

Chairperson Commissioner Sherene Hess called the meeting of the Indiana County Conservation District to order Tuesday, May 16, 2023, at 9:30 am at 435 Hamill Road in Indiana. Other Directors present were Janis Long, Barbara Peace-virtually, Richard Stumpf, Aaron Simpson and Gregg VanHorn. Directors absent: Craig Andrie

Also present: Douglas Beri Jr. – Executive Director, Tammie Robinson – Administrative Assistant, Brooke Russick – Conservation Program Manager - virtually, Alexis Shank – ACAP Coordinator, Marisa Matlin – Conservation Program Specialist, Ben Wenger – Watershed Specialist, Monica Lee-District Educator, Emily Rahalla-AmeriCorps, Doyle Freeman, Sarah King, Cindy Rogers, and John Somonick-Associate Directors, Susannah Harris-DEP NWRO Conservation District Field Representative, Tara Mondock-Penn State Extension Client Relationship Manager-virtually, Kyle Wirick-PA Fish and Boat Commission Waterways Conservation Officer, Matt Heffner – USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Nakku Senkeeto and Erica See-USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) County Executive Directors in training, and Natalie Deemer- Indiana County USDA FSA Executive Director.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS** - none

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

Simpson motioned to pay the bills as presented, second by VanHorn, motion carried.

**CORRESPONDENCE** - none

**DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION DELEGATED PROGRAMS REPORT**

Six erosion and sediment control plans were reviewed.

**STAFF/PROGRAM ACTIONS AND REQUESTS** - none

**ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR REPORTS** –

King reported Dr Marion Holmes will be presenting a tree species inventory of White’s Woods on May 25<sup>th</sup>.

Rogers reported Evergreen Conservancy had many activities on Earth Day including a story book walk and maintenance at Tanoma Wetlands, trail pick up at Blue Spruce Park, and information tabling at Whites Woods.

Somonick reported the PA Farm Bureau Young Farmers are supporting a bill in Harrisburg that would forgive student loans of those who enter and stay in farming for 10 years.

**FIELD REPRESENTATIVE’S REPORT**

Harris reported she has been facilitating regional meetings of District employees in various roles to help everyone learn, collaborate, and share ideas among like staff. DEP Northwest Regional Office is working on holding training for new District staff. Growing Greener and Section 319 grants are open through June 23. The Bureau of Clean Water is holding listening sessions with three Conservation Districts at a time. Chapter 102 technical training will be held May 23-26 in Harrisburg and is open to new staff and managers. Erosion and sediment control plan review and field training will be included.

### COOPERATING AGENCY REPORTS

Heffner reported Indiana County NRCS contracting is currently at \$300,000, which is less than last year but he is anticipating additional contracts. The second round of funds has not been received yet. The Indiana County Soil Conservationist position is still open. A technician position will also be opening up due to office transfers.

Mondock announced Cheyenne Filous is the new area 6 Penn State Extension Client Relationship Manager and will be headquartered out of Armstrong County.

Wyrick reported on a logging operation complaint filed earlier in the year in Pine Township that was recently closed. The operator fixed the problems and remediated the issues.

Beri reported the Friends of Indiana County Conservation District held a Green Drinks event for the First Waves program. The Indiana County First Waves program will be held in June.

### COMMITTEE REPORTS

Beri reported the facilities committee met several times to discuss solar installation on the District building.

Shank reported the ACAP committee met twice to review program documents, bidding requirements, program amendments, and review applications. The program is progressing well.

### OLD BUSINESS - none

### NEW BUSINESS

The Mahoning Creek Farm nutrient management plan (NMP) is currently under review. This NMP is in connection with an ACAP project application. The Ron Davis NMP was presented for approval. The plan was reviewed by Matlin as part of her NMP reviewer certification requirements. Simpson moved to approve the Ron Davis NMP as recommended, second by Long, motion carried.

Long moved to accept donations for the Envirothon Education Grant fund from Indiana County Farm Bureau \$100; Dilltown Sportsman's Club \$50, and Doug Beri, Jr., \$25, second by Simpson, motion carried.

Simpson moved to delegate authority to the District's Executive Director to approve DGLVR project contract length extensions, second by VanHorn, motion carried.

VanHorn moved to approve 50% cash advances for East Mahoning Township projects DR2201 Gilgal Road for \$29,265 and DR2202 Rowe Road for \$97,575, second by Simpson, motion carried.

Russick reported the District's three-year program audit (Quality Assurance, Quality Control review) is scheduled for the week of July 31. A Quality Assurance Board meeting is scheduled for June 19 to review program applications.

Simpson moved to approve a resolution to apply for a Greenways, Trails, and Recreation Program grant in the amount of \$88,950 for the Canopy Walk Development Project, and pay the \$100.00 application fee, second by Long, motion carried.

