

**STEUBEN COUNTY  
SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

*Peachtree Plaza 200 – 1220 N 200 W STE L – Angola, IN 46703*

*260-665-3211, Ext. 3 - www.steubenswcd.org*

**MINUTES**

**STEUBEN COUNTY SWCD BOARD MEETING**

Angola USDA Service Center • 1220 N 200 W, Suite L, Angola, Indiana 46703

**December 13, 2023**

**IN ATTENDANCE**

District Supervisors

Kayleen Hart, Chair  
Chuck Howard, Board Supervisor  
Beth Williams, Board Supervisor

Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)

Arthur Franke, District Conservationist  
Jamie Perry, Natural Resource Specialist

Steuben County Soil & Water Conservation  
District (SWCD)

Janel Meyer, Administrative Coordinator  
Aimee Wentworth, Resource Conservationist

Associate Supervisors

Brad Hamlin

Absent

Craig Holman, Board Supervisor  
David Perkins, Board Supervisor

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Steuben County SWCD Board Chair Kayleen Hart called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. Administrative Coordinator Janel Meyer advised the agenda the Board Supervisors received was amended with the addition of a tree planting/windbreak establishment application in Pigeon Creek and an additional claim since the cost-share payment for the 2,545 linear foot grassed waterway in the Upper St. Joseph River (OH) Watershed was received.

**II. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING (11-15-23)**

Board Chair Hart asked the Supervisors to consider the minutes of the November 15, 2023 meeting. There being no further additions or corrections, she requested a motion to approve.

*A motion to approve the minutes of the November 15, 2023 Steuben County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) Board meeting, as presented, was made by Chuck Howard. Seconded by Beth Williams. Motion carried.*

**III. TREASURER'S REPORT**

Janel provided a financial report for November 1 – November 30, 2023. The financial report was sent to the Board Supervisors for review in advance of the meeting. A hard copy was also provided in the Supervisors' folders.

*Report for period ending November 30, 2023:*

<u>General Fund - All Accounts</u>			
Checking	\$ 59,205.03		
Statement Savings	<u>42,068.41</u>		
Total	\$101,273.44		
<u>Checking account</u>		<u>Savings account</u>	
balance 10/31/23	\$ 62,604.15	balance 10/31/23	\$ 42,054.58
Receipts	\$ 9,384.18	Receipts	\$ 13.83
Disbursement	<u>(\$12,783.30)</u>	Disbursement	<u>(\$ 0.00)</u>
	\$59,205.03		\$42,068.41

November checking account receipts totaled \$9,384.18 (R3624, R3625, R3627). This included a WLTP grant cost-share payment for the 9,000 ft. of fence project in the Hiram Sweet Ditch sub-watershed of the Upper St. Joseph River (OH) Watershed, a sponsorship payment from the Steuben County Lakes Council (SCLC) for the 2023 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Youth Conservation Field Day, and an over-the-counter flag sale.

Disbursement was \$12,783.30 (Claim #6099 - #6107). This included the WLTP cost-share payment for the 9,000 ft. fence project in the Upper St. Joseph River (OH), conservation education expenses (*October 24, 2023 Steuben SWCD Steuben County Life program final session/dinner*), dues and subscriptions, operating expenses, postage for the 2023 Steuben SWCD fall newsletter, and travel expenses [*Resource Conservationist Aimee Wentworth travel (October 4-6, 2023 Indiana District Employee Association (IDEA) Fall Conference and November 2, 2023 IDEA Career Development Training Program) and registration fees for the January 7-9, 2024 Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (IASWCD) Annual Conference for Aimee and Board Supervisor Beth Williams*].

Additional information provided with the monthly claims for Board review and verification included: 1. November 2023 checking & savings account bank statements and reconciliations; 2. November 2023 deposit/check detail and general ledger reports; 3. Staff payroll approval form, time sheets, compensatory time logs (12/1 and 12/15/23 pay periods); and 4. November 2023 vehicle log.

Board Chair Hart asked whether there were any questions or comments regarding the Treasurer's report. Hearing none, she called for a motion to approve.

