



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

Thursday, January 21, 2021

Held remotely on GoToMeeting.com

United States (Toll Free): [1 866 899 4679](tel:18668994679)

United States: [+1 \(571\) 317-3116](tel:+15713173116)

Members Present:

Les Rathbun, Chair, Grange Rep.
Michele Farwell, County Legislator
Ed Lentz, Member at Large
Doris Moennich, Treasurer/Landowner
Larry Roseboom, Sr., Farm Bureau
Helene Kraham, Ag Landowner

Staff Present:

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

Members Absent:

Meg Kennedy, Vice Chair, Cty. Rep

I. **Call to order:** Board Chairman, **Les Rathbun** called the online meeting to order at 10:02 a.m.

II. **Approval of minutes:**

- Motion was made by **Lentz**, seconded by **Roseboom** to approve December's board meeting minutes.
Roll Call Vote: Rathbun – Aye, Lentz – Aye, Moennich – Aye, Farwell – Aye, Kraham – Aye, Roseboom – Aye. The motion carried.

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

A list of December – January's bills to be paid were provided to the Board in advance of the meeting.

- Motion was made by **Lentz**, seconded by **Moennich** to approve treasurer's report.
Roll Call Vote: Rathbun – Aye, Lentz – Aye, Moennich – Aye, Farwell – Aye, Kraham – Aye, Roseboom – Aye. The motion carried.
- Motion was made to approve bills paid was made by **Moennich**, seconded by **Lentz**.



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Roll Call Vote: Rathbun – Aye, Kennedy – Aye, Moennich – Aye, Farwell – Aye, Kraham – Aye, Roseboom – Aye. The motion carried.

IV. Election of Officers:

Doris Moennich was nominated for Treasurer by **Les Rathbun** and seconded by **Ed Lentz**, all in favor, motion carried.

Meg Kennedy was nominated for Vice Chair by **Ed Lentz** and seconded by **Michele Farwell**, all in favor, motion carried.

Les Rathbun was nominated for Chair by **Helene Kraham** and seconded by **Ed Lentz**. **Les** abstains from vote, 5 vote in favor, motion carried.

Jessica Miller was nominated for Assistant Treasurer by **Doris Monenich** and seconded by **Ed Lentz**, all in favor, motion carried.

V. District Secretary/Assistant Treasurer Report

Jessica reports business as usual, running payroll, paying bills, tree sale, working on 2020 audit with Angelica. Setup 2021 timesheets for staff, and is more than willing to provide any additional financial reports if requested. Directors expense 2020 mileage checks will be mailed out next week.

VI. District Reports

Jordan reports by April 1st of this year the town, county, pandemic protocol plan needs to be put in place. Currently in the western part of the state there is a District lawsuit over having to use leave after a second two-week quarantine. Another District is having issues with reimbursement for Covid testing after an 80-mile trip. These two instances are eye opening. We haven't gotten a response from the County lawyer about our Coronavirus lease questions yet. Otsego SWCD had two instances of positive Covid cases, staff effected were asked to get another Covid test before they returned to work to be sure they were negative. Jordan learned after talking with Ag & Markets and other District's, it turns out that it is actually illegal to ask them to get tested again after the quarantine period was over. Jordan told staff once he learned that he shouldn't have asked them to retest, both employees said they would have gotten retested for the peace of mind even if they didn't get asked to. The pandemic emergency plan will need to be passed by the board, and staff will need to sign off on it as well. **Michele** understands that Chair Bliss asked for Emergency Plans but that she has only



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seen one plan so far, and commented that **Meg** may know more. Lentz commented that his town hired a consultant to write the plan. Jordan says the plan will need to iron out working from home while sick, when to use time etc. Staff are now flip flopping every other week to keep staff at 50%. Districts are all handling it different, and Federal partners are a one person per office. All Federal employees were asked to work from home on inauguration day to protect them from violence. Jordan asks when things like this occur who decides what the District should do? Things like this aren't in our personnel policy. **Farwell** comments though we are renting office space to federal partners this seems like a rare instance. It makes sense for Jordan to make a decision on the likelihood that the federal government had to make a blanket policy. Should be left up to your discretion. **Lentz** comments that he agrees with **Farwell**, but that he is concerned about putting all this weight on Jordan, especially if something did happen. **Lentz** suggests when there is a reason for concern, decide, and email the board about it and if they any objections or foreseeable concerns. Jordan reports that he would like to have the emergency response plan sent out to the board and reviewed by staff by the 1st week of February. FSA is still adamant on not participating on Covid questionnaire, and NRCS has stopped also. Everyone has their mask on if they are walking around, and in common areas, but masks can be off at their desks. Both agencies will not come to work if they feel sick. Jordan states he asked the County lawyer to look at the lease to find out what our rights are. We've had issues with NRCS & FSA not closing during snow emergencies. Only way a federal building can close is if a State of Emergency is declared and the public can't get in our building. USDA as a whole can currently only travel to one office, Tony travels to Otsego. The District needs to know our rights.

