

Garrett Soil Conservation District Supervisor's Meeting

March 21, 2023, 7:00 p.m.

Garrett Soil Conservation District Board Room

Participants

- Smokey Stanton, Board Chair
- Kristen Enlow, Board Vice Chair (joining by phone)
- Katharine Debansky, Board Treasurer
- William Buckel, Board Member
- Butch Helbig, Board Member
- Seth Metheny, District Manager (DM)
- Chad Bucklew, District Conservationist (DC)
- Jeannie Frazee, Administrative Assistant
- Connie Stemple, FSA Representative (joining by computer)

Meeting Topics

- Certificate of Quorum
- Call to Order
- Introduction of Guess
- Approval/Correction of February 21, 2023 Minutes
- Treasurer's Report
- District Manager's Report
- Chairman's Report
- District Conservationist's Report
- New Business
- Old Business
- Public Comment

Closed Session on February 21, 2023

On February 21, 2023, at the Garrett Soil Conservation District Office Boardroom, at 8:30 pm, the Board went into closed session pursuant of 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 ore specific individuals." Specifically, the Board discussed their recommendation to the State for the appointment of a new board member from three nominations presented by the University of Maryland Extension. Additionally, they discussed the resignation of a board member and replacement. Members present and voting were Smokey Stanton, Kristen Enlow, and William

Buckel. For the board member recommendation to the State, the Board discussed each candidate. Kristen Enlow made a motion for the Board to recommend one of the three candidates. William Buckel seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with all members voting aye. Regarding the resignation and replacement, there was no vote held.

Call to Order

Smokey Stanton, Board Chair, certified a quorum and called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

Smokey Stanton asked Butch Helbig to introduce himself. Butch Helbig is the new Extension nominated board member. Butch has not yet gotten his introduction packet and is not yet sworn in, so he is sitting as a non-voting member this evening. He plans to get sworn in before the next Board Meeting on April 18, 2023.

Approval of Minutes

Board packets were sent electronically. Katharine Debansky asked for clarification as to whether she should print her packet and bring it to the meeting. Seth Metheny stated that a physical copy could be printed out and provided to each board member at each meeting. Katharine stated that she did not feel that that was necessary. The Board is working toward more digitization.

Kristen Enlow stated that she is unable to read the packet because her email sends it to junk mail. Kristen is in Florida at this time. She said that she cannot open her attachments once they go to the junk folder.

Minutes were approved as submitted.

Treasurer's Report

Orientation to New Formats

Seth Metheny explained the new financial reports to the Board. Included were a Financial Statement that depicts totals in all accounts, the budget amount and actual expenditures YTD, budget overage/underage, percent of budget spent, and the amount spent in the past month. The Chesapeake Bay Trust Fund required reporting form. The State General Fund required reporting forms showing end of 2022 and present. And the District Operations Spending Report.

Transition to Internal Reports from Boal and Associates

Seth Metheny and Jeannie Frazee are now handling financial reporting instead of Boal and Associates. Boal and Associates charges \$550 per month for this service, which is not in the

budget now that an Administrative Assistant is in place. Seth Metheny has spent a significant amount of time trying to straighten out the accounts. Certain line items should be coming from specified accounts. Boal and Associates was writing checks out of accounts without following the proper procedure for delineating which funds should come from which account. Therefore, it was necessary to do a full balancing of all accounts and correct the errors for each account. Seth Metheny completed this action prior to the Board meeting. Seth explained to the Board that it was necessary for him to do a full assessment of each account and fix all errors before turning the financial duties over to the Administrative Assistant.

Financial Statement

Seth Metheny presented the Financial Report. Katharine Debansky motioned to approve the financial statements. Kristen Enlow seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

FY22 MDA General Fund Monthly Statement and FY23 MDA General Fund Monthly Statement

Seth Metheny presented the MDA General Fund Statements from the end of June 22 and February 23. These are required to be filled out and sent to the State monthly as an accountability for the usage of funds coming from the General Fund. No reports have been submitted from the District since October 2021. The State required us to fill out all missing reports, which Seth Metheny has completed. The Board will need to sign each one. The June 22 report has all information for 2022, and the February 23 report has all information for FY 23 to date, as the form is accumulative for the FY. Seth Metheny briefly detailed some of the requirements for the application of State General funds to various expenditures. Payments can only be made up to the approved budget amount for each category. However, in exclusion of fixed charges, if the budgeted amount is exhausted in one category and more funds are needed, they can be moved from another category. However, there must be an explanation on the form, and the total amount spent cannot exceed the full budgeted amount for the year. The FY 24 budget is calculated based on the FY 23 approved budget and any changes accessed during the FY 23 year. The State pays the District the first three General Fund payment early in the fiscal year and the final payment early in the calendar year.

