

FREEHOLD SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Regular Meeting
April 11, 2024

4000 Kozloski Road
Freehold, NJ

I. Call to Order

Chairman Charles Buscaglia called the meeting to order at 1:30 pm.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

III. Roll Call

Present

Absent

Charles Buscaglia

x

Bob Dreyer

x

Don Patterson

x

Roger Gravatt

x (via phone)

Wayne VanHise

x

Staff Present: Timothy Thomas, Paul Califano, Christina LaBianca, and
Andrea Farparan

Others Present: Bill Brash of Shelterwood Forest Management

IV. Compliance Statement

Christina F. LaBianca confirmed that the Open Public Meetings Act has been satisfied by notifying the Asbury Park Press, the Home News, and Monmouth and Middlesex County Clerks.

V. Approval of Minutes

The Board members reviewed the minutes of the March 13, 2024, regular meeting. Wayne VanHise made a motion to approve the minutes of the regular meeting as presented. Donald Patterson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

VI. Treasurer's Report

The Board members reviewed the Treasurer's Report. Wayne VanHise made a motion to approve the Treasurer Report as presented. Roger Gravatt seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

VII. Bills for Payment

The Board reviewed the bills for payment for April in the amount of \$411,270.57, (list attached) larger than normal due to annual PERS payment of \$219,684.00). Wayne VanHise made a motion to pay the bills as presented for April. Robert Dreyer seconded the motion. The motion passed by the following roll call vote: Mr. Gravatt – yes, Mr. VanHise – yes, Mr. Dreyer – yes, Mr. Patterson – yes, and Mr. Buscaglia – yes.

VIII. Correspondence

None to be discussed

IX. Committee Report

No reports this month

X. District Manager's Report

1. Exempt Municipality Reports

- Brian Governale and Courtney Davidson completed the reports for Sayreville and Piscataway with assistance from Nick Lund and Paul Noone
- Both municipalities received "Satisfactory" status on the reports which are now done online and submitted directly to the SSCC
- Donald Patterson made a motion to submit the "Satisfactory" reports for Sayreville and Piscataway to the SSCC. Wayne VanHise seconded the motion and the motion was unanimously passed

2. Conservation Plan in Cranbury

- Another conservation plan was completed by TSP John Cluth and approved by NRCS and is ready for District signature
- Robert Dreyer made a motion to sign the conservation plan for the project in Cranbury. Roger Gravatt seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously

3. Bill Brash of Shelterwood Forest Management

- Mr. Brash was here to explain the Community Forest Management Plans a little more thoroughly
- Right now there are 117 municipalities in NJ but only four foresters are available to perform the necessary inspections
- The District is in a unique position to step in to assist with this program as they already have a relationship with the municipalities within the Monmouth and Middlesex Counties
- There are already twelve municipalities in Monmouth and Middlesex counties that have to have their management plans completed
- The payment for a completed plan can range from the low of \$5,000 to a high of \$20,000 depending on the size, therefore the potential available in our two counties is between \$60,000 and \$240,000
- There are no approved credentials needed to perform the inspection, only need a conservationist background
- Tim is proposing hiring a forester/conservationist who can divide their time between these forest inspections and chapter 251 review. The Cape-Atlantic SCD has hired someone to cover their area and the SCD has a mentoring agreement in place with Shelterwood Forest management. Shelterwood is open to copy this agreement with the Freehold District.

- Tim has been in contact with a professor at Rutgers University where the University is currently being considered for the accreditation necessary to offer to students
- For the risk assessment part of this program, a licensed tree expert is needed and this training is offered a few times a year
- Once the management plans are completed, they are only valid for five years and then will need to be redone for the municipality to continue receiving the monetary assistance, thus creating a continuous income opportunity
- The Upper Delaware SCD has already hired a forester and all plans completed by this employee are the property of the district. Each town pays a minimum of \$3,000 to write the plan

4. Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Highlights

- In category 11, Vehicle and Equipment Purchase, would like to keep the computer budget the same as FY24: purchasing a new server, three computers, printers and accessories as well as keep the vehicle purchase the same going to bid for a 2025 Ford Maverick and expecting to receive more of a trade in value for the 2016 over the 2012 recently traded
- In category 1, Salaries, Wages and Benefits would like to add another employee who would work 60% on fester and 40% on chapter 251, beginning in July 2024 at the same rate as the two new inspectors were just hired in February 2024
- Robert Dreyer made a motion to hire an urban forester/reviewer for FY2025 at a rate equal to the two new inspectors as well as to enter into an agreement with Shelterwood Forest management to mentor the new employee not to exceed \$5,000. Wayne VanHise seconded this motion and the motion was passed by the following roll call vote: Mr. Dreyer – yes, Mr. Gravatt – yes, Mr. VanHise – yes, Mr. Patterson – yes, and Mr. Buscaglia – yes.

5. Fiscal Year 2023 Audit

- The completed Fiscal Year 2023 audit was received from the auditor on March 22, 2024, without first receiving a draft for the first time in over twenty-five years
- There were a few recommendations listed at the back of the report
- Tim Thomas, Charles Buscaglia, Christina LaBianca and Paul Califano meet with Brian Logan from the auditing company, Suplee, Clooney & Company to discuss the recommendations
- These recommendations and meeting was discussed amongst the entire board and it was determined that the auditor should attend the next board meeting to discuss the changes and recommendations and how they may be addressed as there are only a few months remaining in the current fiscal year that will need to then be audited as well

- Robert Dreyer made a motion to schedule a regular May board meeting since there was not one previously scheduled. It was determined that May 8th would be the meeting date. Roger Gravatt seconded the motion and the motion was unanimously passed. Tim will reach out to the auditor to let him know his presence is request at the May meeting to discuss the FY23 audit

XI: Reports from other Agencies

None

XII: Old Business

There was no old business to discuss at this time.

XIII: New Business

1. Wayne VanHise made a motion to approve the attached list of certified Soil Erosion and Sediment Control plans. Donald Patterson seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.
2. There were no denied plans this month.
3. The Board has acknowledged the list of Authorizations to Discharge permits granted by the NJ DEP.

XIV: Adjournment

Wayne VanHise made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Roger Gravatt seconded the motion, and the motion unanimously carried. The next scheduled meeting is Wednesday, May 8th, at 1:30 pm.

Charles Buscaglia
Chairman

Christina F. LaBianca
Secretary