



BUNCOMBE COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT JANUARY 13, 2022 BOARD MEETING

49 Mount Carmel Road, Asheville, NC 28806

Board Members Present

Gary Higgins, Chairman; David Snelson, Secretary; Louise Scruggs, Treasurer; Tyler Ross, Member; and Aaron Sarver, Member

Others Present

Jennifer Harrison, District Director; Anthony Dowdle, Soil Conservationist; Cayle Aldridge, Area 1 Coordinator; John Ottinger, NRCS Supervisor; Tracy Swanson, Organic Growers School; Michael Frue, County Legal; Ariel Zijp, Farmland Preservation Program Manager; Avni Naik, Farmland Preservation Coordinator, and Jessica Hughes, Administrative Assistant.

The meeting was called to order at 10:04am.

Conflict of Interest Statement

Gary Higgins asked those in the meeting to review 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."

Approval of Agenda

Please see exhibit A.

David Snelson made a motion to approve the January 13, 2022 agenda, and the motion passed on the vote with all in favor.

Approval of Minutes

Please see exhibit B. Gary suggested changes to the minutes in regards to typos and a sentence restructure.

Louise Scruggs made a motion to approve the amended December 9, 2021 minutes, and the motion passed on the vote with all in favor.



Supervisory Reports

There were no supervisor reports at this time.

Organic Growers School Scholarship

Tracy Swanson presented on the Organic Growers School (OGS) Spring Conference. Please see exhibit C for full presentation. In years past the SWCD Board has donated between \$1,000-\$1,500. This year OGS is offering track sponsorships which will provide marketing promotions for the sponsor and two tickets to the conference. The Soils Track sponsorship is \$1,000. Higgins stated he liked to give scholarships to help farmers attend this educational opportunity, but also saw value in the marketing promotions offered to the sponsors. Higgins suggested sponsoring \$2,000, \$1,000 for the soils track sponsorship and \$1,000 for scholarships. Scholarships will be offered and selected through the OGS website and will be awarded on a needs basis.

Tyler Ross made a motion to allocate \$2,000 from Board funds to a track sponsorship and scholarships in return for marketing programming for the Buncombe District, and the motion passed on the vote with all in favor.

Election of Officers

The current offers are as follows:

Gary Higgins, Chairman

Tyler Ross, Vice-Chair and Legislative Liaison

David Snelson, Secretary

Louise Scruggs, Treasurer

David Snelson made a motion to keep the election of officers the same, and the motion passed on the vote with all in favor.

Bylaws and Rules of Procedure

Higgins presented the suggested Bylaws, see exhibit D. Michael Frue stated the bylaws and rules of procedure could be condensed to simplify. Frue stated there is a copy of bylaws that he can send that would simplify them. Hughes requested that Frue send her a copy of the template. Frue stated the template is meant to help guide the Board in drafting a set of bylaws. The SWCD Buncombe Board will follow the Fleming rules of procedure.

David Snelson made a motion to review the template Frue will send and address the bylaws at the February meeting, and the motion passed on the vote with all in favor.

Committees for the Board

Higgins asked if there was a need for any special committees of the Board. Hughes stated there were a few members on a committee for the scholarships, but since the scholarship is still undetermined it might be best to hold off on this committee. Cayle Aldridge stated he has not heard any information regarding the scholarship but he is working with the Division and Association to find a solution so Buncombe can offer a scholarship. Some counties have worked with a bank to set up a scholarship and although they do not donate money to the scholarship they promote and coordinate with partners to create the scholarship fund.



Directors Report

Jennifer Harrison stated Buncombe was awarded CCAP funds in the amount of \$97,500. \$50,000 will go to the Spring Mountain Community Center, \$30,000 for Mary Julian, \$15,500 for Francis Delaney School, and \$5,000 for a Pisgah Elementary CCAP repair. Harrison stated all FDR and DSRs have been submitted and beginning to be reviewed at the federal level. In total there were 61 total DSRs. The number was reduced from the FDRs because some projects didn't qualify and some sites were combined into one DSR. Once an agreement is drafted with Buncombe County they will decide if all projects will be funded or if the sponsor can only afford so many.

NRCS Report

John Ottinger shared there are 29 new applications for EQIP and 10 are eligible while 43 remain active. The bUncombe position has been advertised and will hopefully be filled by the Spring. The NRCS office still operating at 25% and encouraging staff to work remotely.

Area 1 Report

Cayle Aldridge reported the Annual Association meeting went well. The commission approved a new best practice in the Ag Cost-share practice, stream debris removal. The removal has to be in ag lands and has to improve water quality. It will be paid at 75%-90% and will be capped at \$15,000. The streamflow rehabilitation program will offer 100% cost-share and does not have to be ag land, but will need a sponsor and could be sponsored by the local districts.

Farmland Preservation Report

Ariel Zijp presented the report for Farmland preservation, please see exhibit F for full report. Easement Project Updates:

- Cole Family Farm Easement - submitted 4 NCDA grant Applications
- McCurry Easement - Survey in progress
- Rosseter Easement - Survey in progress
- Sneddon Easement - Starting survey Jan 2022
- Harvey/O'Doherty Easement - Starting Survey April 2022
- SAHC Teague Property Easement - Starting survey Jan 2022
- SAHC Jenkin's Valley Easement - waiting until stream easement is complete
- Burleson Easement - closed easement on December 29
- Hart Easement - NRCS business tool software problem resolved
- Currie Easement - NRCS business tool software problem resolved
- Sluder Easement - APPROVED FOR NCDA FUNDING 166,500, filed new USDA ALE application this week
- Ramsey Easement - APPROVED FOR NCDA FUNDING 224,000, filed new USDA ALE application this week
- Splendor Valley LLC Easement - APPROVED FOR NCDA FUNDING 53,000, but USDA easement funding approved 106,000

Zijp is working on budget Estimates for Easement Projects for FY23 for AAB and LCAB. A joint LCAB/AAB Board Meeting on January 19th at 9am and went well. Zijp will be speaking at Organic Growers School Spring Conference on Agritourism. Zijp and Avni Naik are working on the farmland Priority Regions and updating Ranking system and will present to the Commissioners Environmental Subcommittee presentation on January



21, 2022. Zijp and Naik are reviewing rankings for grants, programs across the state and nation to create a customized update and deciding on the criteria- Soils, Parcel Size, Proximity to conserved lands, VAD proximity, PUV, Water Supply Watershed. Zijp shared a sneak peak of Farmland Priority Working Map which can be seen in Exhibit E.

NCACSP and AgWRAP Report

Anthony Dowdle presented two requests for payments for NCACSP and AgWRAP programs.

Louise Scruggs made a motion to enter closed session in pursuant to GS 139.8.2-142 to discuss confidential NCACSP and AgWRAP contracts, and the motion passed n the vote with all in favor.

David Snelson made a motion to exit closed session in pursuant to GS 139.8.2-142, and the motion passed on the vote with all in favor.

David Snelson made a motion to approve the requests for payments for contracts 11-2021-001-05 and 11-2022-003-05, and the motion passed on the vote with all in favor.

Environmental Education Report

Taira Lance will be moving to the Finance Department with Buncombe County on January 14th. Unfortunately, Lance was unable to attend the meeting. Higgins requested Lance be invited to the February meeting so the Board can express their appreciation for her years of service.

Announcements

With no further business the meeting was adjourned at 12:08pm.

Secretary
David Snelson

Date

