



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, November 19, 2020

Held at office and offered remotely on GoToMeeting.com

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

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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 (In Person)
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

Guest:

Angelica Palmer – Green Circle
Kathryn Hemstreet – County Executive Director, FSA
Anthony Capraro – District Conservationist, NRCS

- I. **Call to order:** Board Chairman, **Les Rathbun** called the online meeting to order at 10:04 a.m.

- II. **2019 Audit Review**
Angelica Palmer of Green Circle goes over summary for second half of 2019 audit. A summary and audit paperwork has been distributed to all board members before the meeting. She has been helping to transition Jessica Miller into former secretary's roles. She explains that Jessica is very self-taught and has only needed her for a couple questions. In 2020 we have moved into utilizing Intuit Online Payroll that has taken care of having unexplainable tax refund issues. We have not yet invested time into researching why the tax overpayments were made, but it most likely was because taxes were paid before they were due. Petty cash tracking has been an issue, and transparency issues, Angelica suggests since it's not used often it would be easier to eliminate it. Jordan agrees it's best to eliminate it. Not everyone was up to date on how it needs to be tracked. **Ed Lentz** wonders what the biggest underlying problem was with overpayments. Angelica stated that former secretary was paying the payroll tax fast and too soon. Therefore, the system was displaying the tax liability and it was



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overpaid due to being paid too soon. **Ed Lentz** also likes the idea of eliminating Petty Cash. Ag assessments have all been paid by Check, and Petty Cash is the biggest liability. Angelica asks if there are any further questions on the summary before she moves on to the financial reports.

Discussion on tree sale being a money maker or not this last year. Historically it is more of a public outreach event. Angelica's overall assessment of 2019 is that the District is in pretty good health. Discussion on trends for grants being unknown, hard to budget for. Need to work on 2021 budget, and setting it up to align with Quickbooks budget. The Profit & Loss has been simplified to make it easier to compare it with the budget. Angelica is willing to help Jordan setup the budget to better align. Jordan will contact her to work on it.

Looking now at the balance sheet showing how each account is broken down. Undeposited funds showing is accurate. The credit card is generally paid off each month. Monthly payroll liabilities are negative because it was paid before it was due. All other accounts are healthy and accurate.

Les Rathbun is concerned about the number of pages he is needing to print. Angelica will show Jessica how to put all 3 columns on one page on budgets actual report. We could also double side printouts. The District will accommodate those who want a physical copy, and understands some people prefer paper. **Ed Lentz** proposes we should start having a financial committee again, and begin consolidating reports. The old committee consisted of Doris, Les, Ed, and Meg. Angelica will be working with Jess on ways to consolidate board reports, and suggests going forward we only compare month to month and not part of months. We should have the first half of 2020 completed pretty soon

III. Partner Updates

Kate Hemstreet – Farm Service Agency

Kathryn Hemstreet, County Executive Director, introduces herself to the Board. Apologizes for not attending meetings. She gives her FSA background, she covers Albany, Otsego, Schenectady and Schoharie Counties. FSA programs currently going on are the Coronavirus relief program and it runs with the Dairy Margin Protection Plan. FSA offices are in different stances with Coronavirus. It has been hard to come up with a plan nationally. FSA doesn't follow the state phases for reopening. Schoharie office is in phase 2, Otsego is still in phase 1. Phase 2 can have appointments. Her Schoharie office did have a positive case in the USDA office. Therefore, it is shut down at the moment. CRP general sign up will be happening in the new year. CREP agreements are in review. Dairy margin coverage look like 2021



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projections won't good. Most likely we will see an increase in signups. Official status is we can have 10 F-Pac in the office. That was a realignment due to the situation with COVID, one FSA staff is in the Otsego office and one is working remotely. Technically, her staff could both be in the office but she is being cautious. Jordan introduces the board by name to Kathryn and welcomes her to all future meetings. Traditionally she tries to give updates for the meetings but she has been juggling the four Counties. Kathryn thanks everyone.

Anthony Capraro, District Conservationist, NRCS

Anthony Capraro has asked his staff to telework when they can. He gives a quick update on 2021 programs. He is finishing payments for CSP for 2021. Processed 30- 36 applications and will be mailing assessments on all of the applications. Applications numbers are low this year, may have a 2nd signup. They have 4 applications in for EQIP-RCPP for livestock waste practices through USC. We will know in March when projects are funded. Working with the District on tree planting and grants. Hope everyone has a great holiday.

IV. Approval of minutes:

- Motion was made by **Farwell**, seconded by **Lentz** to approve October's board meeting minutes after amending resolution to adopt temperature checks to COVID questionnaire.

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

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

A list of October - November's bills to be paid were provided to the Board in advance of the meeting.

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

Discussion about bills paid. **Moennich** asked about the Trolley charge for farm tour and farm visit, **Lentz** asked about how many NYSEG accounts. ATV is used for tree planting and soil sampling, we've had it for a very long time.