*Chuck Howard moved to approve the Steuben County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) Treasurer's Report for the period ending November 30, 2023, as presented. Seconded by Beth Williams. Motion carried.*

#### IV. COMMITTEE REPORTS

##### a. Natural Resources/Technical Assistance

**Beth Williams, Chair**

##### i. Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018 (Farm Bill) / NRCS / FSA

1. Talking points were provided in the Supervisors' folders. NRCS District Conservationist Arthur Franke reported he has received about 36 Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) applications and 9 Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) applications for FY24. He is still waiting on the State office to share the cost-share rates to determine what payments will be for various best management practices. The deadline for EQIP and CSP applications was December 8.
2. Kayleen Hart, Farm Service Agency (FSA) Program Technician, reported FSA is continuing to process short-term commodity loans for 2023 corn and soybean crops. They have a total of 11. They are accepting applications for the Emergency Relief Program for individuals that had a qualifying disaster from 2022. FSA can begin issuing Pandemic Assistance Revenue Program (PARP) payments to producers who suffered a decrease in allowable gross revenue due to the COVID-19 pandemic for the 2020 calendar year. Signup for this program ended in September. Steuben had 7 applications. Kayleen also shared that Tom Saggars, County Executive Director (CED) for Steuben and LaGrange Counties, announced his retirement. His last day is December 28, 2023.

##### ii. Watershed Projects and Organizations/SWCD

##### -Southeastern Lake Michigan Basin: St. Joe River West (HUC 8) (Lake Michigan)

##### Sub-watersheds:

##### 1. Pigeon Creek

- a. Janel and Art presented a 1.5-acre Windbreak-Shelterbelt/Tree Planting application in the Long Lake sub-watershed of Pigeon Creek. The landowner recently purchased the 11.3-acre wooded parcel (April 2023). On the western edge of the property, there is a linear section that is currently being row cropped. The landowners would like to transform the tillable cropland into a tree planting to enhance aesthetics, serve to delineate the property, and provide wildlife habitat. There is also a section on the north side of the property where they would like to add trees. Art and NRCS Natural Resource Specialist Jamie Perry performed a site visit to assess the property and provide conservation planning assistance. The Steuben SWCD Board discussed the project location, the benefits of adding this conservation practice to the property and approved the application. The western boundary of the property will be planted with five tree rows; two rows will be planted on the northern property boundary. Trees will consist of a variety of spruces, hardwoods, and native shrubs (e.g., persimmon and hazelnut); the planting will be completed by Forester Tom Crowe next spring.

*Chuck Howard moved to approve the 1.5-acre Tree/Shrub Establishment/Planting project in the Long Lake sub-watershed of Pigeon Creek using the Steuben County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) 2022 Pigeon Creek Lake and River Enhancement (LARE) Watershed Land Treatment Project (WLTP) grant. Seconded by Beth Williams. Motion carried.*

- b. Janel was unable to attend the December 7, 2023 St. Joseph River Basin Commission (SJRBC) meeting due to a scheduling conflict. She advised the SJRBC and the Steuben County Commissioners finalized the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) outlining the terms and conditions for the cost-share opportunity to facilitate the installation and operation of water monitoring sensors within the St. Joseph River (MI) watershed (locations TBD). The MOU uses the Monsanto PCB Settlement Funds Steuben County received. The SJRBC will purchase, install, and maintain the equipment while the settlement monies will be used to fund the hydrological study required for installation. SJRBC Director Matt Meersman developed a Request for Proposals (RFP) for assistance

and support of a water study and implementation plan to assess existing green infrastructure and quantify functional value. A draft copy of the RFP was provided in the Supervisors' folders.

-Western Lake Erie Basin (WLEB): St. Joe River East (HUC) (Lake Erie).

