

**Branch County Conservation District
Board Meeting Minutes from June 11, 2019**

Board Members present: Diana Lutz, Bing Johnson and Insa Raymond

Staff present: Kathy Worst, Mike Censke, Lyndsay Morrison, Jordan Beehler and Jared Harmon.

Guests: Jack Knorek

The meeting was called to order by chair Diana Lutz at 7:00 p.m.

Public Comments: none

Changes to the Agenda: Bing Johnson moved to cross out the word 'herbicide' under *new business*, bullet point no. 1, since an herbicide is a pesticide. Insa Raymond seconded the motion. Agenda was approved as corrected.

Secretary's Report: The District Board meeting minutes for the regular April 9 and special board meeting held April 30 meeting as well as the minutes of the May 21 meeting were reviewed. Jordan Beehler pointed out a mistake in minutes from April 30th. She previously was employed with the Elkhart County Conservation District, not with the Steuben County Conservation District. Bing Johnson moved to approve the April 9, and the May 21 minutes as written, and the minutes from April 30th as corrected. Insa Raymond seconded the motion; motion passed.

Treasurer's Report and Payment Voucher List for the last month were reviewed and discussed. There is currently a bank balance of \$51,043.18, which includes \$39,194.44 in the checking account, \$5,103.88 in the savings account and \$6,744.86 in the checking merchant account. Bills in the amount of \$14,383.79 have been pre-paid and \$5,806.90 still needs to be paid out. Insa Raymond moved to approve the treasurer's reports and payment of all bills including the pre-paid bills; Bing Johnson seconded; the motion carried, and the treasurer's report was put to file for audit.

MAEAP Technician – Mike Censke reported he attended an irrigation training as well as the summer conference. He stated this time of the year it is hard to get a hold of farmers, since they are wrapping things up in their fields. He has verifications coming up on June 26. Mike stated he is trying to get as many verifications done on that day as possible, or before the July 1 deadline for bonus points. He has a couple clients interested in the cost share program for fuel pads, but there is always the issue of time. The Farm Field Day will have a focus on hemp this year. A MAEAP verified farmer from St. Joe County is growing 75 acres of hemp. But he mentioned there is really no information on hemp growing available yet. The Farm Field Day is scheduled for August 21, 2019. Mike is looking for a resource person to lead a session on hemp growing 101. Lyndon Kelley will be leading a session on irrigating hemp.

CISMA Coordinator – Jared Harmon is currently working with a client who is growing bamboo. But the bamboo, which is invasive, is crawling into the neighbor's yard. He taught about invasive species at a 4th grade day. Jared also reported about the upcoming Herbicide Training Day at Hillsdale College. The training is mostly geared towards professionals from the landscape industry. It will include invasive species ID, followed by an herbicide treatment demonstration. Attendants will earn 6 RUP credits. Jared is hoping about 50 to 100 people will attend the training. Registration for the training is open until July 5th. The training is on July 18th from 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Vern Stephens will facilitate the training.

New Business:

Fisher Liability Coverage for the District: Fischer Insurance has gathered a list of all Districts involved in a CISMA and has created a plan for group liability insurance coverage. This would cost \$75.00 per year and would be a separate policy. Bing Johnson suggested to invite Joe Fischer to our next meeting to give a presentation about the group liability insurance plan for Districts.

Discussion and Approval of Barry Associates Change in Payroll and Tax Payment System – Bing Johnson moved to approve the Barry Associates Change in payroll and tax payment system, Insa Raymond seconded the motion; motion passed.

Appropriations for next Fiscal Year – it was noted that we need to get started on this.

Old Business:

Summer MACD Conference: the template for the five year business plan of work has not been rolled out yet. Staff was charged to make contacts and to be ready to include master plans from the County and townships, watershed plans, etc. into the plan of work. Now is a good time to look at where we are, and where we want to be in five years.

Requests were expressed for new forest qualified programs.

Bing attended sessions on millages. He reported it costs about \$36,000 to run a campaign. He also learned to target residential areas for support, not the farmers. Now would be a good time to start planning for a 2020 millage during the August primaries. Montcalm County just passed a millage. They piggy-backed with MSU Extension and 4-H. Bing reported to start thinking about potential partners. We could team up with Branch County MSU Extension.

