

**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

January 10, 2024

IN ATTENDANCE

District Supervisors

Kayleen Hart, Chair
Craig Holman, Board Supervisor
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

Ryan Waite

Absent

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.

II. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING (12-13-23)

Board Chair Hart asked the Supervisors to consider the minutes of the December 13, 2023 meeting. There being no further additions or corrections, she requested a motion to approve.

A motion to approve the minutes of the December 13, 2023 Steuben County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) Board meeting, as presented, was made by Beth Williams. Seconded by Chuck Howard. Motion carried.

III. TREASURER'S REPORT

Janel provided a financial report for December 1 – December 31, 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 December 31, 2023:

General Fund - All Accounts

Checking \$ 48,612.86
Statement Savings 42,082.71
Total \$ 90,695.57

Checking account

balance 11/30/23 \$ 59,205.03
Receipts \$ 16,981.47
Disbursement (\$27,573.64)
\$48,612.86

Savings account

balance 11/30/23 \$ 42,068.41
Receipts \$ 14.30
Disbursement (\$ 0.00)
\$42,082.71

December checking account receipts totaled \$16,981.47 (R3626, R3628). This included two Watershed Land Treatment Project (WLTP) grant cost-share payments for a 2.0-acre tree/shrub establishment in the West Branch of Fish Creek sub-watershed of the Upper St. Joseph River (OH) Watershed and 1,584 linear ft. (total length = 2,545 ft.) for a grassed waterway in the Hamilton Lake-Black Creek sub-watershed of the Upper St. Joseph River (OH) Watershed.

Disbursement was \$27,573.64 (Claim #6108 - #6124). This included cost-share payments for the two WLTP conservation management practices in the Upper St. Joseph River (OH) Watershed and a District cost-share payment for 650 linear ft. of the 2,545 ft. grassed waterway, bank service fees (*check order*), conservation education expenses (*December 1, 2023 Contractor Workshop; December 11, 2023 Angola Middle School Science presentation; cover crop/soil tube display*), dues and subscriptions, office supplies, operating expenses, 2023 Petty Cash Fund reimbursement, printing (*2023 Steuben SWCD fall newsletter and Steuben SWCD thank-you cards*), promotional materials (*Steuben SWCD retractable business banner*), travel expenses (*registration fees for the December 5, 2023 Indiana District Employee Association (IDEA) NNE Region Winter Meeting for Resource Conservationist Aimee Wentworth and Administrative Coordinator Janel Meyer*), web hosting, and a new District Laptop.

Additional information provided with the monthly claims for Board review and verification included: 1. December 2023 checking & savings account bank statements and reconciliations; 2. December 2023 deposit/check detail and general ledger reports; 3. Staff payroll approval form, time sheets, compensatory time logs (12/29/23 and 1/12/24 pay periods); and 4. December 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 December 31, 2023, as presented. Seconded by Craig Holman. 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 reviewed the number of Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) applications and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) applications he received for FY24. Art and Natural Resource Specialist Jamie Perry are working on cost-share estimates and loading applications into the NRCS tracking system. Art advised the second CSP sign-up deadline is March 15; he is not expecting any additional applications.
2. Kayleen Hart, Farm Service Agency (FSA) Program Technician, reported FSA is working on 2024 Agricultural Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs. In November 2023, President Biden signed into law a further continuing appropriation which extended the 2018 Farm Bill. This extension allows authorized programs, including ARC and PLC, to continue through September 30, 2024. They also continue to process short-term commodity loans and Emergency Relief Program applications for individuals that had a qualifying disaster from 2022 (Track 1). FSA is administering emergency relief to eligible producers through a two-track process. Processing of Track 2 applications will begin soon.

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 requested Board approval for the 2024 Pigeon Creek Lake and River Enhancement (LARE) WLTP grant application. The Board also set the cost-share application funding request.
Craig Holman moved to approve the Steuben County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) 2024 Pigeon Creek Lake and River Enhancement (LARE) Watershed Land Treatment Project (WLTP) grant application for \$45,000. Seconded by Chuck Howard. Motion carried.
2. Friends of the St. Joseph River (FotSJR)
 - a. Aimee participated in the December 14, 2023 virtual FotSJR Board and Watershed Council Meeting. She reported the Friends group sponsored 2 Indiana Watershed Leadership Academy scholarships. An insurance representative from Alliant spoke to the group about board and officer insurance, liability coverage, volunteer coverage, and host liquor liability insurance. Aimee believes the Board and FotSJR currently do not have much, if any, insurance coverage. The St. Joseph County Conservation District in Michigan is hiring a full-time employee to assist farmers with assessments.
 - b. The next meeting is scheduled for January 18, 2024 via Zoom.

