

Champaign County SWCD
March 31, 2010
Board Meeting Minutes

Directors present: Steve Stierwalt, Eleanor Blackmon, Joe Rothermel, Lennie Heiser and Eric Suits.

Associate Directors present: Kenneth Kesler

Staff present: Bruce Stickers, Renee Weitekamp(arriving late).

Natural Resource Conservation Service Staff present: Kevin Donoho.

Guests: Anita Zurbrugg-American Farmland Trust

The meeting was called to order at 5:15 p.m.

Anita Zurbrugg explained the mission of American Farmland Trust focusing on the issues of farmland protection and water quality as related to agricultural operations. They want to be more active in Illinois and chose the Mississippi River Basin Initiative to increase their presence in the state. They would like to work with us on the project along with several foundations that have expressed interest in funding some of the project. They are working with the fertilizer industry but have not finalized that support yet. American Farmland Trust will write the grant and we will assist with the local interface with producers. They are working on the monitoring portion of the grant with a foundation and hope to secure funding. The Walton Foundation will fund some of the local work including personnel to work with producers. An EPA Section 319 grant is being considered for monitoring funding also.

Steve Stierwalt would like to see us determine what it takes to get producers to implement conservation practices. Some of this work is being done in the watershed through Mark David and Richard Cooke at the University of Illinois. Getting suppliers to see the advantages for them will be a key to the success of the project.

Eric Suits mentioned the need for a strong educational component to the project.

The project will move ahead toward a May 3, 2010 grant submission deadline.

Ms. Zurbrugg left after the presentation and discussion on this item.

Board reorganization:

Eleanor Blackmon nominated Steve Stierwalt for president. No other nominations were made, so she moved and Eric Suits seconded a motion to cast a unanimous ballot. Motion passed.

Lennie Heiser nominated Joe Rothermel for Vice President. No other nominations were made, so he moved and Eric Suits seconded a motion to cast a unanimous ballot. Motion passed.

Eleanor Blackmon nominated Eric Suits for Secretary/Treasurer. No other nominations were made, so she moved and Lennie Heiser seconded a motion to cast a unanimous ballot. Motion passed.

A motion was made to approve the meeting minutes from the February 24, 2010 board meeting. Motion carried.

The financial report was reviewed and Eric Suits made a motion to place it on file and Lennie Heiser seconded it. Motioned passed.

Old Business:

Mississippi River Basin Initiative (MRBI) - Eric Suits made a motion for the district to proceed with the Mississippi River Basin Initiative based on AFT writing the majority of the grant proposal with our assistance and them obtaining funding for the project from various other sources. The motion was seconded by Eleanor Blackmon. Motion passed

Computer Network/Agreement with NRCS - A computer may be provided for the district from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources for the CREP program. We will report later if this is finalized.

Tree Sale - Rich Stierwalt will provide his horse trailer for picking up trees in Decatur. We will have to supply a truck to pull it.

New Business:

Current Legislative Matters - Kenneth Kesler gave an update on the state situation with the SWCD Advisory Board that is supposed to be appointed by the governor. This board is supposed to have 5 members, but has not always been staffed.

The Task Force on SWCDs legislation sponsored by Senator Mike Frerichs passed out of committee and is moving to the Senate floor. The House version, sponsored by Representative Chapin Rose is being held at this time.

The issue of dedicated funding is moving slowly because some people don't want to open the District Act because other unfavorable changes could be made at that time.

Eleanor Blackmon made a motion, seconded by Lennie Heiser, to wait for support of legislation until the funding sources are identified. Motion passed.

Partners For Conservation projects (old CPP program) - Projects were presented for approval including well sealings for Clark and Fogler, waterways for Fisher and Rayburn and a drop pipe structure for Reinhart. Eleanor Blackmon made a motion to approve the projects and Joe Rothermel seconded it. Motion passed.

The board went into executive session from 6:23 to 6:34 p.m. for personnel matters.

The board went back into open session and it was announced Renee Weitekamp would be reducing her hours. A replacement plan was discussed and it was determined a special meeting to draw up a plan would be scheduled for April 5th at 9:00 a.m. at the office. The concept of a person skilled in GIS and able to work with watershed groups was discussed.

RC and DC reports were reviewed (attached).

Joe Rothermel moved to adjourn the meeting. Lennie Heiser seconded, motion carried. Meeting was adjourned at 7:04 p.m.