Ag and Markets assured us by the 2nd week of March we would receive Part A and Part C funds, but he avoided talking about grants opening.

On the positive side the District was discussed in the Chesapeake Bay Journal. Last Fall before the farm tour Jordan toured the Bay photographer around to riparian forest buffer sites. We stopped at the Beecher farm that was on our farm tour and showed the BMP's. The article was published in January. Jordan wished the whole crew could have been there for the picture. The publication goes to every state in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. We can only hope for more positive publicity to come our way.

The District made two Key Bank credit card payments in March, we found that one payment never got credited to our account. The Bank has made us jump through hoops to get the payment credited to our account. They finally let us know the payment was credited to the



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Otsego County Treasurer's account by mistake. 2021 Water Quality Symposium will be held remotely this year so price has dropped dramatically to \$50 for the whole week per person. This means the staff will still attend a week's worth of classes. Jordan is busy working on end of the year reporting, and is having Jessica review old end of the year reports. Jordan plans on completing it all again, with Jessica's assistance. Chris on Monday is going out with Ron and Greg to do a walkthrough farm visit on his 3rd and final CNMP needed for certification. We have two AEM implementation projects that will need to be completed at the end of the year. Other projects that we have extensions for that will need to be completed. The budget for the state has funds for conservation districts.

The District has had some upkeep to do around the facility. The fan needed replacing in the women's room. We have saved money by having Karl, Mark, and Jordan doing maintenance. In the future once finances stabilize, a secondary heat source is needed. The office is heated with radiant heat, the 1st of its generation. It takes 24 hours to see an adjustment on the thermostat. It's a constant worry if it doesn't work. The small offices and bathrooms have floor radiators. **Lentz** asks if any progress has been made to move forward with building extension. Jordan comments that he got the award letter from Bill Magee when he was still in office. Jordan will reach back out. The plans for the extension were all drawn out, and had a secondary heater along the longest stretch of wall. **Lentz** asked if we have a back up generator? Jordan replied that he asked Bill Mason for one previously but it never happened. **Lentz** comments that a generator may be higher priority than a secondary heating source, and wondered if the USDA could chip in. Jordan replies that he will reach out to buildings and grounds to have help sizing an appropriate generator for the office. Farwell notes that Jordan can reach out to Garth Brown, and that she feels it's appropriate to get an estimate from an electrician. With regard to whether the extension should be done all at once. **Lentz** comments he would like to see comparisons of different systems. Farwell suggests we look into incentives.

Envirothon will have to be held virtually if we decide to hold one this year. The State Envirothon went virtual last year, and will be again. We can see if schools would be interested in signing up. Jordan asks if the board feels we should hold a virtual event. **Lentz** and Rathbun both comment that they would hate to see it stop. Tree Sale will be held like we did last year, we are trying to move the District forward despite Covid. The staff will take sexual harassment training online and print out completion certificates. Staff are still meeting virtually twice a week. **Lentz** notes that the Butternut Creek project has been downsizing after a school board member raised concern about having a walking trail. Asks if the forest



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parcel and landowner issue has been resolved. Jordan has not heard from the County lawyer yet, but feels the County should invest some of the timber sale money into making a display to explain why we had to harvest the ash before it dies from EAB. **Farwell** comments Meg Kennedy has a conflict for attending the meetings due to the admin meeting. Farwell would also like to be able to attend the admin meeting. The Board discusses moving meetings to the 3rd Friday of the month.

VII. Partner Reports

NRCS- no report

FSA- no report

VIII. Next Meeting: Next meeting to be held on **Thursday, February 19, 2020 at 10:00 a.m.** hopefully face to face.

IX. Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at **11:45 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

Jessica Miller

Jessica L. Miller

Administrative Assistant/Secretary/Assistant Treasurer

February 01, 2020