

Garrett Soil Conservation District Supervisors Meeting

February 21, 2023, 7:00 pm

Garrett Soil Conservation District Board Room

Participants

- Smokey Stanton, Board Chair
- Kristen Enlow, Board Vice Chair (joining by phone)
- William Buckel, Board Member
- Chad Bucklew, District Conservationist (DC)
- Seth Metheny, District Manager (DM)
- Jeannie Frazee, Administrative Assistant
- Josh Smith, Executive Director Western Maryland Resource Conservation and Development Council

Meeting Topics

- Certificate of Quorum
- Call to Order
- Presentation by Josh Smith from WMRC&D
- Treasurer's Report
- District Manager's Report
- Chairman's Report
- District Conservationist's Report
- Old Business
- New Business
- Public Comment
- Executive Session

Call to Order

Smokey Stanton certified a quorum and called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

Minutes

Minutes were reviewed by everyone present. Chad Bucklew requested that the District Conservationist's Report be corrected to read "one new employee will be joining the NRCS staff" instead of two. Bill motioned to approve the minutes as modified. Kristen Enlow seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer's Report

Seth Metheny gave the Treasurer's Report and presented the District Operations Spending Report. Seth Metheny stated that he talked to Boal's earlier this month to discuss the report and convey the board's needs for the report. Seth asked if the new report was better for the Board. The Board stated that the report was improved from the last one. Seth Metheny stated that Boal's had advised that the First United Money Market is a straight business account and can be used at any time for any purpose. The Truist account is the only one that has been active the past month. William Buckel asked if the interest rate was better at Truist or First United. Seth Metheny was tasked with finding out which bank has the better rate. Daniel Morris will be at the March or April Board Meeting to give a review of the Brinker Account. Smokey Stanton asked if we have received any revenues in the past month for the Lime Spreader or No-Till Drill rental. Seth answered that the last check was a month ago. Smokey Stanton expressed a concern that the financial report does not have a full breakdown of expenses and income during the month but is a good overview of the month. Seth Metheny asked if the Board would want monthly balances on both. Smokey Stanton stated that what is needed is a monthly and YTD breakdown against the budget. There being no additional questions or comments, William Buckel moved to approve the Treasurer's Report and Operations Spending Report. Kristen Enlow seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

WMRC&D Presentation

Josh Smith presented a slide show and spoke about the Western Maryland Resource Conservation and Development Council. The WMRC&D comprises Garrett, Alleghany, Washington, Frederick, and Carroll counties and is headquartered in Hagerstown. Founded in 1993 through Farm Bill Funding, and later funded solely through grants and cooperative agreements with partners, the WMRC&D boasts that 90% of all revenue goes directly into projects. They do not do fund-raising. All employees are on a one-year contract. Josh noted that Claire Snyder assists Garrett County as a grazing specialist. There is a reforestation project in Garrett and Allegany Counties, but it is only open to land in the Bay Watershed. This project funds 100% and includes site prep, tree shelters and 2-year maintenance. It has a 15-year contract. Tree shelters have been increased to 5' instead of 4' due to deer problems. In Garrett County, RC&D is also working on a Mine Drainage Treatment System Design Project to renew land damaged by mining, a Shared Use Trail and Bridge Replacement and Rehab Project at Snaggy Mountain to improve six miles of trails and bridges in Garrett State Forest, and, in conjunction with Penn State, a Wild Turkey Population Dynamic and Disease Prevalence Project to study the decline of wild turkey populations. Frostburg grows was discontinued because of a loss of funding, but the buildings were donated to other organizations. The workshop building and high tunnel went to Accident Elementary School and the tractor went to the 4H Camp, both of which are in Garrett County.

Smokey Stanton presented the District's dues check to Josh.

