

Chairperson Commissioner Sherene Hess called the meeting of the Indiana County Conservation District to order on Tuesday, December 19, 2023, at 9:30 am at 435 Hamill Road in Indiana. Other Directors present were Janis Long, Barbara Peace, Cindy Rogers, and Aaron Simpson. Directors absent: Craig Andrie and Gregg VanHorn

Also present: Douglas Beri Jr. – Executive Director, Tammie Robinson – Office Administrator, Brooke Russick – Conservation Program Manager, Benjamin Wenger – Conservation Program Specialist, Alexis Shank – ACAP Coordinator, Marisa Matlin – Conservation Program Specialist, Blake Mauthe, and Joece Lynn-AmeriCorps, Sarah King, Tom Beresnyak, Charles Flinn, Doyle Freeman, Hunter Overdorff, Alysha Trexler, and John Somonick-Associate Directors, Commissioners Robin Gorman and Mike Keith.

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 Peace, motion carried.

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

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION DELEGATED PROGRAMS REPORT

One erosion and sediment control plan was reviewed and two Chapter 102 site inspections were conducted.

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR REPORTS

Trexler reported she hosted several ICCD staff members at her Western PA Conservancy office to learn about riparian buffer plantings.

Overdorff reported Representative Struzzi’s HB 3132 pertaining to stormwater management has moved out of committee. This would empower municipalities to make plans to control stormwater in their area with funds designated for project implementation.

FIELD REPRESENTATIVE’S REPORT

Suzanna Harris reported there was a recent regional manager’s meeting in Elk County, and she thanked Beri for his presentation to the other managers. Ron Lybrook has been named Manager of Waterways and Wetlands at the DEP Northwest Regional Office. There will be a 2027 PA State Water Plan update and District directors are asked to serve on the committee to protect the waters of Pennsylvania. The Pennsylvania fertilizer law was revised and takes effect January 2024. The new regulations affect turf and agriculture fertilizer application. The EPA is taking public comments on the revised draft of Nonpoint DEP 319 grant guidelines.

COOPERATING AGENCY REPORTS

Beresnyak reported on available Penn State Extension on-line webinars.

Beri reported that the Friends of Indiana County Conservation District has finally been approved for their 501c3 non-profit designation.

COMMITTEE REPORTS - none

OLD BUSINESS - none

NEW BUSINESS

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

No donations were received.

Simpson moved to amend the agenda item for the LV2204 Green Township Acorn Road contract amendment to be up to \$6,378, rather than for \$6,378, second by Peace, motion carried.

Simpson moved to approve DGLVR program Low Volume project contract amendments for LV2201 Brush Valley Township, Old Mission Road Project of \$395.19 for a new grant total of \$3,555.19; Low Volume project contract amendment for LV2204 Green Township, Acorn Road of up to \$6,378.00; a new Dirt & Gravel contract for Brush Valley Township, Rhine Road for \$39,722.00 with a 50% cash advance of \$19,861; a new Dirt & Gravel contract for Grant Township, Snyder Road for \$32,189 with a 50% cash advance of \$16,094, second by Peace, motion carried.

Russick reported ICCD received approximately \$48,000 in additional dirt roads project funding. To be eligible for the additional funding, Districts must have been in good standing with their program spending. Russick made a concerted effort to get completed project invoices submitted by municipalities, issue project cash advances and complete the necessary state reporting to put ICCD in a good position for the additional funding. Freeman noted how valuable the program funds are to our county's municipalities.

Peace moved to approve the ACAP program amended Attachment A. Grantee Responsibilities – to add a joint ICCD/farmer escrow account requirement; amended Attachment D. Schedule of Payments to withhold 30% versus 50%; amended Attachment E. Bidding Procedures acknowledging the lowest responsible bid or quote; approve policy of “holding an application” as a decision; approve holding two existing, complete applications; approve holding all incoming applications until March for a large ranking, and scheduling a second ranking in September for any remaining funds; approve allowing farmers to apply with multiple scopes of work as long as the smaller scope of work addresses any untreated animal concentration areas or if there are no animal concentration areas, the smaller project scope addresses the highest environmental resource concerns, all as recommended by the ACAP advisory board, second by Simpson, motion carried.

Simpson moved to approve the 2024 Board of Directors meeting schedule of the 3rd Tuesday of each month at 9:30 am, committees may meet at 8:30 am prior to the regularly scheduled Board of Directors meeting, and at 9 am and 3 pm on Mondays, second by Peace, motion carried.

Simpson moved to award the Lucerne 3A/Waterworks Passive Treatment System project to the lowest responsible bidder, Earth Shapers, LLC, in the amount of \$466,385, second by Peace, motion carried.

Peace moved to approve sponsorship of the 2024 Stony-Kiski-Conemaugh River's Sojourn in the amount of \$100, second by Simpson, motion carried.

DISCUSSION

Beri reported the PA Game Commission is no longer eligible to receive DGLRV funds. Also, DEP enacted a rule if your permit isn't issued within the time deadlines in specific program guidelines, applicants may ask for their application/permit fee be refunded. This came about primarily because of medical permits, such as nurses not getting permits in a timely manner, however, no other permits were excluded from the new rule. Conservation Districts are waiting for guidance on how this will affect our Chapter 102 program.

Peace moved to enter into executive session at 10:30 a.m. to discuss legal and personnel matters, second by Simpson, motion carried.

The regular meeting resumed at 10:17 a.m.

Simpson moved to change the agenda item from selecting the ICCD 2024/2025 solicitor to readvertising for the position of ICCD's solicitor for 2024 and 2025, second by Peace, motion carried.

Simpson moved to approve readvertising for the at ICCD's solicitor for 2024 and 2025, second by Peace, motion carried.

Simpson moved to accept District Educator Aislinn Slaugenhaupt's letter of resignation, second by Peace, motion carried.

Peace moved to add an agenda item to hold the now vacant District Educator position open and extend the employment offer to Blake Mauthe when his AmeriCorps commitment expires, second by Simpson, motion carried.

Simpson moved to hold the now vacant District Educator position open and extend the employment offer to Blake Mauthe when his AmeriCorps term expires, second by Peace, motion carried.

The next Conservation District Board of Directors meeting will be held Tuesday, January 16, 2024, at 9:30 am at 435 Hamill Road, Indiana, PA 15701. The meeting adjourned at 10:20 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Tammie L. Robinson
Administrative Assistant