

Champaign County Soil and Water Conservation District
March 26, 2008
Board Meeting Minutes

Directors present: Steve Stierwalt (left at 6:15 pm), Eleanor Blackmon (left at 6:15 pm), Lennie Heiser, Joe Rothermel, and Eric Suits.

Associate Directors present: Kenneth Kesler.

Staff present: Bruce Stickers and Renee Weitekamp.

Natural Resource Staff present: Jamie Alderks, Jason Conner and Kevin Donoho (arriving at 5:05 pm).

Meeting was called to order at 4:20 p.m. on Wednesday, March 26, 2008.

Board reorganization – The floor was opened for nominations. Eric Suits made a motion to nominate Steve Stierwalt as Chairman, seconded by Eleanor Blackmon. There being no other nominations, Lennie Heiser made a motion to close nominations and cast a unanimous ballot. Seconded by Joe Rothermel. Motion carried. Lennie Heiser made a motion to nominate Joe Rothermel as Vice-Chairman. Seconded by Eleanor Blackmon. There being no other nominations, Eleanor Blackmon made a motion to close nominations and cast a unanimous ballot. Seconded by Eric Suits. Motion carried. Lennie Heiser made a motion to nominate Eric Suits as the Secretary/Treasurer. Seconded by Eleanor Blackmon. There being no other nominations, Joe Rothermel made a motion to close nominations and cast a unanimous ballot. Seconded by Lennie Heiser. Motion carried.

Joe Rothermel made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 12, 2008 meeting. Lennie Heiser seconded, motion carried.

Eric Suits made the motion to approve the financial reports for February 2008 and March 2008. Lennie Heiser seconded, motion carried. Currently, 5400 – Professional Services reflects monies paid for survey work completed for CREP projects. Upon direction from the Treasurer, the April 2008 financial report will show these expenses in the Program Expenses (5200) category.

Old Business

Bench design for the St. Joseph Wetland – The materials have been purchased and the students are starting to construct two (2) benches.

Farmland Preservation Easements – There is no update at this time.

Area Program Meetings, Investing in Your Future – Overall, the meetings were well attended. NRCS staff will follow-up with the attendees.

Local Work Group – On February 13th, organizations met to review the list of resource concerns and voice their opinions and concerns. Following the meeting, the core group met to prioritize the complete list. This list has been submitted to NRCS. Staff will work on a follow-up mailing to the organizations that participated. This mailing will include the prioritized list of resource concerns.

Parking lot plans and potential grants/cost-shares – A representative with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service came to visit the St. Joseph Wetland in an effort to offer management and funding suggestions for both the wetland and prairie restoration projects.

SAFE program – Champaign County FSA, NRCS, and SWCD staff attended an informational meeting in Bloomington, IL. The SAFE program will be available in a small area from Gifford to Foosland; this area was identified by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources as a high priority.

CPP (Conservation Practices Program) – Cost-share monies need to be spent by June 2008. At this time, all monies are allocated, but weather may cause some construction delays.

Envirothon – Two teams, one from Fisher High School and one from St. Thomas More, will be representing Champaign County at the Envirothon on April 9th.

New Business

Fish Sale – The inclement weather in Southern Illinois has been hard on the fish farm. Due to the ice storms, Largemouth Bass will not be available this spring. Customers who ordered bass will have the option to take delivery in the fall, modify their order or request a refund. The fish pickup will be on Friday, April 4th starting at 1:00 p.m.

Tree Sale – After some discussion, the board decided to move the tree sale pickup from April 5th to April 12th in order to make sure the potted and balled and burlap trees will be available.

Salt Fork Watershed Grant – Staff will work on the final report and final billing.

Contribution Agreement – All work towards the contribution agreement needs to be completed by March 31st, and the final bill submitted by April 16, 2008.

County Board Resolution – Many County Boards across the state have adopted resolutions supporting the SWCD's and requesting their funding be released. These resolutions are being sent to the Governor. After some discussion, the board decided to talk to Mr. Pius Weibel for his opinion on this matter.

Financial Situation –

Piatt, Douglas, Vermilion and Champaign Counties were all represented at the Regional Budget hearing held at Parkland College. Mike Frerichs, Naomi Jakobsson, and Chapin Rose were in attendance. The districts were given a very limited time to speak; however, all written materials were accepted and placed on file.

