



Buncombe County
Soil and Water Conservation District
Board of Supervisors
Meeting Minutes
September 8, 2022, at 10 am

Board Members Present: Gary Higgins, Louise Scruggs, Tyler Ross, and Aaron Sarver

Staff Present: Jennifer Harrison, Ariel Zijp, Anthony Dowdle, Avni Naik,

Others Present: Amanda Buchanan

The meeting was called to order at 10:02 am.

Approval of Agenda: *Louise Scruggs made a motion to approve the September 8th agenda, and the motion passed on the vote.*

Approval of August 11, 2022 meeting minutes: Gary Higgins and Louise Scruggs said that they were happy with minutes from last month.

Tyler Ross made a motion to approve the August 11, 2022 minutes and the motion passed on the vote.

Conflict of Interest Statement: Gary Higgins stated the conflict-of-interest statement, “In the interest of preserving public confidence in the actions of this Board, the chair reminds members of their duty to avoid any conflicts of interests and inquires as to whether any member knows of any conflict of interest or potential conflict of interest with respect to matters to come before the Board.”

Supervisor Reports: Gary Higgins reminded the board that it is Mountain State Fair season and that there are still shifts available for the fair.

Supervisor Position Appointment: Gary Higgins stated that every 2 years the board has to make a reappointment of the appointed positions. Higgins asked Louise Scruggs if she wanted to continue to serve on the board, and Scruggs said that she is going to step down from the position once her term has ended. Scruggs mentioned how much she has enjoyed serving on the board, and that her life is busy with other commitments and family time that she wants to prioritize. The board and staff thanked Scruggs for her time with the board and all that she has done to support them. Louise wanted to suggest Tyler Ross as her appointed replacement. Tyler Ross said he would like to fill the appointed position. Jennifer Harrison, Tyler Ross and Gary Higgins discussed filling out the correct appointment form to get that process started in order to get the paperwork to the commission by the October due date.

Louise Scruggs made a motion to appoint Tyler Ross as her replacement on the board. Tyler Ross Recused from voting, and the motion pass on the vote.

Director's Report: Jennifer Harrison reminded the board and staff that the Fall Meeting will be on Tuesday October 11th, but that they will need the RSVP's by October 3rd. The Fall meeting will be held at the Canton Livestock Market.

EWP/Disaster Response Update:

Harrison mentioned that EWP is continuing to move forward. Harrison and Dowdle are working through the RFQ process with the county, which closed on August 12th, and they are collecting bids from Greg Jennings, Wildlands Engineering and Matt Baker. Harrison stated that she and Dowdle met with SDR state contract for debris removal to explore that option. Harrison and Higgins both stated that with this they would not have to do the bid process, but the cost looks like it will be high, so not positive that it will work for any of these projects. SDR quotes their price based on price per linear ft. or price per tonnage.

Harrison met with Joe Stanton of the State department of Emergency Management Services (EMS) because they have funds for unmet needs from disasters. Harrison reported, from the TS Fred disaster response records, Buncombe reported 4.6 million in total damages documented for EWP, with 1.1 million needed for engineering, totaling in 5.5 million for the total disaster recovery. The funding secured combining EWP funding, Engineering funding, State funding totals at 2.9 million. Currently Buncombe is falling short 2.6 million in order to completely address the disaster recovery needs. Harrison mentioned that Stanton with NC EMS, received 17 million total last year to help with disaster response and additional 5 million later in the year.

Ross asked if the staff has determined how many no-rise studies will be needed for the projects. Harrison said that currently staffing is working on getting engineering bids, in order to get the engineering completed to determine in and when no-rise studies will be needed.

Staffing Update:

Harrison stated that they have completed the interview process for the Administrative Assistant position, and they have made an offer to their top candidate. Currently the staff is waiting for the candidate to accept the position, and if they don't accept the position, they will be ready to offer it to the second candidate. For the soil conservationist position, HR is making final edits to the job description and the process is taking slightly longer than anticipated because HR is understaffed and because we are adding a tiered approach to the Soil Conservation position. The new position will be classified as a Soil Conservationist I, while Anthony Dowdle's position will be classified as a Soil Conservationist II because of job experience, expertise and Job Approval Authority. Harrison mentioned that she will be preparing the interview committee for the position and that 1-2 board positions are able to be on the interview panel. Tyler Ross volunteered to be on the interview team, and Gary Higgins also stated that he would like to be on the panel as well. Harrison stated she would be in touch with the required interview panel training for them to take.

Higgins asked for an update on the STRAP contract and Harrison mentioned that the contract has been signed, approved and sent back to NCDA. Harrison mentioned that 50% of STRAP has to be encumbered by February 28, 2023, but they have 3 years to get all the STRAP work done.

Higgins asked for an update on the ARPA funding that Harrison mentioned at the last meeting. Harrison stated that 2.7 million of ARPA funds were put aside for Buncombe County to use in Barnardsville for recovery. Now the county has to submit an ARPA application to be able to use the funds. Research Institute has been putting together proposals for this restoration in Barnardsville for a few years. The initial proposal was 11 million, but that proposal has been paired down to 9 million budget to be implemented over the period of 2 years. Harrison mentioned that a significant part of the 9 million would be to realign the paint fork bridge, so

they are hoping to see how much progress in the stream restoration the 2.7 million could make. In an effort to secure more funding for this project, Harrison mentioned that they have submitted a letter of intent to the Land and Water fund grant. This would be in order to apply for funds for buyout and demolition, and they were asked to move forward and submit a grant application. In this situation the county would own the property and make it for open space passive recreation. Ross suggested that the staff look into the Voluntary Public Access Habitat Improvement Program (VPA HIP) to get funding for stream restoration, and specifically to be used in locations that are already open to the public.