District Manager's Report

Dam Operations and Maintenance - Seth Metheny gave a report on Dam Operations and Maintenance. Chad Bucklew and Seth Metheny had a meeting with J'Que Jones, Civil Engineer for NRCS. The District is no longer responsible for maintenance of the dams. The contract was for a 50-year lifespan. Seth stated that he has been unable to find the original application. He has reached out to the MDA to get clarification. MDA advised that we are no longer responsible for the maintenance. Historically, the agreement said that the District was to give technical support but that the funds were to have come from the County and the Town of Oakland equally for costs of maintenance. There is a stipulation in the contract that if the District is unable to keep up with maintenance for Dams 2 and 5, maintenance is deferred to the County and the Town of Oakland. Seth has been tasked to talk to the MDA and the Attorney General's Office to obtain clarification. The Dams are on the agenda at this meeting because the District needs to determine if they want to renew the contract. Chad Bucklew stated that the wording of the contract says that NRCS is not responsible for anything unless the Dam operators ask for help. And if they do ask for help, the NRCS needs to send a letter to the County to request funds. It was clarified on the call with J'Que Jones that the District is not responsible for maintenance. Chad Bucklew also clarified that 50 years is the design life of the structures, though some will likely last longer. There is an outside group that is to examine the structural integrity of the Dams, but we have not seen their final report. Smokey Stanton asked if funding for any rehab work would be through NRCS or MDA. Chad Bucklew stated that we do not know at this time. Seth Metheny stated that it would not be possible for the District to pay for a new Dam. William Buckel reminded the Board that the Town of Oakland is the one benefitting from the Dams. The Attorney General also stated that the Town of Oakland is the sole benefactor. Seth Metheny clarified that the Dams in question are Dams 2 and 5. The District is responsible for Dam 7 permanently. Smokie Stanton stated that he does not think the Town of Oakland has ever paid anything for Dam maintenance. Chad Bucklew said it is possible that the County may have paid a little bit years ago.

Question was raised as to whether any of the money in the Brinker Account was from payments made for dam maintenance. Smokie Stanton clarified that the Brinker Account funds came from contract work that the District completed. It also includes retirement funds and equipment rental funds. It does not contain funds earmarked for dam maintenance.

Community Outreach - Seth Metheny advised that the District had received a letter from the FFA asking for funds for a trip to Oklahoma on May 1 – 5, 2023, to attend a National Competition. They need \$3,600 total and are asking for a donation in any amount. William Buckel asked if we could use any of the Community Engagement funds. Kristen Enlow suggested that the money be taken from money budgeted for the Garrett County Agricultural Fair space and 4-H 3rd Place Fair Booth award that was not used. There is an extra \$175 from the Fair space and \$50 from the 4-H Booth award. William Buckel made a motion that the District send the FFA \$225 toward their trip to be taken from the Fair Space and the 4-H 3rd Place award that were not used. Kristen Enlow seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Kristen Enlow suggested to the Board that it is possible Northern FFA could ask for money as well as they are participating in Ag Maintenance.

Deep Creek Watershed Foundation - Seth Metheny said that the Deep Creek Watershed Foundation wants to use our aerial photography and have us delineate the shoreline. We would need new software and to charge an administrative fee. Once purchased the software would also allow the District to analyze property lines and shorelines for MDA and NRCS clients for areas that are susceptible to soil loss. The software is \$15,000 to purchase or \$7500.00 for a one year rental. We could buy it for the price of a two-year rental. Seth Metheny was tasked with asking the Deep Creek Watershed for a contract for them to pay the \$15,000 for the purchase of the software and administrative fees. Seth is to bring the contract to the next meeting. Chad Bucklew stated that we need to make sure the contract states what deliverables they want the District to complete. Seth Metheny explained that the software works by showing the shape of the shoreline over the course of different years, layered on top of each other, so that ongoing receding can be easily documented. Chad Bucklew stated that he feels our offer to the Watershed Foundation is competitive because it would cost much more to hire a business to complete this same assessment.

Open Meeting Certification - Seth Metheny reported that both he and Jeannie Frazee have completed the Open Meetings Certification.