The board discussed in length opportunities and options to help keep the district financially stable. The board also discussed ways to inform the public of the current financial restraints. The board is interested in finding a volunteer to help identify and pursue grant opportunities.

Midwest Streams Bill for Drainage Seminar – The drainage seminar went well; however, the district was not prepared for the amount of the speaker's invoice. The video from the meeting will be available for those who were not able to attend. Staff will follow up with Mr. Kinney to make sure he is agreeable to this. For all future meetings, directors and staff will request all expenses be identified and estimated up front. Lennie Heiser made a motion to pay the \$975.00 invoice to Midwest Streams. Joe Rothermel seconded, motion carried.

Illinois Envirothon – The AISWCD is requesting financial support for the Illinois Envirothon. After discussion, the board will not contribute any monies at this time.

Annual Meeting Gift Certificate – Eric Suits made a motion to purchase a \$25.00 gift certificate for Brenda Donoho as a thank you for playing the piano at the annual meeting. Lennie Heiser seconded, motion carried.

No-till Farmer Magazine – The board decided to not renew the subscription to the No-till Farmer Magazine.

AISWCD Dues – The Association membership dues are normally 3% of the operations money received from the state. Up to this point, the Association has not asked for any funding; however, they will be in a financial hardship soon. Therefore, in order to continue working for the districts, the Association is asking districts to pay their membership dues based on the monies received. Joe Rothermel made a motion to pay \$423.84 for AISWCD membership dues. Eric Suits seconded, motion carried.

Video Camera – Following discussion, Eleanor Blackmon made a motion to allow staff up to \$550.00 to purchase a video camera contingent upon the district receiving the remaining operation funds from the State of Illinois. If funds are not received, the board will re-evaluate the need for a video camera in July. Joe Rothermel seconded, motion carried.

IEPA Grant (3 counties working together) – There is nothing to report at this time.

Champaign County Fair – Kenneth Kesler asked for the district's tent to be moved to a new location and is waiting to hear back from the fair association. A decision on whether to participate in the fair does not need to be made at this time.

Burn Class – The Illinois NRCS will be hosting a prescribed burn training (in class combined with a field exercise) for employees. This training will be held in Champaign County. In the future, the board may discuss hosting an informational meeting about prescribed burning for area landowners and operators.

Electronics Recycling – The Champaign County electronic recycling day is scheduled for April 19th. In the future, if the district is interested in hosting such an event, the RC&D has money and equipment available to assist in an electronics recycling day.

Annual Plan of Work Review – Postponed until next month.

Acting District Conservationist Report – is attached
The NRCS can work on CRP until April 18, 2008.

A.C. Report - is attached.

R.C. Report - is attached.

Watershed Coordinator Report – is attached.

Committee Reports –

Barnhart – A parking lot design needs to be developed and focus needs to be given to finding grants to purchase the additional 8.1 acres. The Barnhart Prairie committee needs to meet in the near future.

ERMA – ERMA is faced with funding issues.

IEPA Stormwater Grant – Mike Hirschi is gearing up for the spring construction season.

Headwaters – No grants were submitted. Many other Ecosystem Partnerships are cancelling their meetings because no grants were submitted.

Salt Fork – Clark Bullard and Morris W. Leighton proposed a name change to the US board on Geographic Names concerning the Upper Salt Fork River and the Saline Branch. Eleanor Blackmon made a motion to not support the name change. Eric Suits seconded, motion carried.

St. Joseph Wetland – The committee met on February 21st. Agenda items included maintenance and funding issues.

Strip-till – A meeting was held March 26th at 3:00 p.m. The announcement was made that no FREC projects will be funded. The committee is looking for funding and ways to move the project forward.

MS4 – The MS4 group will meet next week. The City of Champaign will vote on their erosion control ordinance soon.

LRMP – Public meetings will be held on April 1st and April 5th to gather input on priorities that should be included in the plan which will be presented to the Champaign County Board.

Other – Beth Mason with NACD will be visiting our county on April 1st.

The next regular Champaign County SWCD Board meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 30, 2008 at 6:30 p.m.

Eric Suits moved to adjourn the meeting. Lennie Heiser seconded, motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 6:48 P.M.

Minutes prepared by Renee Weitekamp for Eric Suits, Secretary
Champaign County SWCD