



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, October 21, 2020

Held at office and offered 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 (Late)
Doris Moennich, Treasurer/Landowner
Larry Roseboom, Sr., Farm Bureau (In Person)
Helene Kraham, Ag Landowner (In Person)
Meg Kennedy, Vice Chair, Cty. Rep.

Staff Present:

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

Guest:

None

I. Call to order: Board Chairman, **Les Rathbun** called the online meeting to order at 10:07 a.m.

II. Approval of minutes:

- Motion was made by **Kraham**, seconded by **Roseboom** to approve September's board meeting minutes.

Roll Call Vote: Les – Aye, Kennedy – 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 September - October's bills to be paid were provided to the Board in advance of the meeting.

Motion was made by **Moennich**, seconded by **Kennedy** to approve treasurer's report.

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



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

IV. District Secretary/Assistant Treasurer Report

- Worked with Angelica to complete the 2019 4th quarter audit. Will be reviewing 2020 with her next.
- Working with Karl to report 2020 Cover Crops for USC DEC.
- Business as usual, paying bills, running payroll, filing.

V. District Reports

Annual Plan of Work (POW) was emailed to the Board prior to the meeting. The annual plan of work allows the district to be protected by the Ag and Market's State lawyer. The board must pass a resolution of support to approve the POW, please review the document. It doesn't hold us liable if we do not complete everything. It has everything we do in it, grants, coordination, outreach, tree sale, etc. The State encourages us to go through it every so often. It's due by November 1st, 2020. The POW stays the same year to year, Round 26 AgNPS is added.

- A resolution was made by **Kennedy** to pass the annual plan of work, seconded by **Moennich**.

Roll Call Vote: Les – Aye, Kennedy – Aye, Moennich – Aye, Farwell – Aye, Kraham – Aye, Roseboom – Aye. The resolution carried.

Part B Project

The part B project is \$6,000. For the last few years we have used it for the Otsego county buffer maintenance project. It's submitted and approved by the State. The buffer program is something we would like to continue. The buffer program is very visual which makes it a good part B project. It's also necessary for a performance measure.

- A resolution was made by **Kennedy** to approve continuing the buffer maintenance Part B project, seconded by **Kraham**.



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- Roll Call Vote: Les – Aye, Kennedy – Aye, Lentz – Aye, Moennich – Aye, Farwell – Aye, Kraham – Aye, Roseboom – Aye. The resolution carried.

Forestry and Other Updates

Dan is currently out marking a timber sale. Dan presented his outlook on timber sales at the Public Works Committee meeting. He currently has over 400 trees marked for a conservation minded cut. He is hoping to have a sale ready to be put out to bid in November. With Dan's experience he knows that the cost of getting a logger on site that a larger sale will entice loggers to bid. The PWC seemed happy with the presentation, and Dan was able to explain the current timber market.

Jess and Jordan have started planning the 2021 Erosion and Sediment Control Class. It's offered every other year. We are looking into having it at the Quality Inn again, and the County building. The 3rd option may be to host it online. Either way we would still hire Chip from Broome SWCD and Wendy from Tioga SWCD. We would be following guidance on gathering numbers and regulations.

Karl is working on ordering trees for the 2021 tree and shrub sale. One nursery experienced a fire this year and has limited stock. Historically we have picked the trees up. This year we had to ship them at a costly expense. Good News. Chris is now sending in his 2nd CNMP plan corrections. Once the corrections are finalized he will be able to submit his 3rd plan and final plan that has already been completed. Chris's plans are not yet certified but the plans have been submitted for an RCPP grant and will be put into the next round of AgNPS. Tony being an NRCS Certified planner he can sign off on Chris's plans after he reviews them. We should be seeing an RFP for the next round of AgNPS. Karl is going out to collect photos for the USC DEC cover crop grant. It's run on a first come, first served basis. Farmer must submit photos, seed tag for certified seed, acreages, and termination details. It's been a very successful program; the only downfall is if we can't fulfill our contracted acres it will get returned back. We have an AgNPS project finishing up and we will be getting that closed out. Erica reported that the Watershed Study will be done by the end of October. The District has conducted site visits on a culvert in Westford and others. We are still working on the budget conversion, it's taking longer than expected.

Office Issues

With the cleaner working at SUCO we now have him come at the end of the day on Friday after everyone leaves. The staff has picked up cleaning duties on the daily cleaning schedule. The state



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office Covid committee reviewed the lease that states the building will be cleaned daily. We currently pay \$100 a day for cleaning one time a week. Concerned we would be forced to hire a 3rd party to clean daily. Staff has been rotating chores, vacuuming, disinfecting, mopping, bathrooms. If an individual is getting tested or has been around someone who is getting tested that person should not be here. NRCS and FSA have different standards when it comes to Covid-19. All projects and processes are extended due to Covid-19, this is now in the POW, and maybe should be extended to any pandemic. **Lentz** suggests the District add a questionnaire for covid-19 and testing before staff enter the building. The board resolves that the landowner leaser are imposing restrictions on who can enter the building. Each person should have to sign a statement.

