

**Branch County Conservation District  
Board Meeting Minutes from April 13, 2021**

Due to Covid 19 pandemic this meeting was held via zoom tele-conference

**Board members present:** Jason Hyska (chair) – Branch County, Matison Township, Art Doner – Branch County, Matison Township, Bing Johnson – Branch County, Union Township, Insa Raymond – Branch County, Batavia Township

**Associate Board Members:** Charity Krueger

**Staff:** Laurie Rosenberg, Jared Harmon, Lyndsay Dalke, Mike Censke

**Guests:** Jack Knorek

The meeting was called to order by Jason Hyska at 7:00 p.m.

**Approval of Agenda:** Art Doner moved to approve the agenda as presented, Insa Raymond seconded the motion, passed.

**Approval of Minutes:** The Board reviewed the March meeting minutes. Motion by Art Doner to accept the minutes as written; seconded by Insa Raymond, minutes were approved.

**Staff Reports**

**MAEAP Water Stewardship Technician, Mike Censke:** Mike has been attending roundtable meetings with other MAEAP Technicians from SW Michigan to network and to share experiences and ideas. He participated in training for the new database. The database will allow for better and more streamlined reporting. Mike has completed 6 farm visits and 4 verifications. He has four more verifications scheduled for late April / early May. The deadline for water use reporting has been extended. Mike is expecting many phone calls from farmers this regarding. He has spent \$180 cost share dollars and is planning on spending some more for a manure pad. The remaining cost share dollars will be available for summer spending. See Mike's written report for more details.

**CTAI Conservatationist, Jared Harmon,** gave a presentation on forest management plans, QFP and MAEAP at the Augusta Hunt Club. He interviewed people who will be doing road side spraying and submitted reports. He assisted the District manager building the District's Instagram and Facebook page. Jared also helped with the tree sale and he will be picking up the ordered trees from the nurseries. He also attended the MAEAP verification training. Jared is planning on traveling to Idaho at the end of April to pick up some pack goats. While out west he wants to look for elk sheds, which later could be used for educational purposes with kids. See also Jared's written report.

**Farm Bill Biologist and acting District Administrator, Lyndsay Dalke** reported thins have really been picking up in March. The CRP people are ready to go – to plant trees and seeds. Lyndsay did some CRP revisions and had to make some changes in tree choices. Lyndsay reported there is a new team of FBB with whom she had some zoom meetings. She also did some CRP status reviews. Lyndsay was contacted by Lindsay from ESA Solar in regards to the solar panel project south of Coldwater. ESA Solar wants to work with the District and would like the District's input on possibly planting native grass habitat underneath the solar panels.

**Action Item:** Lyndsay will invite representatives from ESA to give a presentation for the District at the next meeting.

Charity wants Laurie to research how much money the company has donated in the past.

**District Administrator, Laurie Rosenberg** reported she has worked mainly on the tree sale during her first few weeks with the District. She has worked hard trying to promote the tree sale and to get the word out. Many orders have come in. The trees are almost sold out. Because of this Laurie backed out on further advertising the tree sale. Laurie also reported she cleaned up the email lists. From 220 email contacts 60 were either bad, or the people were no longer interested. Now the list is updated and current with 160 people. Laurie learned that in order to put an add into the Shoppers Guide, it needs to be done two weeks in advance. However, the Shoppers Guide will insert a flier for you for a cost of \$55.00 per 1000 fliers. Laurie printed the fliers in office and took them to the Shoppers Guide.

Charity asked about gross sales. This should be included in Laurie's report. However, it is too soon to include numbers for gross sales in the report; this information is not available yet.

Art was wondering how many orders came through the Facebook adds. However, this is unknown.

Laurie also reported she has ordered 5000 trees. She had to adjust the order, and order 500 more trees. Laurie has looked with Jared at different grants and at potential partnerships, which could be built. She stated the website is very static and could use some work. Communication updates are necessary. This could be costly though – selling adds for the newsletter would be one way to raise funds.

## **Old Business**

**Rental Agreement:** this is done. Laurie and Mrs. Smucker signed the agreement, since it needed two signatures. Laurie asked about the liability when she signs. However, signing with name and title representing the District is okay for Laurie to do without that Laurie personally will be held liable.

**Tree Sale Update:** see under Laurie's report.

**Monthly Financials** were reviewed by Board members. There are \$19,935.63 in the checking account (Business Infinity), \$6,683.55 in Checking / Business Select and \$5,997.74 in the Savings account as of March 31, 2021.

**Motion:** Jason Hyska moved to approve the Financial Report as presented, Art Doner seconded the motion, and financial report was put to file for audit.

**Motion:** Jason Hyska moved to add Laurie Rosenberg as a signer to all Branch County Conservation District bank accounts; seconded by Art Doner; passed.

## **New Business**

**Credit Card** is on hold for now, since Laurie had to remove Jordan Beehler's name first.

**Motion** by Art Doner to add Laurie's name to the credit card, seconded by Insa Raymond, passed.

**New Board Members:** Marcus talked to Marc Hacker about becoming a District Board member. Marc has a lot of experience and ideas, but we need a grass roots person, who knows how to build the structure for the District. Marc Hacker wants to wait.

**Action Item:** Laurie will come up with a list of names for potential new Board members.

**Truck for the District:** NRCS has a truck available, which District staff have used to pick up the no-till drill; but we should not be doing this, because of liability issues this could create. Laurie asked if there might be a cheap truck available some place? Bing suggested to check with the Road Commission. However, we

will have to pay the insurance and we also will have a liability by owning a vehicle. What are other Districts doing? Some either have their own truck, or they hire somebody to deliver the no-till drill. However, these Districts are financially better situated. The other option would be that farmers come and pick up the no-till drill themselves. The Board decided to leave things as they are for now, to look at numbers during this coming year, how often we move the drill, etc.

**Action Item:** Jared will contact the Road Commission to see when they will get new vehicles again and sell their old ones.

**Funding / Advertising for the District:** Laurie was wondering what the policies are? Jason suggested for Laurie to contact the MACD to get information on the policies.

**Fall Plant Sale:** ideas brought up were to sell kits, Serviceberry, Redbuds.

**Action Item:** Laurie will contact Alyssa Blonde at the Hillsdale Conservation District, gather ideas and suggestions and bring these to the next meeting.

Charity Krueger stated the Hillsdale County Conservation District put together a list of workshops they offer. Laurie should attend some of these workshops. Jason reminded Charity, however, that Laurie only works very limited hours and has little extra time available. We will also be offering workshops again next year, when we can meet in person again.

### **Adjourn**

**Motion** to adjourn the meeting by Jason Hyska, seconded by Art Doner, passed.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:24 p.m.

Meeting minutes respectfully submitted by Insa Raymond, secretary.

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Signature

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Date