Sub-watersheds:

1. Upper St. Joe River – Includes Fish Creek, Nettle, and West Branch Sub-Watersheds
  - a. Janel reported the final cost-share payment for the 2021 Upper St. Joseph River (OH) WLTP was received for the 2,545 linear ft. grassed waterway in the Black Creek-Hamilton Lake sub-watershed. All funds in the grant were used.
  - b. Janel participated in the November 14, 2023 Domestic Action Plan (DAP) Advisory Committee Meeting. She reported: (1) Indiana's DAP document is due for a revision/update this year. The updated draft was out for public review with comments due by December 3. EPA is requiring Indiana submit a finalized document by the end of December; (2) Indiana is not meeting the DAP defined goals to reduce phosphorus (P) by 40%; however, neither is any other state. While Indiana did not sign the cooperative agreement stating the 40% P reduction would be met by 2025, Indiana is still required to meet the reduction; (3) The meeting featured a presentation by a USGS Hydrologist outlining legacy phosphorus in terms of streambank erosion, streambed-sediment storage, and streambed-sediment source. It was reported about 50% of the phosphorus contributions/problems come from in-stream (streambank). If Indiana is looking for a net P reduction of 40%, we'll need to continue concentrating on applying best management conservation practices to the land but also need to concentrate more on in-stream P management including two-stage ditches and other practices that will control the hydrologic energy which is driving streambank erosion.

iii. Entire County

1. Steuben County Lakes Council (SCLC)
  - a. Janel attended the December 2, 2023 monthly board meeting and provided meeting highlights: (1) Scott Banfield, Aquatic Enhancement & Survey, Inc., provided a summary of the SCLC's 2023 water quality testing. The presentation focused more on identifying non-point source pollution tracking rather than highlighting testing results. Scott encouraged Lake Associations to look at proportionality and not depend on 1 or 3 sampling events to gauge water quality; (2) Kate Barrett, SJRBC, presented an overview of the 2023 Steuben County Strategic Water Quality Monitoring Program (SCSWQMP) sampling; (3) The SCLC budgeted \$1,000 for FY24 Steuben County SWCD educational financial support (sponsoring the cost of educational materials for Stewardship Week and the 4<sup>th</sup> Grade YCFD). Janel will update the MOU to reflect the increase for 2024-2028. Prior to FY24, SCLC support was capped at \$600.
  - b. The next SCLC Board Meeting is scheduled for February 3, 2024.

**b. District Operations/Marketing**

**Chuck Howard, Chair**

i. SWCD Training/Public Relations, etc.

1. Field Visits/Trainings

- a. ILMS 2024 Conference Committee Meeting • November 15, 2023. Janel reviewed the preliminary schedule/tracks for the Indiana Lakes Management Society (ILMS) March 21-22, 2024 Annual Meeting. She asked the Board for permission to attend and to consider a conference sponsorship since its being held in Steuben County. She advised (1) A \$500 sponsorship includes one complimentary registration; (2) the member registration fee without a sponsorship is \$135; (3) City of Angola/Trine University MS4 Coordinator Kris Thomas would like to co-sponsor a level with the SWCD. She is willing to pay for her registration separately. Janel asked the Board to consider sponsoring the conference at the Spring (\$500), Stream (\$650) or Lake (\$800) level.

*Chuck Howard moved to approve up to an \$400 Steuben County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) sponsorship for Administrative Coordinator Janel Meyer to attend the March 21-22, 2024 Indiana Lakes Management Society*

*(ILMS) Annual Conference at Pokagon State Park. Seconded by Beth Williams.*

- b. Fremont and Angola Middle School Programs • November 28 and 29, 2023. Aimee assisted Purdue Extension 4-H Educator Tami Mosier with the Fremont and Angola Middle School after-school programs. She presented the water availability lesson, the "Incredible

