

Chairperson Commissioner Sherene Hess called the meeting of the Indiana County Conservation District to order on Tuesday, September 19, 2023, at 9:31 am at 435 Hamill Road in Indiana. Other Directors present were Janis Long, Barbara Peace, Cindy Rogers, Aaron Simpson and Gregg VanHorn. Directors absent: Craig Andrie

Also present: Douglas Beri Jr. – Executive Director virtually, Tammie Robinson – Office Administrator, Brooke Russick – Conservation Program Manager, Benjamin Wenger – Watershed Specialist, Marisa Matlin – Conservation Program Specialist, Doyle Freeman, Sarah King, Hunter Overdorff, and John Somonick-Associate Directors, Susannah Harris – DEP Field Representative virtually, and Aaron Lehman.

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 VanHorn, motion carried.

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

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION DELEGATED PROGRAMS REPORT

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

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR REPORTS - none

Somonick reported the Aultman Run Watershed Association has completed approximately half the work on a \$3 million project to remove boney piles and create a recreational trail. Work to clean up the watershed has been on-going for 23 years.

King reported the Friends of White's Woods will host a webinar featuring Dr. Curt Meine talking about Leopold's land ethic. Invasive weed pulling has been taking place for the past five weeks at White's Woods and there is more to be done.

FIELD REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT

Suzanna Harris reported Beri did an excellent job presenting a seminar at the recent Manager's Summit. Director nominations are due November 15. There is mandatory watershed specialist training the week of October 2. Environmental Education grant applications will be accepted through November 15. The REAP tax credit application period for farm best management practices began August 7 and will be accepted until depleted or October 31, whichever comes first. PACD is offering a Verbal Judo course and a recognizing deception course geared toward dealing with complaint situations. Harris is planning to have a fall collaboration meeting for staff to keep the lines of communication open between Districts and DEP upon the retirement of Lori Boughton, DEP NWRO Regional Manager.

COOPERATING AGENCY REPORTS - none

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Beri reported the personnel committee met to interview candidates for the Conservation Program Specialist, Education Focus position. The committee recommendation to fill the position will be addressed later in the meeting.

OLD BUSINESS - none

NEW BUSINESS

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

Simpson motioned to accept a \$500 donation from the Indiana Garden Club for the Envirothon Education Grant fund, second by VanHorn, motion carried.

Peace moved to approve the 2024 PA Municipal Retirement System annual Minimum Municipal Obligation of \$18,923, second by Long, motion carried.

Rogers moved to approve hiring Aislinn Slaugenhaupt for the Conservation Program Specialist, Education Focus position, at a starting annual wage of \$35,000, second by Peace, motion carried.

Simpson moved to approve PACD ag plan reimbursement grant applications for Chris Stewart for \$400 and Gregg VanHorn for \$800, second by Peace, motion carried with VanHorn abstaining.

Peace moved to approve two ACAP cover crop seed stipend applications for Dave and Melissa George of \$500 and the Indiana Community Garden of \$100, second by VanHorn, motion carried.

Beri reported options were investigated to try to avoid freezing of the furnace unit condensation lines like had happened in December causing water damage to the building. Heat tape was recommended over trying to build an enclosure around the furnace units. VanHorn moved to approve using Handyman for Hire to install electrical outlets and thermostat controlled heat tape on the condensing lines for the attic furnace units, second by Peace, motion carried.

Peace moved to approve a Dirt/Gravel, Low Volume Roads (DGLVR) grant for Cherry Tree Borough, High Street project at a cost of \$67,728, second by Long, motion carried.

Peace moved to approve a DGLVR program contract amendment for DR2104 Green Township, Pear Road of \$44,105, for an amended contract total of \$188,201, second by Simpson, motion carried.

DISCUSSION

There is no new information to report on the planned watershed alliance.

Evergreen Conservancy is hosting a program on the reintroduction of the Pennsylvania American Marten (aka Sable) on November 5, 2023.

Directors, staff, and volunteers harvested approximately 11 pounds of hops on the District grounds. A home brew beer workshop will be held in November using the hops, and the wet hop brew that has been made from our hops will be ready for that workshop.

The District will host an Apple Festival with cider making, food trucks, and educational events on October 7th on the District grounds.

The next Conservation District Board of Directors meeting will be held Tuesday, October 17, 2023, at 9:30 am at 435 Hamill Road, Indiana, PA 15701. Van Horn moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:08, second by Simpson, motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Tammie L. Robinson
Administrative Assistant