Stumpf moved to approve a contract with the PA Department of Agriculture for a Spotted Lanternfly Grant of \$10,174.13, second by Simpson, motion carried.

Long moved to approve a contract with DEP for an Environmental Education Grant titled Indiana County Environmental Stewardship Initiative in the amount of \$8,955, second by Simpson, motion carried.

Simpson moved to approve receipt of \$34,000 grant from the Colcom Foundation for support of the District's specialty crops greenhouse projects, to be passed through the Community Foundation for the Alleghenies, second by VanHorn, motion carried.

Long moved to approve receipt of a \$35,000 grant from the Colcom Foundation for the creation of the Watershed Alliance of Indiana County, to be passed through the Community Foundation for the Alleghenies, second by Simpson, motion carried.

Simpson moved to approve receipt of a PA American Water Grant to support the First Waves Indiana Program in the amount of \$4,650, second by VanHorn, motion carried.

Simpson moved to approve contracts for PACD mini grants for manure/nutrient management plans for Mahoning Creek Farm Nutrient Management Plan \$1,500; Craig Andrie Manure Management Plan \$400; and Adam Fairman Manure Management Plan \$400, second by VanHorn, motion carried.

Simpson moved to approve the ACAP committee recommended program policies including ACAP Statement of Policy; ACAP Grantee Responsibilities, Requirements, and Prevailing Wage Information Packet; Indemnity Agreement; Prevailing Wage Acknowledgement Letter; Schedule of Payments; and Bidding Information Provision and Requirements, second by Long, motion carried.

Simpson moved to approve the ACAP committee's recommended grant application of an NRCS project with a total cost of \$88,644 with a request for \$54,066 in ACAP funds for animal trails and walkways, along with an underground outlet to control roof runoff from an existing heavy use area (HUA), with a ranked score of 54 out of 71, second by Long, motion carried.

Long moved to approve the ACAP committee's recommended grant application for a non NRCS cost share project totaling \$172,904 with a request for \$150,546 in ACAP funds, with an in-kind contribution of \$22,358 for a beef cattle operation to install a HUA and manure storage, and a large gully remediation with grassed waterway, with a rank of 34, second by VanHorn, motion carried.

The District was in need of a new partner to grow malt barley associated with a current PDA grant with required deliverable deadlines. Simpson moved to approve a contract for \$1,000 with Barb Peace to grow malt barley as part of the PA Department of Agriculture Specialty Crops Block Grant, second by Stumpf, motion carried with Barb Peace abstaining.

Beri reported on solar installation proposals by two companies. The Groundhog Solar proposal was a better fit for the District with a \$117,363 total project cost. Government entities are eligible for a project rebate of between 40% and 50% of the cost. The District has the option to pay cash for the balance or take out a loan. A low interest loan option through Penelec would cost less than current electric bills. The payback period is anticipated to be 8 to 9 years. Long moved to approve the facilities committee recommendation for solar installation on the Conservation District building by Groundhog Solar, second by Peace, motion carried.

Simpson moved to approve Barb Peace to serve on the ACAP Committee, second by Long, motion carried with Peace abstaining.

Simpson moved to approve McCall Scanlon & Tice, LLC to conduct the 2022 District audit at an estimated fee of \$7,250, plus expenses, second by VanHorn, motion carried.

Simpson moved to approve Beri's appointment as a director representing Pennsylvania on the Northeast Association of Conservation District Employees board, second by Peace, motion carried.

Stumpf moved to approve the 2023/2024 health and vision insurance renewal of existing plans, second by Simpson, motion carried.

#### DISCUSSION

Matlin reviewed current and on-going landowner compliance issues associated with Chapter 102 and Nutrient Management. A logging complaint in Glen Campbell has not been remediated by the operator and DEP is proceeding with compliance enforcement with cost recovery for the District. A logging site on RTE 286 has been remediated following a DEP compliance order with a small fine and cost recovery. The landowner has removed the bridge from the Shelocta manure complaint site and DEP is reviewing their manure management plan. The landowner of the RTE 286 fill site was issued a Notice of Violation from DEP and is required to get an NPDES permit for the fill area and a Joint Permit for the culvert on site. The Martin Road earth disturbance NPDES permit is expected to be received soon. The motocross track site in Green Township is expected to submit an NPDES permit application in a few weeks. A large dairy operation is in the process of obtaining a NMP plan and Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation permit.

Hess reported due to declining interest and activity, the Penn's Corner Resource Conservation and Development organization has come to a crossroads. A facilitated strategic planning session was held recently to assess its viability and the organization will meet to decide whether to rebuild or dissolve.

The next Conservation District Board of Directors meeting will be held Tuesday, June 20, 2023, at 9:30 am at 435 Hamill Road, Indiana, PA 15701. The meeting adjourned at 10:56 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Tammie L. Robinson  
Administrative Assistant