- Journey” activity, and the Augmented Reality Sandbox (ARS) Unit. Five students attended the Fremont program, and eighteen students attended the Angola program.
- c. Steuben County Strategic Water Quality Monitoring Program (SCSWQMP) Update Meeting • November 30, 2023 (*virtual*). Janel reported the SCSWQMP will be notified by mid to late December whether their Steuben County Community Foundation application for additional funding to support sampling has been selected. She advised the group is discussing alternate pharmaceuticals to evaluate because the caffeine testing could not differentiate whether caffeine was the result of leaking septic systems or from chicken feed, which contains caffeine. The Board discussed how various pharmaceuticals may not be removed during the treatment process. The city offers biosolids/compost to the public, free of charge, for general land application. Runoff from this type of land application could influence water sampling test results. Janel will share these concerns with the SCSWQMP Committee. Each Supervisor received a copy the article “Testing the waters: Trine group checking Steuben County streams” printed in the Angola Herald Republican on November 30, 2023. Janel advised the press release was submitted by Trine and may not have accurately depicted the program and each partner’s role.
  - d. Steuben County Contractor Workshop • December 1, 2023. Aimee reported 63 people registered, including speakers and staff; only 43 attended. She advised we will order 10% less food than the number of people registered moving forward since an average of 25% of the people are no-shows (based upon registration from the last three contractor workshops).
  - e. IDEA NNE Region Meeting • December 5, 2023. Janel and Aimee attended the meeting where the SWCD Career Development Program and IDEA fall conference were discussed. The group also had a lengthy discussion on the proposed IASWCD dues increase. Janel shared her dissatisfaction with the IDEA SWCD Career Development Program and Directors’ decision to not open it to all IDEA members. For the next five years, the program will be offered by “invitation only” with a maximum of 2 participants per region. Janel shared she was unsure why IDEA promotes a program that will only open to a select few. The 2024 IDEA Fall Conference will be held October 23-25 in Michigan City. The next time the NNE Region will host the conference is 2026. Planning for this meeting will begin next fall. No one at the meeting was supportive of the proposed IASWCD dues structure increase. Elkhart County SWCD will be holding a 3-day workshop on March 5-7, 2024 which will focus on agriculture, stormwater, and SWCD/MS4 compliance. Elkhart is offering free table space to those districts that register for the workshop. Individuals can choose to participate one, two or all three days.
  - f. Amazon Business Pay by Invoice Webinar • December 6, 2023. Janel participated in this webinar to learn about the pay by invoice payment method. This allows Amazon Business customers to purchase items on credit. Amazon will provide an invoice once the order has shipped.
  - g. ISDA Financials Training • December 7, 2023 (*virtual*). Janel participated to learn what changes were being implemented for the 2023 annual financial reporting. She advised districts will be required to report the expenditures for the one-time 2023 capacity payment and the \$10,000 Clean Water Indiana (CWI) matching grant.
  - h. Angola Middle School Program • December 11, 2023. Aimee, Art, and Jamie provided soil and water conservation demonstrations to 200 Angola Middle School 7<sup>th</sup> grade science students (5 class periods; 200 students). They presented various activities including “Earth as an Apple,” the Enviroscope®, a soil erosion demo, and discussed careers in conservation.
  - i. ILMS Education/Outreach Committee Meeting • December 11, 2023 (*virtual*). Janel participated to discuss scholarships, awards, the December newsletter, and planning for a January 17, 2024 Dam Liability/Law Changes Webinar.
  - j. Institute for Sustainable Future “Which Way Does It Flow” Webinar • December 12, 2023. Janel and Aimee participated in this webinar which addressed the interaction between groundwater and surface water and why it matters.
2. A copy of the November 2023 tally sheet was provided in Supervisors’ folders.
- ii. Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (IASWCD)
    1. Janel presented a copy of the January 9, 2024 Legislative Breakfast Invitation sent to Senator Glick, Representative Zent, and Representative Smaltz. Senator Glick is planning on attending.
    2. Steuben SWCD staff, Board Chair Hart, and Board Supervisor Williams are planning to participate in the December 18, 2023 IASWCD Dues Restructuring Information and Feedback Session. All

Supervisors received information outlining the dues restructuring in their folders. The Board was not supportive of the proposed new structure since IASWCD used Certified Net Assessed Values and Annual Financial Reports by county to determine the dues level for each district. This approach penalizes SWCDs in counties with high property values because there is no direct correlation between higher property values/taxes and districts being better supported by their county. The Board also believed assessing different amounts without district involvement to be unfair.

iii. Indiana State Department of Agriculture (ISDA)

1. No District Support Specialist (DSS)/Resource Specialist (RS) update was provided.
2. Additional details about the March 14, 2024 joint LaGrange/Steuben SWCD Annual Meeting were discussed. Staff will coordinate with the LaGrange SWCD on table décor and conducting district reporting and Board elections.