FY23 CBTF Quarterly Report

The State requires that the District fill out a quarterly report for the use of the Chesapeake Bay Trust Fund. The last quarterly report was filed in 2021. Since there were no unusual expenditures for 2022 the State has allowed the District an exception to submitting the missing forms, however the Quarterly Report must be filed as required moving forward. For FY23, the CBTF provided funds to assist with half of the Administrative Assistant's wages and fridge, a one-time payment for S&E contractual services, and a special equipment payment. Kristen Enlow asked about the \$30,000 Equipment payment. Seth Metheny explained that it was designated for the purchase of laptop computers.

The Board feels that the new reports are better than the previous ones from Boal's. Smokey Stanton asked about the carryover from FY22 for the General Fund. The carryover is \$7442.64. He stated that there was a \$600 contingency coming out of the previous year.

Account Management and Reconciliation

Seth Metheny recommended to the Board that all accounts be separated for ease of tracking for reporting and to avoid problems with funds being written from the wrong account in the future. It would be a best practice for auditing purposes. That would create the following checking accounts: State General, CBTF, Local, and Equipment Rental.

District Operations Spending Report

Seth Metheny presented the District supply spending for the month. Having no questions, the Board approved the expenditures after a motion was passed by Katharine Debansky and seconded by William Buckel.

Seth Metheny was tasked with cancelling the letter of engagement with Boal's for them to do the financial accounting for the District monthly and with writing a letter of re-engagement to Boal's for them to do end of the year accounting and handling payroll for the Administrative Assistant.

District Manager's Report

Newsletter Distribution

Seth Metheny stated that the first quarter 2023 newsletter had gone out both through the mail and by email. The cost for postage was over \$300 which was above the yearly budget of \$1000 if it is sent out each quarter. The District is actively compiling an email list so that as many newsletters as possible can be sent via email. Seth Metheny recommended that other physical copies of the newsletter be placed at local businesses so that consumers can pick them up instead of the District mailing them to save postage fees. Butch Helbig suggested that the District utilize the free sections of the agricultural announcements in "The Republican" and "The Weekender". Katharine Debansky stated that the newsletter looks nice. The Board approved transition to an electronic newsletter with some physical copies in businesses and important information submitted to the newspaper.

MACS and Cover Crop District Representative

Smokey Stanton directed Board members to refer to the information in their packets. MDA has forms that need to be filled out by the Board. Seth Metheny recommended to the Board that he and Chuck Hayes facilitate the Cover Crop program, as Chuck has been doing most of the Cover Crop Program in the past.

MACS Western Region Pilot

MDA is proceeding with using the flat rate for funding in the Western Maryland area. Seth Metheny stated that the staff would be attending training on March 22. Western Maryland for this designation includes: Garrett, Allegany, Washington, Carroll, Frederick, and Baltimore. Smokey Stanton asked why they chose Western Maryland for the flat rate. Seth Metheny answered that it is because the flat rate is used more in this area. The District does have the option to use the itemized rate on a case-by-case basis.

Deep Creek Foundation Update

Seth Metheny said that he had sent the Deep Creek Foundation an email going over the maps that we have available and explaining what we can do if we have the software. They would need to purchase the software and pay a small fee for employee services. The District has not heard back from them yet, but it may be because they are waiting for their board meeting. Kristen Enlow asked if they are a special interest group and asked why they did not go to Lake Management. Seth Metheny explained that the Forestry Board does not have the necessary maps. Smokey Stanton stated that they are a special interest group but they are also a non-profit. The Board wants to make sure that they are not providing favoritism to the group but that any decisions are made fairly and in the best interest of the community. The District has arial photos from the 1920's through present, with 50 to 100 pictures per set. The program can scan and stitch them together into one image which would show changes over time. It is photo editing with GIS capabilities. This could be an asset to the community as a whole.

Fees Proposal Update

The CBTF provided a one-time payment of \$30,000 to pay for contractual services for S&E review, but once that is gone, the District will no longer have funds for these services. The Board would like the County Commissioners to approve a tax to offset this cost. Seth Metheny has been tasked with meeting with a contractor to put together a fee schedule. Chad Bucklew suggested using Brian Boal to assist. The issue was tabled for this meeting and will be addressed in a future meeting.

Chairman's Report

Supervisor Appointments

Smokey Stanton welcomed Butch Helbig, who has been appointed by the State as the Extension representative of the Board.

GCSD Treasurer

Katharine Debansky has let the Board know that she will be resigning before June. She will send the Commissioners a letter of resignation. Katharine is a non-expiring appointment from the County. Smokey Stanton will contact the Commissioners and ask for a new appointment.

Smokey Stanton asked the Board if anyone would like to volunteer to be Treasurer since Katharine is leaving. A response is not required tonight.

MDA Secretary Introduction Meeting

Smokey Stanton let the Board know that the new MDA Secretary will be introducing himself on a Zoom meeting.