-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 requested Board approval for the 2024 Upper St. Joseph River (OH) LARE WLTP grant application. The Board also set the cost-share application funding request.
Craig Holman moved to approve the Steuben County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) 2024 Upper St. Joseph River (OH) Lake and River Enhancement (LARE) Watershed Land Treatment Project (WLTP) grant application for \$30,000. Seconded by Chuck Howard. Motion carried.

iii. Entire County

1. Steuben County Lakes Council (SCLC)

- a. The next SCLC Board Meeting is scheduled for February 3, 2024. Janel reported the 2024-2028 Conservation Education Support Program Memorandum of Understanding has been finalized (maximum reimbursement of \$1,000/year for educational materials purchased for Stewardship Week and the 4th Grade Youth Conservation Field Day).

The SWCD received the SCLC 2024 Membership Campaign request to renew our \$45/year business/professional membership. Board Chair Hart requested a motion to approve.

Beth Williams moved to approve renewing the Steuben County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) \$45.00 business/professional membership with Steuben County Lakes Council for FY24. Craig Holman seconded the motion. Motion carried.

b. District Operations/Marketing

Chuck Howard, Chair

i. SWCD Training/Public Relations, etc.

1. Field Visits/Trainings

- a. ILMS 2024 Conference Committee Meeting and Education/Outreach Meeting • December 30, 2023 and January 8, 2024 (*virtual*). Janel reported the next ILMS Outreach event is a Dam Ownership Responsibility/Liability webinar with the DNR on January 17, 2024. The Conference Committee continues to finalize details for the March 21-22, 2024 Annual Meeting. Janel is working to coordinate the display of the WaterWays exhibit at the meeting. She asked the Board to consider amending their December 13, 2023 motion to approve up to a \$400 sponsorship for her to attend the ILMS Conference. The SWCD planned to co-sponsor with the City of Angola/Trine University MS4 Coordinator Kris Thomas; however, Janel advised it would be an additional \$60 for Kris to register separately. It is more cost-effective for the SWCD and MS4 to each sponsor at the \$500 level, which includes registration fees. Janel requested the \$400 amount be increased to \$500.

Beth Williams moved to approve amending the December 13, 2023 motion to approve up to a \$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 to \$500. Seconded by Chuck Howard. Motion carried.

- b. Climate Change and Agronomics • December 21, 2023 (*virtual*). Aimee participated in this webinar to learn how climate change is impacting crop production. Factors impacting production include CO₂, temperature, growing season, and precipitation. Drought and heat stresses often happen simultaneously. Experiments with elevated CO₂ levels show a 12% increase in yield for rice, 13% increase for wheat but may require additional nitrogen at higher CO₂ levels. There is a temperature tipping point. At 85 degrees F there is a decline in corn yield (3.8% decline for each 1-degree F increase over 85 degrees). Soybeans showed a positive response to increased CO₂, which may offset yield losses due to heat and drought.

- c. Steuben County Strategic Water Quality Monitoring Program (SCSWQMP) Update Meeting • December 28, 2023 (*virtual*). Janel reported the SCSWQMP was notified their Steuben County Community Foundation (SCCF) grant application was selected for funding. This 3-year, \$60,000 grant (\$20,000/year) will be used to support the water quality monitoring program. The group will be sending a letter of appreciation to the SCCF. She advised the grant requires a \$5,000 match and asked the Board to consider cash in-kind support, in addition to staff in-kind technical assistance. Board Chair Hart asked for a motion to approve cash in-kind support for FY24.

Craig Holman made a motion for the Steuben County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) to provide a \$1,000 cash sponsorship to support the Steuben County Strategic Water Quality Monitoring Program (SCSWQMP) in FY24, along with in-kind technical assistance for the life of the project. Seconded by Chuck Howard. Motion carried.

Each Supervisor received a copy of the presentation Dr. Kate Barrett (Aquatic Ecologist, St. Joseph River Basin Commission) gave at the SCLC December board meeting. The presentation provided preliminary data analysis for various parameters. A report summarizing the 2023 sampling season should be available, shortly. The next meeting will

be held in early January to discuss what criteria will be used to select the additional 10 samplings sites, sonde maintenance, pharmaceutical testing, 2024 outreach and education events, and updates/concerns from the program committee.

