



BUNCOMBE COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT FEBRUARY 10, 2022 BOARD MEETING

Virtual Meeting

Board Members Present

Gary Higgins, Chairman; David Snelson, Secretary; Louise Scruggs, Treasurer; and Tyler Ross, Member

Others Present

Jennifer Harrison, District Director; John Ottinger, NRCS Supervisor; Anthony Dowdle, Soil Conservationist; Ariel Zijp, Farmland Preservation Program Manager; Avni Naik, Farmland Preservation Coordinator, and Michael Frue, County Legal; Taira Lance; Jessica Hughes, Administrative Assistant.

The meeting was called to order at 10:03am.

Conflict of Interest Statement

Gary Higgins asked those in the meeting to review the conflict of interest statement, “In the interest of preserving public confidence in the actions of this Board, the chair reminds members of their duty to avoid any conflicts of interests and inquires as to whether any member knows of any conflict of interest or potential conflict of interest with respect to matters to come before the Board.”

Approval of Agenda

Please see exhibit A. Gary Higgins suggested moving the bylaws to the March meeting to allow for the Board to look over the document.

Tyler Ross made a motion to approve the February 10, 2022 agenda with corrections, and the motion passed on the vote with all in favor.

Approval of Minutes

Please see exhibit B. Higgins stated Avni Naik was present at the meeting and needed to be added to the role call and the Farmland Preservation Report was from the wrong month and needed to be changed.

Louise Scruggs made a motion to approve the amended January 13, 2022 minutes, and the motion passed on the vote with all in favor.



Supervisory Reports

Higgins attended some of the StRAP meetings and it went well with many attending who had experience across the State working with debris removal.

Taira Lance Recognition

Higgins requested Lance to attend the March meeting so the recognition could be in person. Lance agreed.

StRAP Funding

StRAP is the Stream flow Removal Assistance Program which focuses primarily on removing debris and handles some stream bank stabilization. \$38 million has been given by the General Assembly to help with stream debris removal from Tropical Storm Fred. A 25% match is available from this funding to cover the state portion of the federal EWP program. Projects that were not eligible for EWP will be able to participate in this program. 15% of the funds can be used for admin and engineering fees, however, funds cannot be used to pay for existing employees salary. Projects in StRAP and EWP can be combined to removal a greater stretch of debris in streams. 50 projects were approved for EWP and 11 sites were denied. The 11 sites denied totaled \$1,000,000. Prior the 11 projects denied, there were 6 more projects that did not qualify based off the field data report which totaled \$200,000. Anthony Dowdle stated there were several ag sites that need assistance who did not qualify for EWP that would qualify for StRAP. Dowdle does not have a number of those projects at this time.

Directors Report

Harrison stated the Environmental Educator position will be posted soon, she discouraged that the process is taking longer than she anticipated due to the posting of salary. Human Resources is in the process of a compensation study and was finalizing the salary that would be posted instead of having to post the full range of salary. 5 teams are registered for Envirothon. Harrison is requesting a second technician position that can assist Anthony. Current projects total over \$7 million and she believes the chanced of getting a new person is high. If approved this person would not be hired until July 2022 because it will be in the new budget.

NRCS Report

John Ottinger presented the NRCS report and shared the sponsor guide which can be seen in exhibit C. At the time of this report, a total of 42 Damage Survey Reports have been approved and funded totaling \$3,158,014.30. 11 DSRs have been denied. Several are being reconsidered with additional supporting documentation being supplied. These total \$1,069,783.00. **Sites must be determined to be an imminent threat to “man- made structures” such as homes, bridges, roads, and utilities. Documentation or proof of this threat is vital and was lacking on those 11 that were denied. A total of 6 FDRs were not permitted to move forward. Those totaled \$203,000.00. This coming Friday all DSR will be finalized. NRCS will draft an agreement with Buncombe County and submit for signature. Once the agreement is finalized and signed worked is expected to be completed in 220 days.

For Program Year 2022, Buncombe has a total of 25 eligible applications. These applications include pasture, crops, stream restoration and forestry practices.

The deadline for ranking these applications is March 11th. Obligation deadline is May 6th



We currently have 42 active federal contracts in Buncombe County.

The Buncombe NRCS Soil Conservationist position has been advertised, closed and a tentative offer has been made.

NCACSP and AgWRAP Report

Anthony Dowdle presented one contract for NCACSP and AgWRAP programs.

Tyler Ross made a motion to enter closed session in pursuant to GS 139.8.2-142 to discuss confidential NCACSP and AgWRAP contracts on 11:07am, and the motion passed on the vote with all in favor.

Louise Scruggs made a motion to exit closed session in pursuant to GS 139.8.2-142, and the motion passed on the vote with all in favor.

David Snelson made a motion to approve the application for contract 11-2022-005-05, and the motion passed on the vote with all in favor.

Tyler Ross made a motion to approve the contract 11-2022-005-05, and the motion passed on the vote with all in favor.

Farmland Preservation Report

Ariel Zijp presented the report for Farmland preservation, please see exhibit D for full report. Updates on the easements are as follows:

- Cole Family Farm Easement - awaiting grant applications
- McCurry Easement - Survey in progress
- Rosseter Easement - Survey in progress
- Sneddon Easement - Starting survey Jan 2022
- Harvey/O'Doherty Easement - Starting Survey April 2022
- SAHC Teague Property Easement - Starting survey April 2022
- SAHC Jenkin's Creek Easement - waiting until stream easement is complete
- Hart Easement - NRCS business tool software problem resolved
- Currie Easement - NRCS business tool software problem resolved
- Sluder Easement - NCDA contracts signed and approved
- Ramsey Easement - NCDA contracts signed and approved
- Splendor Valley LLC Easement - NCDA contracts signed and approved

Zijp is working to update landscape records, projects, budgets, tasks. Monitoring visits are planned for March and April. Zijp is working on budget estimates for easement projects for FY23 for AAB and LCAB. On March 19th Zijp will be speaking at Organic Growers School Spring Conference on Agritourism. Zijp and Naik are working on mapping the farmland preservation priority regions and ranking system.



Announcements

With no further business the meeting was adjourned at 11:45am.

Secretary

Date