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

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

- Worked on reviewing 2020 Angelica and adjusting as necessary.
- Reported 651.40 acres for 2020 Cover Crops grant for USC DEC.
- Business as usual, paying bills, assisting customers, running payroll, filing.
- More than willing to consolidate financial reports

VII. **District Reports**

Jordan Clements will be scanning staff performance evaluations after meeting and will be sending a blank evaluation for the board to review him. Partner agencies are at 1 staff per office. The District is separate. Delaware has been at 25% staff. Going forward, do we keep all staff in the office, 50% or send all staff to work from home? Jordan feels we should be doing something since our partners have taken a reduction. We currently have no staff allowed in the breakroom. What does the board want to see happen? We could flip staff each week, Jordan wouldn't want to work from home the entire week. Chris and Dan are in a different situation because they work in the cabin. If Dan can't be in the field for most of the day he should work from home. The trend is COVID is spiking, and we are planning for that. Jordan commends his staff for adapting to working from home and being productive. It would be one thing if we are totally separate in the building but we don't have separate bathrooms, or breakrooms. **Lentz** is in favor of keeping staff safe. With coming into winter people are stuck in the office. Jess, Mark, and Karl can flip weeks. Jordan could work from home two days a week. Explains how Otsego just had a spike of 18 cases in one day. Jordan would like to be proactive and go to 50% staff. **Farwell** agrees it's a good plan and to monitor rates, and keep doing temperature checks. **Lentz** questions if Jordan needs to be in the office that often. Jordan responds with last time he was considered essential so he came in everyday, also brings up how he needs to be in to plow. Kathryn mentions that FSA is getting a revised weather protocol to reflect teleworking. The District currently uses temperature checks and CDC COVID questionnaire for staff to fill out daily. Some staff have asked if anyone answers yes to any of the questions honestly do we hold that person liable? Say for instance Jess answers yes because she has a headache, then she can't be at work. Do we have our staff use sick time then? It was if you answer yes to any of the above questions you will not be



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allowed entry into the facility. **Lentz** expects if the staff answers “yes” they will work from home if they feel well enough to, or they will use sick time. Kathryn felt her and her staff should not fill out the CDC questionnaire due to the liability. Kathryn explained, the way the lease is setup you cannot restrict our access, you cannot put contingencies on our access to the space we are leasing. She feels that her staff is monitoring themselves for symptoms. In Schoharie we had a 1st order exposure, once they tested positive, policy states they are become 1st order. Kathryn is not comfortable with her staff signing or any possible retribution by bringing COVID into the office. We know people can be positive without being sick. **Lentz** states as the lessor we have a responsibility, and has difficulty not following CDC guidelines. Should we follow USDA policy? Kathryn explains that the USDA has guidelines and that the infected person didn't violate office policy. Staff are erring on the side of caution. Explains she does not feel it's appropriate for our landlord to restrict access to the building. **Farwell** comments that the County employees all have to answer a COVID questionnaire before entering County buildings. The County also leases its space to private organizations that comply with the questionnaire. This is an unusual situation. This is a liability issue on both sides. Kathryn explains the COVID cleaning protocol after exposure. Once the office is vacant for 7 days then routine cleaning can occur. It's 14 days if a person is exposed. Kathryn explains she didn't have any exposure to the COVID positive staff member. **Lentz** recommends we have our leased reviewed by the County's lawyer. We need to know what our rights are as a lessor. Kathryn will send out a document explaining orders. **Rathbun** questions if this is a health department issue. Anthony Capraro explains that he has been told by NRCS that he and his staff are also not responsible for filling out the District's COVID questionnaire. His staff just does it to be good partners. He tells his staff if they feel any symptoms to just stay home. USDA staff are all setup to telework. **Farwell** requests USDA send us their policies. Jordan comments we can't control what our staff does outside of the office. Temperature checks are just one small step. We need to see what the lawyer can provide us as well.

End of the year reporting is coming up soon, Jess is a quick learner and may relieve me of some of those duties for reporting. EQIP-RCPP application is in line for review. Chris's second CNMP corrections are in, and he is waiting to review the progress with Ag and Markets. Round 22 buffer grant is moving forward with fencing. Grants received extensions that will give us until 2021 to complete. Currently questioning sediment and erosion class being able to be held in person or not. Will see if we could set it up to be held remotely. Will be getting winter newsletter out soon. Erica checked in and said she will have everything to me by the 1st week of December for the watershed study. Currently have a boundary line



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dispute with a landowner that will require a survey. The County will need to pay for this and we are working on getting 3 quotes. There is roughly 300,000 board feet on the parcel marked to harvest. It's mostly ash that will need to harvest before we are bound to lose it to the EAB. Working with Tony on moving forward with future cost share agreements. Historically we have had a luncheon for our December meeting, however with COVID that isn't happening this year. We will see if we can use the County building for our next meeting.

VIII. Next Meeting: Next meeting to be held on **Thursday, December 17, 2020 at 10:00 a.m.** hopefully face to face.

IX. Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at **12:00 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

Jessica Miller

Jessica L. Miller

Administrative Assistant/Secretary/Assistant Treasurer

December 1, 2020