- d. Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (IASWCD) Annual Meeting • January 7 – 9, 2024. Aimee and Beth reported the Clean Water Indiana breakfast at the Statehouse was a success; however, they were unable to determine the number of legislators in attendance. Lieutenant Governor Suzanne Crouch provided the welcome. They met with Senator Glick and learned she will be introducing a bill to provide tax reductions for individuals with parcels of land $\geq \frac{1}{2}$ acre that contain certified wetlands. Beth advised the proposed Strategic Growth dues structure was approved at the IASWCD business meeting. On average, this will cost each district \$4,000/year as opposed to the current \$2,000. Beth also shared IASWCD leadership was made aware of district's concerns that the IASWCD, an organization which represents SWCDs, is being managed top-down rather than bottom-up.
2. A copy of the December 2023 and 2023 (total) tally sheets were provided in Supervisors' folders.
- ii. Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (IASWCD)
 1. Steuben SWCD staff, Board Chair Hart, and Board Supervisor Williams participated in the December 18, 2023 IASWCD Dues Restructuring Information and Feedback Session. Janel advised the Steuben SWCD sent a letter to the IASWCD Board outlining concerns how the proposed dues structure was determined without district involvement.
- iii. Indiana State Department of Agriculture (ISDA)
 1. Janel provided the District Support Specialist (DSS)/Resource Specialist (RS) update which focused on the new ISDA mental health campaign and availability of business cards listing crisis support information. Board Supervisors were encouraged to promote this critical program.
 2. Janel asked the Board whether they wanted to charge for the March 14, 2024 annual meeting dinner or provide the meal for free. She also asked the Board to set a budget for annual meeting supplies, including, but not limited to table covers, centerpieces, drinks, etc. Board Chair Hart asked for a motion regarding the annual meeting dinner and annual meeting supply budget.
Chuck Howard moved to approve a free dinner to individuals attending the Steuben County Soil and Water Conservation District and LaGrange County SWCDs joint March 14, 2024 Annual Meeting as this event furthers the mission of the Steuben County SWCD. Seconded by Craig Holman. Motion carried.
Craig Holman moved to approve up to \$500 for materials/supplies for the March 14, 2024 Steuben County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) and LaGrange County SWCD joint Annual Meeting, including, but not limited to, table covers, centerpieces, beverage costs for the evening meal, etc. Seconded by Beth Williams. Motion carried.

Aimee reported the flyer for the joint annual meeting has been completed and online registration is open.

c. Budget and Finance

Kayleen Hart, Chair

- i. Treasurer / Depository Appointment of fiscal officer and financial institution are determined at the beginning of each fiscal year. Board Chair Hart asked for a motion to designate the FY24 financial officer and financial institution.
Chuck Howard moved to designate Administrative Coordinator Janel Meyer as FY24 Fiscal Officer/Treasurer for the Steuben County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). Seconded by Beth Williams. Motion carried.
Beth Williams moved to designate Key Bank as the Steuben County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) FY24 financial institution/depository. Seconded by Chuck Howard. Motion carried.
- i. District Budget and Finance Committee Audit Board Chair Hart and Board Supervisor Howard volunteered to perform the internal district audit. They will work together on scheduling a date/time to complete.
- ii. 2024 Affiliate Memberships Janel asked the Board to consider the sponsorship levels for the Steuben County SWCD FY24 Affiliate Membership. The supervisors requested 2024 Affiliate Membership levels remain the same as 2023. Board Chair Hart asked for a motion to approve 2024 Affiliate Membership levels.
Chuck Howard moved to approve the 2024 Affiliate Membership levels at Bronze - \$25, Silver-\$50, Gold - \$75, and Platinum - \$100 and above. Seconded by Beth Williams. Motion carried.

- iii. Table Cover Janel requested Board discuss the approval of purchasing a custom Steuben County SWCD table cover for various events, workshops, field days, etc. Board Chair Hart asked for a discussion and motion on purchasing a custom Steuben SWCD table cover.
A motion was made by Craig Holman to approve up to \$350 towards the purchase of a Steuben County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) custom table cover. Seconded by Chuck Howard. Motion carried.
- iv. Conflict of Interest Statements Board Supervisor David Perkins was not in attendance to sign a Uniform Conflict of Interest Disclosure Statement.
- v. 2024 – 2026 Business Plan Janel presented the final version of the revised/reformatted business plan. Board Chair Hart asked if there were any questions or discussion regarding the updated document. Hearing none, she called for a motion to approve the 2024-2026 Steuben County SWCD Business Plan.
Chuck Howard moved to approve the 2024 – 2026 Steuben County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) Business Plan, as presented. Beth Williams seconded. Motion carried.