Scruggs asked the staff if we need to check on paying David Snelson for storing the rental equipment, because it had been a while since last, we discussed that. Harrison said that they would get him paid and check the minutes to find out when the last payment happened and the new payment rate that the board last voted on. Higgins said he would help to look through the minutes to find that information.

Farmland Preservation: Ariel Zijp presented the farmland preservation report below:

- Easement Purchase Criteria Process for LCAB And AAB
- LCAB mapping update and ranking update process
- Prepping New Possible Projects for AAB Approval Process- Farm visits, and board visits
 - Scott Fisher, Russ Roberson, Will Harlan, Mary Ann Brigman, Roger's Family Trust, David Rogers, SAHC Garrett Cove
- Updating VAD system and mapping
- Upcoming Trainings – CET, LTA Training, Farmland Succession Certification Training
- **Easement Project Updates**
 - Survey & Deed work
 - Clark Easement –Survey work
 - Berner Easement –Survey Work
 - SAHC Teague Property Easement – finished survey, SAHC Baseline, Closing 9/12
 - Splendor Valley LLC Easement –survey in review, deed work, baseline/maps
 - Closing Easements
 - Rosseter Easement –Closed easement July 8th
 - McCurry Easement – closing easement July 18th
 - Sneddon Easement – closing easement July 18th
 - Harvey Easement – Closing scheduled for August 4th
 - Waiting on Grant Funding –
 - Sluder Easement – NCDA approved, waiting on USDA funds
 - Ramsey Easement – NCDA approved, final stages of USDA approval
 - Anthony Cole Farm 38.2 acres– Grant funds awarded - \$172,500
 - Gary Cole Farm 28.9 acres– Grant funds awarded - \$129,000
 - Jasperwood Phase 1 - 113 acres – a Grant funds awarded - \$440,778.80
 - Jasperwood Phase 2 - 98 acres– Grant funds awarded - \$376,171.91

Environmental Education: Rose Wall and Jen Knight were not at the board meeting because it was Mountain State Fair set up day, but Jennifer Harrison shared a brief update on their behalf. Harrison mentioned that the proposal submitted to use the remaining Pigeon River Funds for the outdoor classroom, was not accepted. Staff has talked to Pigeon River and had plans to resubmit for the project in the spring. Higgins mentioned that he thinks the board would be supportive of helping with some of the funding for this project.

Ongoing community needs assessment

- Held meetings with RiverLink, Parks and Recreation, County Recycling Coordinator, and the CTNC AmeriCorps program director
- Still trying to connect with school system administrators and after school groups

Community Programming

- Accepted as an ecoExplore Hotspot!
- Ag & Land Resources Campus BioBlitz rescheduled to jumpstart iNaturalist project
- We have received 2 [Project Explore](#) applications from Erwin HS and N. Canton Elementary – connect with any teachers you know on this!
- Kids' activities prepped for the Mountain State Fair – setting up today!

Flagship Programming

- Owen HS reached out for resources to start new Envirothon program
- Reached to YMCA afterschool program regarding Envirothon clubs

Education Resources

- Attended CET
- Outdoor Classroom Grant Pivot was denied on the grounds of being too far outside the original scope.
 - We were encouraged to reapply next grant cycle.
 - Plan to further develop ADA plans and solicit letters of support from school system before reapplying in the spring

NCACSP & AgWRAP:

Anthony Dowdle shared the PY23 CCAP ranking for this program year.

- Barnardsville VFD, Roger Maney – Roof Runoff and cistern for water use
- Erwin Hani Cane Creek – Streambank Failure
- Biltmore Lake HOA -- to reduce sediment to Biltmore/Enka Lake
- Phillip Cole – Culvert damage and home damage with severe gully erosion.

He explained the conditions of all applications and made the staff recommendation that the board prioritize the Barnardsville VFD application. While the Barnardsville VFD ranked 2nd, and the Cane Creek site ranked 1st, the Cane Creek will require a no rise study, which the CCAP budget wouldn't cover. Therefore, Barnardsville VFD would be the recommendation based on the complications arising from the FEMA no rise requirements.

Tyler made a motion that the Barnardsville VFD project should be the top priority, and the motion passed on the vote.

NRCS Report: Amanda Buchanan stated that Buncombe County should have received a letter stating that Amanda Buchanan, Justin Webb and Mattie Rourke have be designated the Buncombe representatives for EWP work, since Jake Stokes has left NRCS.

NRCS Update:

Emergency Watershed Protection Program:

On 8/29/2022 Tim Beard designated Amanda Buchanan, Mattie Rourk, and Justin Webb as Government Representatives for Buncombe County.

Programs Update

EQIP:

	EQIP	CSP Classic	CSP Renewal
Application Deadline	October 14, 2022	October 14 th , 2022	April 15, 2022
Eligibility Determination	November 18, 2022	November 18 th , 2022	
Screening/Priority Deadline			
Assessment Deadline	February 24, 2023	June 20, 2023	November 12, 2021
Ranking Deadline	February 24, 2023	June 20, 2023	November 12, 2021
National & State Fund Pool Obligation Deadline	April 7, 2023	August 18, 2023	
Obligation Deadline (Local)	May 5, 2023		December 17, 2021

We currently have 44 active federal contracts in Buncombe County.

Obligations: \$2,538,658.15; Payments: \$249,329.15Acres: 1,318.9

CSP:

For FY22 program year 1 contract for CSP Classic obligated.

Other:

Closed Session: Approval of CSP contracts.

Buchanan asked Harrison if she would check on the MOA to make see how its progressing. Harrison said she would check on that and get back to Buchanan.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:02 pm.

Secretary

Date