

**Piscataquis County Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors.
Meeting Minutes**

December 14, 2025 at 2:30pm.

Attendance:

Staff: Kacey Weber

Supervisors: Jensen Bissell, Kent Black, Carolyn Ziegra, Jim Ferrante

Assoc. Supervisors: Sam Brown, Arthur Wilkins, Alani Worden, Mike Pouch

Guests: none

The Meeting was conducted at the Thompson Free Library in Dover-Foxcroft.

Establish a Quorum: Board Chair Jensen Bissell opened the meeting at 2:37pm.

Consent Agenda - Motion and second to approve the consent agenda. Unanimous to approve. This includes the previous minutes, grant reports, November dashboard and staff reports. A motion was made and unanimous to approve.

Finance Report - See *attached dashboards*.

A motion made and unanimous to approve.

NRCS report: n/a

Education Coordinator / Executive Director Report Highlights -

Kacey reported, *reports attached*.

- County Commissioners received ~43 letters of support for funding the District, recommendation to fund flat \$13,500 to the District for 2026 will be voted on December 16th.
 - Kacey to send thank you notes after this date to relevant parties
 - Level of effort for outreach about funding support was good and a success!
- Recreational Trails Program grant work nearly complete, there may be money for gate at end of work! Carolyn and Kacey to meet about this later on.
- NRCS new Manager planning role in progress (Kacey's new report based out of Bangor)
- Amy from Penobscot Soil and Water District beginning work in NRCS office with Carl to meet contract with District; she will work in the office once a week
- District website was down for a bit, time was spent to fix! \$72 + \$80 spent on IT services - all is well
- Classroom time spent by Kacey ongoing
- Williamsburg Forest won the Maine Tree Farm of the Year!!!
 - Ag Trade show: January 14th is the first award for the Tree Farmer of the Year! Civic Center in Augusta!
 - Board members to share with Kacey if they are going to attend as a group!
- 2026 Calendar of District events is included in the Board packet, it's beautiful, check it out!

Board Development: n/a

New Business:

- Staff Holiday Gifts - \$24,000 surplus in accounts!
 - 2024 Gift was \$100 per staff member
 - 2025 gifts will go to Caitlin and Kacey
 - **A motion was made to give \$150 to each staff member for their holiday gift from the Board of Supervisors. The motion was seconded and voted; unanimous to approve.**
- Strategy for 2025 Surplus: ~\$24,000
 - Current Balance in Board Designated Funds account: \$54,905
 - If we hit \$100,000 in accounts, we can invest for higher returns
 - Projected \$9-14,000 per year in returns from Kacey's research
 - Jensen: suggestion that Board should set limit in savings accounts to improve investment in county operations and other good things
 - Kacey to share in January meeting what final surplus is;
 - Set target as % of annual operating budget
 - Expenses in 2025 around \$169k
 - Arthur asks about liquidity of investment options
 - Example is Maine Community Foundation as locally run investment portfolio manager: no longer accessible to District with annual return
 - Current CD return is 3-4% return, savings account APY is 3% at Bangor Savings
 - Decide on 2025 surplus: cannot stay in operating account; then strategize on investment or other uses for total sum
 - \$895 dollars made from ~12,500 CD account this year
 - Kent brought up discussion for endowment fund seed with savings funds at some point in the future; discussion that again, investment is for long term and District may not be operating at that level at this point. Perhaps best move is to invest ourselves using some legal support and not commit to a long term investment decision.
 - Suggest to commit to putting 2025 surplus into Board Designated Account for this year and take the next 6 months to decide a longer term strategy for funding surplus moving forward
 - Goal to focus meetings in 2026 with big topics spread throughout the year
 - Fundraising strategy in one of the upcoming meetings
 - **A motion was made and seconded to designate 2025 surplus gets moved into Board Designated Funds account for 2026. Unanimous to approve**
 - Industry standard: days cash on hand - to discuss in 2026
- Staff Restructuring and FY2026 Budget
 - Budget scenario 1: traditional structure vs Scenario 2: new proposal
 - Challenge to have a part time education coordinator; 700 training hours is unsustainable as demonstrated with two new ECs in 2025. 700 hours!!!
 - New proposal does not take Education coordinator salary; Executive Director to absorb EC duties.

- ED hourly wage in 2026 under Scenario 1: 26.08
 - Ed hourly wage in 2026 under scenario 2: \$30/hour
- Workshops summary
 - Scenario 1:
 - Contract labor new budget from speakers for workshops asking for fee
 - +\$603
 - Scenario 2:
 - Contractor to attend events
 - Paid hourly rate X hours per workshop
 - \$(856)
- Onion Foundation Grant requirement for school workshops
 - 1-2 days a week target
 - Scenario 1: \$25,000 each from Onion Foundation for EC and ED
 - Scenario 2: “Working Executive Director” would perform workshops, no EC funding from Grant
 - Onion Foundation funding would last until Aug 2027
 - District FY is a calendar year
 - Onion Foundation pays for Teen Wilderness and Educational supplies (e.g maple tapping)
- Admin Salary
 - Traditional Scenario 1:
 - 17 hours/wk paid from County/State (these are 40 hours per week for ED less all grant funding, IE grants pay for 23 of Kacey’s weekly hours)
 - EC 5.5 hours paid from admin
 - Move to annual raises on calendar year not hiring anniversary
 - New proposal Scenario 2:
 - Admin pays ED 9 hours/week
 - No EC position to pay from admin budget
- Admin Summary
 - Scenario 2:
 - New budget item for marketing: newsletters, email campaigns
 - Chamber of Commerce proposal MOU \$2800 for the year, includes all formatting- Kacey to provide content only
 - Contract labor budget increased (e.g. Seth Ostroski at Law Farm, signs, trails, other land management)
 - Shift costs from Land management account and create actual budget for this
 - Lower payroll costs (one staff member rather than 2)
- SUMMARY: new proposal increases ED salary, total net surplus increased from \$8,236 to \$12,552
 - Hourly wage for EC is not enough to retain talent
- Options to adjust new proposal include:
 - ED rate