c. Budget and Finance

**Kayleen Hart, Chair**

- i. 2024 Steuben County Final Adopted Budgets & Wages Janel reported Steuben SWCD staff did not receive the requested 5% wage increase. Most county employees were capped at a 3% wage increase by County Council.
- ii. Encumbrance Janel advised she will submit an encumbrance form to carry forward the remaining FY23 funds used to pay part time clerical employee Lisa Ledgerwood to FY24.
- iii. Conflict of Interest Statements Board Supervisor David Perkins was not in attendance to sign a Uniform Conflict of Interest Disclosure Statement.
- iv. 2024 – 2026 Business Plan A revised draft copy of the FY24-26 Steuben County SWCD Business Plan was sent to staff and Board Supervisors for review in advance of the meeting. The group continued the discussion on the draft document language. Janel advised she received very few suggestions/edits by December 4 per her request at the last Board meeting. She again requested all meeting attendees review the document and provide guidance on various sections requiring additional information. She will also send the draft to ISDA DSS Sandra Hoffarth for review.

d. Information and Education

**David Perkins, Chair**

i. Drainage Board (DB)

Staff are attending the twice-monthly county Drainage Board (DB) meetings as schedules allow. Janel reported the Surveyor provided a project report outlining 2023 DB accomplishments including an increase in 5 maintenance unit fees and no 2023 public beach closures due to elevated *E. coli* levels. A maintenance hearing for the Dudley Gleason Regulated Drain is scheduled for January 16, 2024. This drain is located southeast of Fremont.

ii. 4-H/Purdue Extension/SWCD/Other Educational and SWCD Projects

Aimee report:

- Tim Groosbeck and the Waites' "Conservation Farming Legacies" videos were posted on the SWCD website and YouTube channel. Janel also shared the information on the Steuben FaceBook page.
- Two individuals expressed an interest in registering for the Indiana Master Naturalist (IMN) program. IMN Program Coordinator Jody Heaston approved Steuben's program application.
- At the November Board meeting, Aimee requested approval to take on the role of IDEA Assistant Region Director for the North-Northeast region. The Supervisors expressed their support for Aimee wanting to take on the role but had reservations with the amount of travel requiring her to be out of the office, which could compete with her job duties. Aimee advised she could attend the meetings virtually which would be less of a time commitment and require less travel. She would attend meetings in-person only if the Region Director were not available. The Board discussed this added information and approved Aimee stepping into the IDEA North Northeast Region Assistant Director role.

Janel report:

- Janel presented the new Steuben SWCD retractable banner. Staff worked with local business Folia Nova on the banner design. She advised the Board approved a maximum of \$300 towards the purchase of a banner; however, staff believed consulting with a designer would result in a more professional product. Board Chair Hart approved spending the additional \$100 for Folia Nova's services. Janel requested the Board amend the original motion to reflect the new \$400 maximum for a retractable banner.

*Chuck Howard moved to approved amending the original June 8, 2022 motion [i.e., approve up to \$300 towards the purchase of a Steuben County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) custom retractable banner] to approve up to \$400 for the purchase of a Steuben County SWCD custom retractable banner. Seconded by Beth Williams. Motion carried.*

- The Steuben SWCD will be offering a Native Plant Kit sale again this spring. They will also be adding a Water's Edge Kit for butterflies and pollinators as an additional option. The Water's Edge Kit will be provided by Riverview Nursery and the Native Plant Kits will be provided by Cardno.

iii. Upcoming Regional / National Events

1. *Christmas Day Holiday • December 25-26, 2023 (County Offices Closed)*
2. *New Year's Day Holiday • January 1, 2024 (County Offices Closed)*
3. *National No-Tillage Conference • January 9 – 12, 2024 (Indianapolis, IN)*
4. *Steuben County SWCD Monthly Board Meeting • January 10, 2024 (Angola, IN)*
5. *Martin Luther King Jr. Day • January 15, 2024 (County Offices Closed)*
6. *Fort Wayne Farm Show • January 16 – 18, 2024*
7. *2024 Northern Indiana Grazing Conference • February 2 – 3, 2024 (Shipshewana, IN)*
8. *SCLC Monthly Board Meeting • February 3, 2024 (Angola, IN)*
9. *Steuben County SWCD Monthly Board Meeting • February 14, 2024 (Angola, IN)*