- A resolution was made by **Lentz** to restrict who can enter the building due to Covid-19 questions, seconded by **Kennedy**. Roll Call Vote: Les – Aye, Kennedy – Aye, Lentz – Aye, Moennich – Aye, Farwell – Aye, Kraham – Aye, Roseboom – Aye. The resolution carried.

Farwell mentioned that one of the conditions need to be have you been asked to isolate or self-quarantine by a contact tracer.

The security system has been in place for 10 years now and it signals to the security center. Whoever the closest to the office will respond to the alarm call. Over the last couple months Tony has been called at 1am and 2am to meet the sheriff at the office for a false alarm. Since the federal government owns the phone lines their IT department has looked into it to see if the fault is on their end. They were not aware our security system was on their phone lines because we have not had any issues until recently. We have been advised by them to purchase our own phone line for the security system to go on. Something in the phone line is sending signals to Binghamton without the actual alarm going off in the building. Jordan will be looking into phone lines or if there is an internet option and getting cost estimates. Up until 10 years ago we didn't have a security system, but we experienced a robbery therefore it was installed. **Lentz** asked if we have had a service call yet, Jordan explained that have looked into the problem remotely, but we have not yet had an actual tech come on site. Options will be laid out at the next board meeting, NRCS definitely wants it removed from their phone lines.

VI. Partner Reports

NRCS- Did not submit a report.

FSA- Did not submit a report.

VII. Old Business



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Budget will be presented. Been working with the County Treasurer on allocation. The County budget present by the Treasurer showed 10% cut to all outside agencies. We will need to make \$20,000 on County forest timber sales. Luckily, the Forest tech salary was still a line item in the budget at the 45k dollar amount as before. **Lentz** suggests as a show of good faith to the County we should reduce our \$45,000. Jordan states the forestry contract was setup as a win, win deal for the County. The District pays for the forest technician's benefits. **Kennedy** understands **Lentz** point however but would like to keep the forest technician line item the same because it is a salary amount. Suggested, if you really wanted to offer a discount it should really come out of the County Allocation General fund instead. **Rathbun** feels giving money back will tell the County we really don't need their money, and suggests we leave it alone. **Kraham** agrees, we should leave it alone. **Farwell** feels both opinions are right. It could be seen as a gesture of good will, but it also shows we don't need it. Also feels we should let Public Works Committee know if forest technician is making more than \$45,000. Jordan states 3 years have gone by and I've tried to show good faith and that we spend more to help the County. We paid for parking lot costs at County forest properties, pay forest technician benefits, offered to split costs on proposed tree planting of 100 spruce trees at Dozen Dad's. The County highway has also benefited from the Community Conservation Grant Program. We have done great things with the County to show great partnership. We haven't asked for more this contract, just level funding. Currently we are not asking for a percentage on timber sales due to the current situation. However, if the board feels we should change it we will. **Rathbun** says to keep it status quo, the rest of the board agrees.

Discussion on the 2020 virtual farm tour. Karl had a friend who makes hunting videos professionally in Rochester put all the videos and audio clips together for the 2020 Farm Tour. We received the video the Friday before the 2020 Farm Tour. We were supposed to have the video 2 weeks before but we had issues with USPS. Therefore, we had no time to edit the video prior to the airing. Jordan apologizes to Doris for her name being left off the video accidentally. By no means was the District trying to push one candidate or another. The farmer would only my staff to take his picture next to his political sign. I understand perception but I didn't give it a second thought because we got a lot of conservation done in a difficult year with Covid. By no means was it anyone intentions to stir the pot. The County lawyer suggested the best option would be to blur the sign out. By no means was the intention to push the agenda. Besides that, the video came out really well, it highlighted a lot of positivity, and we had lots of great comments on it. Jordan apologized if it caused any distractions in the film, and if it took away from the bigger picture. No intentions were to push any person, it could have easily been another candidate. In the future we won't include



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any political signs. **Kennedy** thanks for Jordan for his explanation. **Farwell** clarifies the only intention was to get it fixed. She states if we went to the farm for the tour the signs would have been there, but we would have been guests at the farm. The District owns the video so we need to be careful. **Lentz** seconds both points made. Jordan would like to send out more videos in the future, and will send a new farm tour link out with the sign blurred. The Board tells the staff we commend them on a job well done. It went as well as it possibly could have.

Moving forward getting the POW in by November 1st. Early Decemeber we know what the County budget is looking like. Move forward, and submit grants for AgNPS. Also need to get the budget transferred over. The 2019 Audit will be sent over before next month's meeting. We could also invite the accountant to join. **Rathbun** asks should we send the 2019 audit over to the County? None were opposed to passing it along. Just don't want to see it audited again by the County. Rathbun would also like the next meeting to be held in person, he feels discussion has been limited due to virtual meetings. Masks and distancing will be in place, Jordan will reach out to see if we could use the County building for the next board meeting now that the weather is getting cold.

- VIII. Next Meeting:** Next meeting to be held on **Thursday, November 19, 2020 at 10:00 a.m.** hopefully face to face.
- IX. Adjournment:** Meeting adjourned at **11:31 a.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

Jessica Miller

Jessica L. Miller

Administrative Assistant/Secretary/Assistant Treasurer

October 30, 2020