District Conservationist's Report

District Activity Report

The Board expressed a concern because the Activity Report no longer has applicant names listed on it so the Board cannot track projects. The new report only lists a number of projects but does not have enough information to track specific projects. Chad Bucklew said that it is necessary to remove names from the report for the Board meeting because it is a public meeting. Seth Metheny advised the Board that a separate report could be sent to Board members that does have the names. Kristen made a motion that the activity report that goes to the Board members have names listed on it. William Buckel seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Chad Bucklew talked about the 1200-acre goal for Planners. They are currently on Level 1 but in a year, they can be reclassified if they reach the 1200-acre goal.

Katharine Debansky asked who had specified that there are to be no names listed on the report. Both Chad Bucklew and Seth Metheny answered that it had been mandated by both the MDA and NRCS due to privacy protection laws.

Seth Metheny updated the Board about an issue with the Backbone Solar Project. Everything that was required for the District for the timbering portion of the project has been completed, but the Shallow Water Ponds assessment has not been approved because Dam Safety cannot review the plan for a while because they are refusing to look at the project ahead of other projects already scheduled. Dane Bauer from Hall and Bauer called and talked to Seth Metheny. He asked if the District could sign off on the project because the Forestry portion of the project was ready to go. The District contacted MDE, and they advised that if the District went ahead and signed off on the plan so that the Forestry portion of the plan could start, MDE would prevent phases 2 and 3 of the project from going through until the Shallow Water Ponds were approved because they would need them prior to approving phases 2 & 3. The Board has concerns about the District signing off on the plan because Shallow Water Ponds should have been approved before approval. William Buckel stated that it would be no problem if the plan

had been for timber only. The plan had to be for the entire project because there can only be one S&E permit for a property. The Board wants to study the issue further and will reconvene in a special meeting to discuss options. Smokey, William and Katharine will research the issue and come back to the Board with recommendations.

Chad Bucklew highlighted trainings that the staff has attended. These include CREP training, Wetlands & Waterways Regulatory Training, and Construction Inspection & Quality Control & Roof Design Considerations. There has been an application for Nutrient Transport and 1 claim for payment.

Chad Bucklew updated the Board that the Teams allocations have been pushed back a couple weeks. They emphasize energy efficiency, soil health, and greenhouse gas emissions. There are 1.4 million dollars available in Maryland due to the IRA (Inflation Reduction Act). Our District NRCS is working with maple syrup producers to apply for equipment that will utilize less energy to boil syrup. Jacob Metcalf is talking to producers to obtain energy audits. The deadline is Friday. The District currently has 8 completed.

The District did not receive any AMA funding because none of our applications ranked high enough. Funding was extremely limited, and there were 2 million applications for funding in the state.

Office Lease Update

Chad Bucklew let the Board know that the office space lease has expired. The lease is unified with the FSA, USDA, and MDA. The District needs to look at advertising for a new facility. Because so many new staff have been added, there is no longer enough space or parking at the current facility. Chad Bucklew suggested the possibility of renting a building at the McHenry Business Park adjacent to the Garrett County Airport. We would need 4000 square feet for staff members. Requirements for employee space has decreased so only 489 sq feet is needed for each employee. This is a smaller space than employees have now. If the District stays in the current building wiring needs to be addressed because a separate space is needed for the LAN/WAN which is currently in the lunch room. The District would not be able to lease the space without this being addressed. Additionally, the LAN/WAN room would need a separate air conditioner to keep the equipment at a steady temperature. The front door, also, is too heavy and not ADA compliant. These needs have been communicated to the County. The last lease evaluation was in 2016. The District needs to provide realtors with any preferences of where to look for a new building, as it is required that realtors search for the facility. Smokey Stanton suggested that if the District moves outside of town there may be zoning restrictions. Smokey Stanton and Katharine Debansky suggested that we utilize the empty schools that will be becoming available with the schools realigning, as this would help the community make use of the buildings. Katharine Debansky also suggested checking into Simon Pierce. Butch Helbig commented that he feels it is helpful to the public to have the Extension Office in the same building. Connie Stemple advised the Board that it would take a while to go through the process as GSA has control of the final decision. However, the District can make recommendations. She reminded the Board that if the building is an "Open Concept" space the work environment will be different.

New Business

FY24 MDA General Fund Budget Request

Seth Metheny advised the Board that the District needs to put in a request for a FY24 Budget. Seth and Jeannie looked at the FY23 Budget and found a lot of empty categories where a request could have been made previously. Seth briefly made recommendations. These recommendations would take the Budget up to over \$6000 for the State General Fund Budget. Due to the length of the meeting, the Board determined to look at these recommendations, the FY24 Commissioner's Request and the FY24 MDA CBTF request at the special meeting as well.

Seth Metheny let the Board know that he did not find any deposits from the Commissioners for FY23. These funds would go into the Local Fund. Smokey Stanton suggested that no funds had been requested from the Commissioners for FY23.

William Buckel made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Kristen Enlow seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 p.m.