Diana established a millage sub-committee consisting of Diana, Bing and Insa. They will meet on June 26th, at 7:00 p.m. at Biggby's. We will need permission from the County Commissioners to get on the ballot. Mr. Wykoff, Montcalm County District, is willing to join a millage meeting to talk about their county's millage experiences. Diana will send out some dates for a meeting.

All together everyone concurred the summer MACD Conference was an excellent conference, lots was learned and the topics were good.

Lakeland School Outdoor Center Status: The Board decided not to progress yet, but to wait and see first how the millage will turn out.

Coldwater Lake State Park Restoration Project is progressing well. Lindsay was hoping to get half done by tomorrow. She has a tractor and will be picking up seed on Friday.

Director Search and Associates – we are still looking. Lindsay suggested John Sherman as a prospective associate for the District. He does new farming techniques successfully. Lindsay will give John a call and invite him to a meeting. The Board discussed we also need someone with financial background and with political connections. Kathy suggested Jay Johnson as a prospective associate fulfilling the criteria. She offered to invite him to the next meeting.

Prescribed Burns – got through everything and have one lined up already for next year. Need to have a discussion with Nate, from Blue Heron, as burn boss.

No-Till Drill: going well.

Smith Property Issues: Kathy handed the letters for Ron Smith and Frank Stowell to Ron Smith personally, when he stopped by the District office. She asked Ron to hand deliver the letter to Frank. Kathy and Marcus had a meeting with Ron Smith and discussed the issues we are having with Frank. Ron seemed to be understanding.

Native Plant Sale went very well. It was super busy well into the afternoon.

Review of the District Policy Manual and Staff Work Agreements need to be reviewed. Kathy will send out copies to each Board member.

The Wildlife Habitat & Invasive Species Field Day scheduled at Coldwater Lake State Park for August 17th is set. However, we need to find a new location for the talk. Our previous location had issues and needed to withdraw. The talk could possibly be done at Kinderhook Township Hall, if a building is needed. Nate from Blue Heron signed up already to come.

Invasive Species Training Day will take place on July 18th at Hillsdale College; everything has been finalized. More details above under Jared's report.

Pay Pal: no progress.

Five Year Business - Plan of Work: covered under summer MACD conference.

Michigan Sales Tax Issue: Colleen is still working on this.

Electronic Recycling Day: RFP is out; BizAid and Kathy will work on the second round.

BizAid recycling grant proposal has been submitted. No news yet.

Tree Sale – still collecting data; no news.

Talking Points for Road Commission on new Truck: Diana suggested to approach the Road Commission about getting one of their pick-up trucks and to develop talking points for these discussions. The District currently spends a lot of money on mileage. There is also a lot of wear and tear on personal vehicles of staff when driving so much for work. A District pick-up truck would be very beneficial.

John Mitchell Memorial Fundraiser at American Legion in Quincy is set for October 19th. Tim Wilkinson is the contact person for this at the Legion. He and his wife Deb will organize everything. Diana will meet one more time with Tim and Deb to discuss last details. Tim mentioned he has \$1,400 that Becky Mitchell gave to the Legion and the Legion wants to give it to the District. Diana will ask for more information about this.

Directors' and Staff Report

Directors: Insa Raymond mentioned she is working on this summer's youth renewable energy camp for 4H. The focus will be on solar energy.

NRCS District Conservationist: Marcus Reynolds, absent – see written report.

MWSP / MAEAP Technician: Mike Censke, present – see at the beginning of the meeting.

Farm Bill Biologist: Lyndsay Morrison, present – see written report. Lyndsay stated she would like to establish a fur kit for educational purposes. She also presented a price comparison for a variety of furs.

CTAI Specialist: Jordan Beehler, present – see written report.

District Administrator – Kathy Worst – everything was discussed already during the meeting.

Public Comments: none

Adjourn: Bing Johnson moved to adjourn the meeting, Insa Raymond seconded the motion; the meeting was adjourned at 9:55 p.m.

Meeting minutes respectfully submitted by Insa Raymond, secretary.



Signature



Date