d. Information and Education David Perkins, Chair

- i. Drainage Board (DB)
 No update was provided.
- ii. Spring Newsletter / Annual Report
 Janel requested an article from Board Chair Hart for the 2023 Steuben SWCD Annual Report.
- iii. 4-H/Purdue Extension/SWCD/Other Educational and SWCD Projects
 Aimee report:
 - Five individuals have registered for the 2024 Indiana Master Naturalist (IMN) program.
 - She was introduced at the new Indiana District Employee Association (IDEA) NNE Region Assistant Director at the IASWCD annual meeting.
 - Aimee requested overnight travel approval for February 26 and April 15 to attend the IDEA Directors Meeting and Communications module of the IDEA Career Development Program she missed in 2023 due to a scheduling conflict with the 4th Grade Youth Conservation Field Day (February 26-27, 2024) and the IDEA Directors Meeting and Education module that she was asked to assist with (April 15-16, 2024). The Board discussed the travel request and asked Janel whether business needs and staffing requirements would be affected by the absences. Janel advised she was not informed of the travel request prior to the meeting and would need to check schedules. The Board discussed impacts to office operations and availability of ISDA Resource Specialist Kate Sanders to assist the days Aimee is requesting travel approval to ensure all Steuben SWCDs required financial deadlines are met. Board Chair Hart asked for a motion to approve or oppose the travel request.
Chuck Howard moved to approve overnight travel for Resource Conservationist Aimee Wentworth on February 25-26, 2024 and April 15-16, 2024 for the Indiana District Employee Association (IDEA) Directors Meetings and Professional Career Development Training Program sessions – pending the availability of Resource Specialist Kate Sanders with the Indiana State Department of Agriculture on those dates. Seconded by Craig Holman. Motion carried.
- iv. Upcoming Regional / National Events
 1. **Martin Luther King Jr. Day • January 15, 2024 (County Offices Closed)**
 2. Fort Wayne Farm Show • January 16 – 18, 2024
 3. Dam Ownership Responsibility and Liability Webinar • January 17, 2024
 4. Veterans IN Farming 2024 Workshop • January 19-21, 2024 (*Fair Oaks, IN*)
 5. 2024 Northern Indiana Grazing Conference • February 2 – 3, 2024 (*Shipshewana, IN*)
 6. SCLC Monthly Board Meeting • February 3, 2024 (*Angola, IN*)
 7. Steuben County SWCD Monthly Board Meeting • February 14, 2024 (*Angola, IN*)
 8. **President’s Day Holiday • February 19, 2024 (County Offices Closed)**
 9. Elkhart County SWCD “Pay Dirt” Workshop • March 5 – 7, 2024 (*Goshen, IN*)

V. CLAIMS

6123	PageCrafter (Jan. – June 2024 Website Hosting & WordPress Updates)	\$ 240.00
6124	Key Bank (Check Reorder Fee)	\$ 44.23
6125	Aimee Wentworth (Reimbursement per SWCD SOP- 2024 IASWCD Conf. Travel)	\$ 398.80
6126	Beth Williams (Reimbursement per SWCD SOP-2024 IASWCD Conf. Travel)	\$ 324.74
6127	Ceres Solutions (Fuel for Expedition – January 2024 Statement)	\$ 29.72

Chuck Howard made a motion to approve the claims for the Steuben County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) January 10, 2024 Board meeting. Beth Williams seconded the motion. Motion carried.

VI. NEXT BOARD MEETING

February 14, 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.

Craig Holman moved to adjourn the January 10, 2024 Steuben County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) Board meeting. Seconded by Beth Williams. Motion carried.

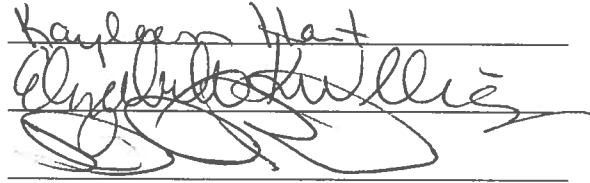
Meeting adjourned by Board Chair Hart at 6:17 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by:



Janel S. Meyer, Administrative Coordinator

Minutes approved by Steuben County SWCD Board:



3/14/2024

(Date)