

Piscataquis County Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors.

Meeting Minutes

March 9 , 2023 at 4pm.

Attendance:

Staff: Sarah Robinson, Kacey Weber

Supervisors: Jensen Bissell, Jim Ferrante, Kent Black

Assoc. Supervisors: Sam Brown, Kim Merritt, Donna Coffin

The Meeting was conducted via Teams .

Establish a Quorum: Chair Jensen Bissell opened the meeting at 4:04 pm. Quorum was established.

Consent Agenda - Motion and second to approve the consent agenda. Unanimous to approve. This includes the previous minutes, grant reports and staff reports.

Finance Report - A motion was made and seconded to accept the Finance Report as presented. Included corrected January dashboard and February dashboard. Feedback was received from Board members about the dashboard and how it's presented. Sarah plans to start work on the presentation of the dashboard in April.

District Conservationist Report - On 3/7/23 the Local working group had a very well attended meeting. We've discussed in past meetings here as well as at the LWG meetings that our goal is to gather information for future NRCS local funding priorities. Yesterday's meeting was organized differently than we have done in the past and at least so far that was very successful. The feedback received has already generated a lot of internal conversation about priorities and missed opportunities so we're already feeling that the changes in the meeting structure are to our advantage and ultimately to the advantage of the participants we're trying to work with.

Kacey is already starting to pull the notes together with minutes so we can start to look at what our next steps should be and how to plan out the next meeting. I do appreciate the time and support of the board and the people who have come to these meetings and participated and provided input. These meetings have always seemed to generate good discussion, different points of view and the folks that attend do support one another regardless of the ag sector represented, people are respectful and the discussions are of benefit. Carl Bickford will be on detail as District Conservationist in Skowhegan for 120 days starting either at the very end of March or beginning of April. It's hard to have him step away but I fully support Carl taking opportunities for development. I have also taken details many times over my career and it always provides input, insight and the chance to learn and to apply that to yourself as an employee as you move forward in your career. So I offer him congratulations on being accepted for this opportunity. NRCS has received Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funding in two programs. The funding has a focus on Climate Smart ag and forestry, and as such there are core practices that are applicable. They focus on forestry and ag practices that help in protection of soil health, carbon management and other core practices that have shown to help in climate change mitigation. As we look forward we have been told to expect that the IRA funding is not only going to continue but substantially increase over the next five years in addition to our historic program budget levels potentially increasing NRCS program funding opportunities 2X or more and also enhance the utilization the Conservation Stewardship Program across Maine with significantly more access to funding in that program.

New Business -

TWE Scholarship - Discussions took place on whether or not we were able to provide scholarships and if we did, what the criteria would be/look like. Kacey and Sarah will work on this and present to the Board in April.

Educator of the Year Award - University of Maine School of Forest Resources is the staff recommendation - multiple professors doing great work in Piscataquis County, we want to recognize work that exceptional work. A motion was made and seconded to support the nomination. Unanimous vote.

Merchandise - Shared solution to merchandise - working with Sistrin in Newport, Maine. Prices have changed and products will be available through the Tree & Plant sale only.

PEEC - Kacey provided an overview of PEEC- who is involved, what is the collaborative working on. Shared about upcoming Admin meeting, Green Jobs Fair.

Executive Director Report - Mailchimp - \$270/year. A "band aid" - need to look into options for the future. We chose Mailchimp mainly because it offers integrations. Donna suggested looking into shared accounts. **Fundraising** - Friends of Baxter State Park - very helpful - fundraising, sponsorship and grants. Sarah has received several recommendations to look into contracting with local grant writers. Reached out to Korah Soll and from that conversation, reached out to Warehouse. Email out to TNC to start the process of finding a new grantor. **TNC check-in** was positive. **Outreach and Training** - Maine Sustainability Water Conference - going at the end of March. **Tree & Plant Sale** - ready to go on Monday, March 13th. Added this year have been improved organization and layout, use of jotforms, veggies seedlings, frasier fir trees. **Thompson Free Library** - provided a letter of support for infrastructure updates. **Local Outreach** - Kent would volunteer at the Whoopie Pie Festival. Booth cost? Other outreach events we attend/ ideas: Attend Forest Heritage Days - Greenville. Idea: Dover Days parade. We need to plan some time for this conversation at the upcoming Strategic Planning meeting. **Strategic Planning** - coming up on March 23rd.

Board Development - Maine Woods Forever meeting - Jensen plans to go, Steve will be presenting.

Upcoming Events/Dates - Strategic Planning March 23rd, Tree & Plant Sale March 13th, Land Management Meeting, April 11th, Board meeting April 13th, Ladies Walk and Talk on April 15th, Forest Health Webinars, April 6th and 13th.

Jensen motioned for the meeting to shift into executive session for the Executive Director's review.

Exit Executive Session and a motion was made to approve the Executive Directors 4% annual raise.

Meeting ended at 6:30pm.

