CRF POW's



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- Turned in both POW's
- Awaiting Contract

6. Call from DASNY

- Will be receiving the \$200,000.00 for excavator shortly
- Should receive call for the \$250,000.00 for extension shortly.

7. Reviewed Staff Goals:

- Made a few minor changes. Maintaining a level of challenge.

8. Lee & Irene Monies

- Made new contact with DEC
- Provided them with requested documentation
- Sounds promising

**VI. New Business:**

A motion was made by Lentz, seconded by Kennedy to enter Executive Session at 12:13 p.m. to discuss personnel matter. Motion was made by Kennedy, seconded by Moennich to end executive session at 12:37 p.m.

No further business.

**VII. Next Meeting:** Next meeting to be held on **Friday, July 16, 2021 at 10:00 a.m.**

**VIII. Adjournment:** Meeting adjourned at **12:38 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

*Jessica Miller*

Jessica L. Miller

Administrative Assistant/Secretary/Assistant Treasurer

July 6, 2021