

FREEHOLD SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Regular Meeting
March 12, 2025

4000 Kozloski Road
Freehold, NJ

I. Call to Order

Chairman Charles Buscaglia called the meeting to order at 1:35 pm.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

III. Roll Call

Present

Absent

Charles Buscaglia, Chairman

x

Bob Dreyer, Vice-Chairman

x

Don Patterson, Treasurer

x

Roger Gravatt, Supervisor

x

Wayne Van Hise, Supervisor

x (via phone)

Staff Present: Timothy Thomas, District Manager, Paul Califano, Assistant District Manager and Andrea Farparan, Board Secretary

Others Present: Tairi Melchiorre, Acting District Conservationist, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

IV. Compliance Statement

Secretary Farparan confirmed that the Open Public Meetings Act has been satisfied by notifying the Asbury Park Press, the Home News Tribune, Monmouth and Middlesex County Clerks and posting at the entrance to the District office.

V. Approval of Minutes

The Board reviewed the minutes of the January 15, 2025, regular meeting. Supervisor Gravatt made a motion to approve the minutes of the regular meeting as presented. Supervisor Van Hise seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

VI. Treasurer's Report (read by District Manager Thomas)

The Board reviewed the Treasurer's Report. Supervisor Van Hise made a motion to approve the Treasurer's Report as presented. Supervisor Gravatt seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

VII. Bills for Payment

The Board reviewed the bills for payment as approved by the Committee of Purchase for February in the amount of \$192,694.01 (list attached). Supervisor Gravatt made a motion to pay the bills as presented for February. Supervisor Van Hise seconded the motion. The motion passed by the following roll call vote: Supervisor Gravatt – yes, Supervisor Van Hise – yes, and Supervisor Buscaglia – yes.

The Board reviewed the bills for payment for March in the amount of \$154,256.86 (list attached). Supervisor Gravatt made a motion to pay the bills as presented for March. Supervisor Van Hise seconded the motion. The motion passed by the following roll call vote: Supervisor Gravatt – yes, Supervisor Van Hise – yes, and Supervisor Buscaglia – yes.

VIII. Correspondence

1. The District received a thank you card from the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) for the 2025 fiscal year Diamond Level membership contribution. This level membership entitles the District to half price registration fee for the second attendee to the National Conference as well as other privileges.
2. The New Jersey Agricultural Society sent a thank you letter for the District's annual membership donation to support their core programs, Farmers Against Hunger, Ag Leadership Development and Ag Education.
3. The District received an invitation to the New Jersey Agricultural Society Gala. The Gala is being held at the Crowne Plaza Princeton on Saturday, March 29th at 6:00pm. If any board member would like to attend, please advise District Manager Thomas.
4. NACD Board Member, Ray Cywinski has been providing frequent updates from Jeremy Peters, NACD CEO. Jeremy has written several letters explaining the presidential executive orders and how they relate to conservation program delivery.

IX. Committee Report

No reports this month

X. District Manager's Report

1. NJ Senate, No.3833 "Ease of Doing Government Business Act"
 - Although the bill has stalled, the District is in compliance with the measures proposed with the exception of ability to accept credit card payments
2. Preserved Farmland Agreement – Middlesex County
 - The District has received the 2025 Agreement for Preserved Farmland inspections to take place March 20 through November 30, 2025. This will be the second year the District will be performing the inspections. The agreement is to inspect and report, any enforcement action will be the responsibility of Middlesex County.
3. Annual Meeting
 - District Manager Thomas and Secretary Farparan attended the NACD Annual Meeting in Salt Lake City, Utah which featured a new meeting format. This new format allowed for participation in a greater number of breakout sessions as well as more opportunities to meet colleagues from across the nation.

4. Farm Summit

- The Monmouth County Division of Planning in partnership with the Monmouth County Agriculture Development Board is hosting a “Farm Summit” today, Wednesday, March 12th starting at 3:45pm here in the Agriculture Building. Ed Wengryn, Secretary of Agriculture will provide opening remarks. Supervisor Buscaglia and District Manager Thomas will be attending.

5. Master Gardener Opportunity

- District Manager Thomas is discussing the possibility for a cooperative project with the Rutgers Master Gardeners. Possible project ideas are a greenhouse or a 3-Bin Composter. Funds are available in the fiscal year 2025 Professional Development and Public Information Category.

6. Certificate of Deposit Maturity

- Columbia Bank provided notice that a Certificate of Deposit (CD) is maturing on March 12, 2025. After comparing interest rates and terms with other financial institutions, Columbia Bank offered the best rate. Supervisor Gravatt made a motion to renew the CD at Columbia Bank for a term of 24 months at an interest rate of 4.10%. Supervisor Van Hise seconded the motion. The motion passed by the following roll call vote: Supervisor Gravatt – yes, Supervisor Van Hise – yes, and Supervisor Buscaglia – yes.
- Columbia Bank provided notice that a Certificate of Deposit (CD) is maturing on March 28, 2025. Supervisor Gravatt made a motion to renew the CD at Columbia Bank for a term of 24 months providing the interest rate is comparable to other term / rate options. Supervisor Van Hise seconded the motion. The motion passed by the following roll call vote: Supervisor Gravatt – yes, Supervisor Van Hise – yes, and Supervisor Buscaglia – yes.

7. Treasurer’s Report Format

- The format of the Treasurer’s Report was discussed. Ultimately it was decided that no changes be made to the report.

8. Annual Pension Contribution

- The annual employer liability pension appropriation is due April 1, 2025. In previous years this payment was made by wire transfer. However, this year remittances must be made through the Transmittal Electronic Payment System (TEPS).

9. Regional Supervisor Meeting

- The Central Regional Meeting is scheduled for April 22nd at Villa Mannino, Bordentown. Please let District Manager Thomas know by April 4th if you will attend. Other dates / locations are available if you are unable to attend on April 22nd.

XI: Reports from other Agencies

Tairi Melchiorre, Acting District Conservationist, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) introduced herself and provided details on how the recent executive actions are affecting NRCS.

XII: Old Business

1. Unclaimed Funds

- The review of the District's claim has not yet been completed.

2. New Vehicle Update

- The new vehicle is expected to be delivered by the end of March.

3. FY24 Audit Update

- The Fiscal Year 2024 Audit is anticipated to be completed by the end of this month.

XIII: New Business

1. Supervisor Van Hise made a motion to approve the attached list of certified Soil Erosion and Sediment Control plans. Supervisor Gravatt seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

2. There were no denied plans this month.

3. The Board has acknowledged the list of Authorization to Discharge permits granted by the NJ DEP.

4. Supervisor Gravatt made a motion to move the topic of Reports From Other Agencies from the end to the start of the meeting. Supervisor Van Hise seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

XIV: Adjournment

Supervisor Gravatt made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Supervisor Van Hise seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The next scheduled meeting is Wednesday, April 9, 2025 at 1:30 pm.

Charles Buscaglia
Chairman

Andrea Farparan
Secretary