

Richard Stumpf called the meeting of the Indiana County Conservation District to order on Tuesday, March 21, 2023, at 9:35 am at 435 Hamill Road in Indiana. Other Directors present were, Craig Andrie, Janis Long, Barbara Peace, Aaron Simpson and Gregg VanHorn. Directors absent: Commissioner Sherene Hess

Also present: Douglas Beri Jr. – Executive Director, Tammie Robinson – Administrative Assistant, Benjamin Wenger – Watershed Specialist, Marisa Matlin – Conservation Program Specialist, Monica Lee-District Educator, Tom Beresnyak, Doyle Freeman, Sarah King, Hunter Overdorff, Cindy Rogers, and John Somonick - Associate Directors, Matt Heffner – USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. Nicole Lambert – Indiana County Extension office master gardener coordinator participating virtually.

PUBLIC COMMENTS - none

Simpson moved to approve consent agenda items including accepting minutes of the previous two meetings as presented, treasurer's report to be filed subject to audit, correspondence, DEP delegated programs reports and staff reports, second by VanHorn, motion carried.

Simpson moved to pay the bills as presented, second by Andrie, motion carried.

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION DELEGATED PROGRAMS REPORT

Three erosion and sediment control plans were reviewed.

STAFF/PROGRAM ACTIONS AND REQUESTS - none

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR REPORTS

Overdorff reported House appropriations budget hearings are underway. Beri noted Conservation Districts have maintained level funding in the currently proposed budget.

FIELD REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT

Suzanna Harris submitted a written report prior to the meeting.

COOPERATING AGENCY REPORTS

Heffner reported \$500,000 in Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) project contracting work is underway. The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) will begin soon. New EQIP and CSP applications will be accepted on a rolling basis. Staffing levels in the Indiana field office remains the same.

Beresnyak reported on available educational webinar workshops.

Beri reported the Friends of the Indiana County Conservation District (FOICCD) board recently met. Chairperson Adriene Smocheck resigned due to taking a new position with the DCNR Bureau of Recreation and Conservation. A component of her position is determining where grant funds are allocated, and therefore creates a conflict of interest. Beri also reported the FOICCD attorney is continuing to work to get the IRS to accept previously submitted documents to grant the 501c3 status. If they refuse, the process must start over, and application fees be paid again.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Beri reported a building committee meeting was held to review solar panel installation plans and education space addition plans. The committee recommended moving forward with gathering data on the Groundhog Solar option. Also, the committee consensus was to recommend moving forward with enclosing the back porch to add educational and storage space.

Robinson reported there are 33 teams registered for the Sr. Envirothon, which sets a record.

OLD BUSINESS - none

NEW BUSINESS

No nutrient management plans are currently under review. No plans were presented for approval.

Andrie moved to accept donations from Jim Resh, \$100; Ted and Sherrill Kuckuck, \$200; Gibson-Thomas Engineering, \$200; Crooked Creek Watershed Association, \$100; Joe and Arlene Yackuboskey, \$36.25; Charles and Regan Houser, \$25.00; Indiana Garden Club, \$50; and Lias Tire, Inc. \$50.00, for the Envirothon Education Grant fund, second by Simpson, motion carried.

Simpson moved to approve opening two new checking accounts with First Commonwealth Bank for the ACAP program and DCNR Canopy Walk grant, second by Long, motion carried.

Andrie moved to approve a contract with MD Sleppy Construction for \$8,516.00 for Bear Run Passive Treatment System maintenance to be paid from the Bear Run Trust maintenance account, second by Peace, motion carried.

Peace moved to approve contracting with Kaycee Newell of Newell Graphic Arts for the 2022 annual report design at a cost not to exceed \$2,000, second by Simpson, motion carried.

Long moved to approve advertising for three quotes to enclose the Conservation District building's rear porch to create a wildlife center and additional storage, and if required due to exceeding the \$22,500 municipal bidding threshold, to bid out the project, as recommended by the building facilities committee, second by Simpson, motion carried.

Andrie moved to approve creating a maximum project cost share of \$250,000 per applicant for ACAP projects, second by Simpson, motion carried.

Beri reported the WIP IV Harry Holt project is quickly approaching the contract deadline of June 30, 2023. The consultant the District has been working with has gone silent and swift action is needed to meet grant deadlines. Simpson moved to add the WIP IV Harry Holt project to the agenda, second by Peace, motion carried.

Simpson moved to authorize staff to move forward with Gibson-Thomas Engineering to develop the WIP IV project designs that will enable the District to move forward with advertising, bidding, and construction of the project, second by Peace, motion carried.

DISCUSSION

Somonick reported Tom Clark, formerly of the Susquehanna River Basin Commission, offered to volunteer his assistance to help the District with future projects in the Bear Run watershed.

The next Conservation District Board of Directors meeting will be held Tuesday, April 18, 2023, at 9:30 am at 435 Hamill Road, Indiana, PA 15701. The meeting adjourned at 10:22 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Tammie L. Robinson
Administrative Assistant