- Land management
- Contractors
- Marketing agreement with Chamber of Commerce

A motion was made to approve Scenario 2: new proposal budget scenario. Seconded to approve. Discussion:

- Contractor training and time spent + reliability, worry about Board of Supervisors taking many contractor hours to attend events
 - Option for ELO: extended learning opportunity + ELO coordinators to support students (existing pool of student workers)
 - Rural Aspirations would oversee ELO
 - ELO would require transportation
 - Secondary option for “Gig work” to pay contractor
 - Training clarification: school programs and attending events is quite different; Kacey under scenario 2 as working ED does all school programming. Scenario 2 assumes working knowledge of conservation for ED (any ED, not just Kacey)
 - Board Hourly rate (~maybe \$37.50) and subject to mileage reimbursement
 - **Potential for new policy and legal advice on Board members as “Contractors” to replace much attendance for events**
 - **Option to remove some Contract labor funding to replace with volunteer**
 - **With no Education Coordinator, no path of succession with one staff member -**
 - **Budget Scenario 2 addresses with wage increase for ED**
 - **Cheryl and Kacey have better systems in place for financial education for potential new ED**
 - Risk of using contract labor to staff events; need more information on ELO; no money collection, take attendance, take photos, represent District
 - If approved today, potential for ED to take a few months to find ELO, would take calendar of events and fill “position”
 - Risk of contractor lacking District expertise and face time to represent District
 - Risk for ELO (student) to be short tenure, balanced by fact that District mission is to increase educational opportunities for county so short tenure is a good thing
 - 14 days of events on current calendar; potential for Board member to attend each event throughout year to act as ELO or other contractor supervisor → will need policy for supervisor time/potential wages
 - Kacey shares that model is not intended for Supervisors to take most of the events; does not wish to ask too much of Supervisors
 - 2026 is first year to test Contractor role; Supervisors can plan on spending some time attending events and be made available as new plan launches
- Marketing MOU from Chamber of Commerce budget item
 - Newsletter production & formatting + content creation
 - E-blast: updates throughout year
 - Additional Chamber of Commerce software licenses
 - Not complete takeover of social media presence

- Land management \$10,000
 - \$5,000 for Seth at Law Farm
 - \$4800/week for MCC team for trail maintenance: connect more Williamsburg trails, create a loop
 - Materials - \$2000 average that pops up throughout the year
 - Question about increasing budget rather than spend from Board Designated funds as needs come up; with increased budget transparency would increase for ED

Amendment to original motion to budget \$15,000 for land management in Budget Scenario 2. Some of this should be for contingencies; larger spending should require Board discussion. Unanimous to approve.

Revisit ask from schools for stipend! Much school funding has been cut this year from the federal government.

Kacey to look into potential for creating entity for properties and NRCS funding
Where will we bus folks to Williamsburg Forest for the Tree Farm; Davis field or new AMC parking lot

Meeting adjourned at 4:26pm

Executive Session: n/a

Upcoming events:

PCSWCD Meeting Attendance Record

2025 Attendance	1/16	2/13	3/13	4/10	5/8	6/12	7/10	8	9/11	10/9	11/13	12/14
<i>Supervisors</i>								n/a				
Jensen Bissell, chair	X	X	x	x	x	X	x		x	x		x
Jim Ferrante, vice chair		X	x	x		X	x		x	x	x	x
Kent Black	X	X	x	x	x	X	x		x	x	x	x
Molly London				x		X	x		x			
Carolyn Ziegra	X	X			x	X			x	x	x	x
<i>Associate Supervisors</i>												
Steve Tatko												
Mike Pouch			x	x		X					x	x
Sam Brown	X	X	x	x	x	X	x		x	x	x	x

PCSWCD Meeting Attendance Record

2025 Attendance	1/16	2/13	3/13	4/10	5/8	6/12	7/10	8	9/11	10/9	11/13	12/14
Toby Hall	X		x	x	x	X	x		x	x		
Alani Worden	X	X	x	x	x	X	x		x	x	x	x
Arthur Wilkins	X	X	x	x	x	X	x		x	x	x	x
<i>Staff</i>												
Kacey Weber, ED	X	X	x	x	x	X	x		x	x	x	x
NRCS DS	X		x	x	x		x		x			
Cheyenne, EC					Hir ed		x				Resign ed	
Caitlin Maguire												
Dustin Small, EC	(hired)				Re- sig ned							