SCD Scholarship - Seth Metheny also reported that the SCD Scholarship announcement needs to go out soon. In the marketing materials the wording was slightly changed. Originally, the wording stated that a student needed to graduate from either Southern, Northern, or Ridgeview High Schools and be a Garrett County resident. This excludes homeschoolers. The wording was changed to say that applicants need to be a resident of Garrett County when they graduate high school or be a Garrett County resident at the time of application. Kristen Enlow expressed a concern that in the past the District did not want someone to receive the scholarship that was only coming to the County to attend college but had not been a resident. The Board of Supervisors stated that it was never the intent to exclude homeschoolers. It is possible to verify that a homeschooler does live in the county because they would have had to have registered with the Garrett County Board of Education. Also, Jeannie Frazee stated that homeschool diplomas are recognized in the State of Maryland and are also recognized by colleges and universities.

Chairman's Report

MASCD Winter Meeting - Smokey Stanton reported on the MASCD winter meeting. The new secretary was there. The meeting room was very small. Smokey also commented that the new website represents the District well. Chad Bucklew added that they had the chance to meet the new NRCS Conservationist Kendrick Flowers at the winter meeting.

District Conservationist's Report

Due to the Inflation Reduction Act Funds and Allocations (IRA Funds), there may be more funding in the near future. There will be an additional 1.4 million dollars in funds available, but not every practice is covered. Covered practices will be targeted toward soil health, carbon sequestering, reducing nitrogen emissions, and reduction of methane. Greenhouse gas and soil health practices. That means half of our practices will qualify. Chad said he looks for another

10-15% budget increase for the year. Money needs to be expended by September 2031, with most of it being available in 23, 24, 25, & 26. By 2026, it could double what we have for equipment. IRA funds have already been appropriated, so they are guaranteed to be available. Next year, there could be a potential sign-up. Chad Bucklew presented the Activities Report. It no longer has names of clients due to the Privacy Act. Seth Metheny noted that the MASCD call discussed the need to remove any personal information from the report. Chad stated that the District has a lot of applications ranked and ready to go by the April 7 deadline. However, some Engineering designs may not be ready in time. Chad estimates that the District will have all high tunnel applications in and ranked by March 10. Craig Zimmerman started last Monday, February 13, as the new NRCS Soil Conservation Technician.

Old Business

Website Update - Jeannie Frazee stated that the new website is up and running. The District used a temporary domain to set up the website prior to transfer of the old domain. This domain was free. Because the hosting package does not allow for two domains, the temporary one has been parked with a re-direct to the site. Jeannie recommended that the District observe if the temporary domain increases Google ranking over the course of the year, and if not do not pay to renew the domain. Jeannie installed a plug-in on the site to back-up weekly to a Google Drive, in lieu of buying Codeguard service for \$99 per year. We plan to add an interactive map and historical photos. Jeannie asked the Board to let her know if they have anything they want added to the website.

Annual Work Plan - Seth Metheny asked if a member of the Board of Supervisors would come to the District office and help develop a workplan guidance timeline. The Budget and the Workplan go together.

Backbone Solar - Backbone Solar is finishing up the review process. The District submitted some questions through Randy Storey. It is recommended that they obtain input from the Maryland Dam Safety.

Chad Bucklew updated the Board that we do not have authority to approve small ponds at this time.

Additional Comments

Smokey Stanton asked if there were any comments. Seth Metheny said that he has been told that the District has to sign the agreement presented at the last Board meeting for Jeannie to drive a State vehicle. Smokey Stanton stated that the Board is still working on that issue.

Executive Session Announcement

Smokey Stanton announced that the Meeting will be going into Executive Session to discuss the appointment, employment, assignment, promotion, discipline, demotion, compensation, removal, resignation, or performance evaluation of appointees, employees, or officials over whom this public body has jurisdiction; any other personnel matter that affects one or more

specific individuals. Specifically, the Board is discussing the appointment of a new board member from three nominations presented by the University of Maryland Extension and how to approach the Commissioners about their nomination.

The meeting adjourned into Executive Session.* Those present in the Executive Session were Smokey Stanton, William Buckel, Kristen Enlow via phone, and Jeannie Frazee to take the minutes.

Executive Session ended and the meeting adjourned at 9:10 pm.

*General Provisions Art. 3-305(b)(1). To discuss the appointment, employment, assignment, promotion, discipline, demotion, compensation, removal, resignation, or performance evaluation of appointees, employees, or officials over whom this public body has jurisdiction; any other personnel matter that affects one or more specific individuals.