V. **CLAIMS**

6105	Lonsbury Garage (District Vehicle Maintenance-Oil Change/Oxygen Sensor)	\$	658.66
6106	cmglobal (2024 IASWCD Annual Conf. Registration for SWCD staff & Board)	\$	790.00
6107	Drew and Laney Koeppel (3,000 Ft. Fence- LARE, Hiram Ditch UPSJR)	\$	9,000.00
6108	NACD (FY24 Membership Dues)	\$	450.00
6109	Walmart (12/11/23 Conservation Education Supplies and Office Supplies)	\$	86.18
6110	Petty Cash (Petty Cash Fund Replacement)	\$	53.52
6111	Janel Meyer (Reimbursement per SWCD SOP-Lenovo Gen11 Laptop w/security package)	\$	1,646.19
6112	Graphics 3, inc. (2023 Steuben SWCD Fall Newsletter Printing w/Mailing Services)	\$	933.55
6113	JY Design & Print, Inc. (Steuben SWCD Thank You Cards – 100 Total)	\$	50.34
6114	Janel Meyer (Reimbursement per SWCD SOP-Adams 1099MISC Forms)	\$	29.99
6115	Bon Appetit (December 1, 2023 Contractor Breakfast Workshop Sponsorship)	\$	312.50
6116	Janel Rogers (2.0-acre Tree/Shrub Establishment- LARE, W. Branch Fish)	\$	803.13
6117	Charles W. Howard (2,545 ft. Grassed Waterway Supplemental Funding- District)	\$	6,500.00
6118	Ceres Solutions (Fuel for Expedition – December Statement)	\$	51.90
6119	Folia Nova (Steuben SWCD Retractable Banner w/Case and Banner Design)	\$	400.00
6120	LaGrange County SWCD (December 5, 2023 NNE IDEA Region Meeting)	\$	20.00
6121	Mikila Cook (Conservation Education – Soil Tube Display)	\$	106.74
6122	Charles W. Howard (2,545 ft. Grassed Waterway- LARE, Hamilton Lake-Black Creek UPSJR)	\$	15,845.37

*Beth Williams made a motion to approve the claims for the Steuben County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) December 13, 2023 Board meeting. Kayleen Hart seconded the motion. Motion carried (Board Supervisor Chuck Howard recused himself from the vote).*

VI. **NEXT BOARD MEETING**

**January 10, 2024 – Board Meeting – 5:00 p.m.**

- Angola USDA Service Center, 1220 N 200 W, Suite L, Angola, IN 46703

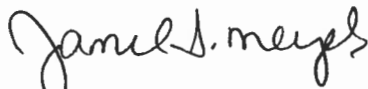
VII. **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the Steuben County SWCD, Board Chair Hart called for a motion to adjourn.

*Chuck Howard moved to adjourn the December 13, 2023 Steuben County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) Board meeting. Seconded by Beth Williams. Motion carried.*

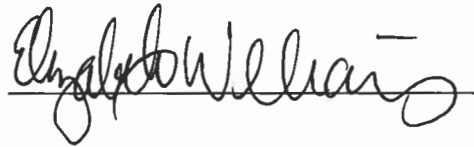
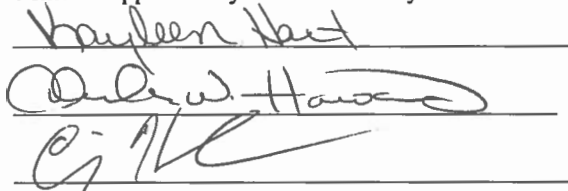
Meeting adjourned by Board Chair Hart at 6:33 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by:



Janel S. Meyer, Administrative Coordinator

Minutes approved by Steuben County SWCD Board:



1/10/2024

(Date)