

Chairperson Commissioner Sherene Hess called the meeting of the Indiana County Conservation District to order on Tuesday, August 15, 2023, at 9:30 am at 435 Hamill Road in Indiana. Other Directors present were Craig Andrie, Janis Long, Barbara Peace, Cindy Rogers, Aaron Simpson and Gregg VanHorn.

Also present: Douglas Beri Jr. – Executive Director, Tammie Robinson – Administrative Assistant, Brooke Russick – Conservation Program Manager, Benjamin Wenger – Watershed Specialist, Alexis Shank – ACAP Coordinator, Marisa Matlin – Conservation Program Specialist, Hunter Overdorff, Chuck Flinn, and John Somonick-Associate Directors, Suzannah Harris – DEP Field Representative (virtually), Mike Keith and Robin Gorman-Indiana County Commissioners, Jaysa Stitt and Rich Tice – McCall, Scanlon and Tice auditors.

PUBLIC COMMENTS - none

VanHorn 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 Simpson, motion carried.

Jaysa Stitt and Rich Tice presented the audit findings for the calendar year ending December 31, 2022. Details of the entire report were reviewed with the board. The opinion was that the financial statements were presented fairly in all material aspects, respective to the financial position of the governmental activities and each major fund of the Conservation District as of December 31, 2022. No deficiencies in internal controls that were considered to be a material weakness were found. Additionally, no instances of noncompliance were identified. Andrie moved to approve the 2022 audit report as presented, second by Peace, motion carried.

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

CORRESPONDENCE - none

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION DELEGATED PROGRAMS REPORT

Two erosion and sediment control plans were reviewed, and three Chapter 102 site inspections were conducted.

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR REPORTS

Overdorff reported the state budget was passed and Conservation Districts are level funded for the fiscal year. Overdorff attended Ag Progress Days where he heard Congressman Thompson's report on the Farm Bill. He attended the District's legislative bus tour and appreciated the report pointing out that for every \$1 of county funds received, the District brings in \$13.00.

FIELD REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT

Suzanna Harris reported the Conservation District Fund Allocation program cost-share rates remain essentially the same this year. The application period for Environmental Education Grants is currently open. The Management Summit will be held in September. An overview of Sunshine Act details was provided. The Conservation District board of directors nomination process is underway.

COOPERATING AGENCY REPORTS - none

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Russick reported the Dirt/Gravel and Low Volume Roads Program Quality Assurance Board (QAB) met to rank projects and review policy needs. Items will be presented for action later in the meeting.

Beri reported the personnel committee met earlier in the month and items will be presented for action items later in the meeting.

Shank reported the ACAP committee met prior to the regular meeting and items will be presented for action items later in the meeting.

OLD BUSINESS - none

NEW BUSINESS

No nutrient management plans (NMPs) are currently under review.

An overview of the Brookside Dairy and Tomb farm NMPs were presented to the board. Andrie moved to approve the Tomb farm NMP as recommended, second by Simpson, motion carried. Andrie moved to approve the Brookside Dairy NMP as recommended, second by Peace, motion carried.

There were no donations received this month.

Peace moved to accept the resignation of District Educator Monica Lee, second by VanHorn, motion carried.

Long moved to approve the annual Conservation District Fund Allocation Program (CDFAP) application for funding for District Manager, E&S Technician and ACT positions, second by Simpson, motion carried.

Peace moved to approve the following DGLVR QAB recommendations as an omnibus action, second by Long, motion carried with Andrie abstaining.

1. Adding a "Pre-construction Site Meeting Policy" to the QAB Standards and Administrative Policy.
2. Approving FY 23-24 Dirt/Gravel project grant applications for funding: Green Township: Railroad Street \$33,481, Green Township: Vanderbilt Street \$12,175, Rayne Township: Blystone Road Phase 1 \$79,306 and Phase 2 \$51,360 (totaling \$130,666), East Mahoning Township: Black Road \$76,811, East Mahoning Township: Steele Road Phase 1 \$109,440, and West Mahoning Township: Griffith Road \$50,723.00, and contingent on funds available Grant Township: Snyder Road \$32,189.00.
3. Approving FY 23-24 Low Volume Project grant applications for funding: Buffington Township: South Factory Hollow Road \$131,597.

Andrie moved to approve the ACAP committee recommendation of awarding a grant to Leo Bernard in the amount of \$240,909.45, second by Van Horn, motion carried with Simpson abstaining.

Peace moved to approve the ACAP committee recommendation of awarding a grant to Lone Oak Farm in the amount of \$242,779.31, second by VanHorn with Simpson abstaining.

VanHorn moved to approve an ACAP policy to set up jointly named escrow accounts for ACAP advancement of funds, second by Andrie, motion carried.

Peace moved to approve a policy for remaining, unallocated ACAP funds where the District will hold current applications, accept additional applications, and then rank them all as a group, second by VanHorn, motion carried.

Rogers moved to approve a revised District Educator position description that includes an Abandoned Mine Land and Abandoned Mine Drainage component to make the position more flexible for funding opportunities, and authorization to advertise to fill the position vacancy, second by Simpson, motion carried.

Peace moved to ratify the Personnel Committee selection of Blake Mauthe for the Watershed Project Coordinator and Allison Smith for the Conservation Coordinator AmeriCorps positions, second by Simpson, motion carried.

#### DISCUSSION

Hess reported the Penns Corner Resource Conservation and Development organization met and the trustees moved to dissolve the organization unless funds could be committed by August 28, 2023, to fund a position to start the rebuilding process.

Somonick reported on the operations of the Solid Waste Authority and the on-going issues with recycling and the costs to do so.

Keith reported the local Indiana County Waste Management landfill will cease operation by June 2024. The landfill still has 50 more years of capacity; however, the Cambria and Westmoreland landfills do not bring in their daily capacity, so they are streamlining their operations. Concern was voiced that rural Indiana County will become a dumping ground. Discussion was held on how the District can be proactive in heading off the dumping that is likely to happen, including working with municipalities to provide scheduled dumpster opportunities for their residents. Flinn noted the Solid Waste Authority accepts waste material and provides mulch and compost at no cost.

Beri reported the hops on the district grounds will be harvested August 19 at 8:00 am and directors and associates were asked to assist if available. The District is partnering with Levity Brewing on a conservation beer.

VanHorn complimented the staff on the recent legislative bus tour.

The next Conservation District Board of Directors meeting will be held Tuesday, September 19, 2023, at 9:30 am at 435 Hamill Road, Indiana, PA 15701. The meeting adjourned at 10:52 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Tammie L. Robinson  
Administrative Assistant