



MONROE COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT BOARD MEETING MINUTES
June 17, 2021

MEMBERS PRESENT: Pat Ross, Sharon Laverdure, Roger McFadden, Randy Rice, Bob Armstrong
Chuck Gould and Craig Todd

DISTRICT STAFF: Kristina Heaney, Roger Spotts, Annie Polkowski, John Motz and Diana Flint

ASSOCIATE DIRECTORS: Brian Winot

PUBLIC: Leslie Berger, Jack Fossett, Paula Heeshan and Ross Ruschman

Pat Ross called the meeting to order at 8:00 am.

Roll call for the board was taken and all board members listed above were in attendance.

Public comment: none

Executive Session: Pat Ross called for an executive session at 8:01am. The board conveyed to the board meeting room for the executive session in regards to personnel. The session ended at 8:30am.

Board Meeting Minutes: Pat Ross asked for approval of the May 20, 2021 board meeting minutes.

A motion was made by Roger McFadden, seconded by Sharon Laverdure, to approve the May 20, 2021 board meeting minutes. Motion carried.

Technical Report:

Lori Kerrigan provided report in the board packet. She wasn't in today so Kristina Heaney presented the technical report.

Pat Ross asked about the 54 meetings and the 71 staff meetings that were held in April. Kristina explained that some are meetings that staff attended that we weren't hosting and that it includes internal meetings. There are also external meetings such as pre-construction that are counted. The totals are over the course of the month and include all meetings that staff attend. Pat Ross asked if there was a large project starting and Kristina confirmed that the Pipeline Project covers four counties and is a very large project.

There were no other questions for the technical report.

EE Report: Roger Spotts provided report in the board packet. Roger stated that the Pleasant Valley Envirothon team won the state tournament and will be competing in the international competition at the end of July. They beat over fifty counties to win the competition, this marks the first time that Monroe County has won the competition. This will be held virtually, with the team being here so they can be monitored. Roger stated that they won by ten points and that each student will receive a \$1,000 scholarship. There are five students on the team and Maricatherine Garr is the advisor. He said that Alesia Gallo worked hard in preparing for Envirothon and will be helping them at the international level. Roger stated that it's been difficult getting the good news out, Channel 13 and the Pocono Record didn't respond to our request to do a story. The team has been invited to the July board meeting. Patt Ross mentioned that the board can give recognition to each team member, maybe a plaque. He suggested ABC trophy, who Roger is familiar with. Sharon Laverdure agreed to that idea. Roger said that the state gave the team a trophy which will stay at the school.

Roger stated that the summer program schedule is building and the building opened up to the public on June 1st. We've had a good response to the Kettle Creek for Kids program, which is weekly. The August summer day camp has the highest registration in ten years and is close to being full. There are still spots available for Conservation Camp. For that camp, the volunteer staff has been vaccinated and the campers have to show they've been vaccinated or provide a negative COVID test three days prior to the start of camp. Roger stated that we have a commitment to use Stony Acres this year and that ESU is trying to figure out the future of the site. We've looked into other options such as hosting the camp here, which Kristina stated the Kettle Creek Fund is on board with. She stated that Roger has done the background work and that we don't want to move forward yet until we know what the decision is from the ESU student-led group. Craig Todd stated that we need to make sure that what's being proposed is similar to what's there now.

2020 Conservation Educator of the Year: Roger introduced Ross Ruschman from MCTI as Conservation Educator of the year. He is an Envirothon coach there and has developed innovative programs for students involving the environment, ecology and sustainability. Ross accepted his certificate of recognition. Pat thanked him for his work and Sharon noted that he was her student.

Recommendation to Hire: Environmental Educator Kristina stated that interviews were conducted this week for the Environmental Educator position. Four excellent candidates were interviewed and the one stand-out was Alexandra Dutt, who currently works here as a Resource Conservation Specialist.

A motion was made by Craig Todd, seconded by Roger McFadden, to hire Alexandra Dutt as an Environmental Educator. The motion carried. Sharon abstained from the vote.

The Nature Conservancy COVID-19 Bog Contract: Roger Spotts mentioned the license agreement with the Nature Conservancy. Pat asked why the contract is for such a short period of time. Roger explained that the stipulations in exhibit A and B are COVID restrictions which will be phased out at some point. This will allow us to start doing bog walks again, but doesn't change our five year contract with the Nature Conservancy. Exhibit C lists the COVID modifications which we've agreed to meet. Roger then explained that the contract doesn't include areas of the Bog that are open to the public, but is only based on boardwalk access.

A motion was made by Chuck Gould, seconded by Roger McFadden, to approve the Nature Conservancy COVID-19 Bog contract. Motion carried.

District Managers Report: Kristina provided the report in the board packet. She stated that our allocation for the dirt and gravel low volume roads program has increased from \$123,000 to \$129,000. John Motz has been a big asset to the program, which is now one of our most successful.

Next, Kristina mentioned that she met with another conservation district manager yesterday about the strategic planning committee and he gave her some great suggestions. There were concerns that we're missing a core group of people and that she'd like to hold a focus group for municipal and township officials, developers and contractors, consultants and educators. She feels that their opinions are essential and proposed an evening meeting, possibly during the third week of July. Pat felt that the meeting should be held in person and not on Zoom. She will publically advertise it and asked for any suggestions. She feels that this is a better approach to involve the community as a whole and not isolate any entities. She asked Brian Winot for any suggestions and he stated that he'll get back to her. Craig asked if there were any issues with the dry dam inspection report. She stated that there was nothing of substance that was an issue. Last year, a dive team was hired but they haven't conducted their work yet. Kristina stated that the grass is now up to your waist and that we were relying on our summer work crew. She stated that a large mowing and debris cleanup will be held in late September or mid-October.

Office Assistant Senior Position: Kristina held interviews but doesn't have anyone for the position yet. She'd like to re-classify the position to better align with the work that the position calls for. She requested a motion to re-grade the position to an Administrative Coordinator position.

A motion was made by Craig Todd, seconded by Roger McFadden, to re-classify the Office Assistant Senior position. Sharon abstained from the vote. Motion carried.

PA State Board of Education signed Science Standards Letter: Kristina informed the board that the PA Department of Education is re-evaluating their education standards. They are looking to remove some environmental education programs from their high school curriculum. Kristina is working with the PACD and has written a letter requesting that these topics remain in the curriculum. She mentioned that she has an e-mail with a link in which the public can provide comments. Sharon asked if we've reached out to local school districts. Roger will send this information out to Monroe County school districts. Kristina isn't sure why the curriculum is being changed and if it's being replaced with anything. Randy Rice stated that maybe it's being replaced with the Black Lives Matter movement curriculum.

ACT 2021-2022 Program Application and Renewal: This is our agricultural grant program. Kristina informed the board that we've had the program for a number of years and that we're looking to renew it. There are no changes to the program or the requirements. The funding goes to the county to supplement the pay for a resource conservation specialist. Pat stated the amount of the grant is \$16,225.

A motion was made by Craig Todd, seconded by Bob Armstrong, to renew the ACT 2021-2022 Program Application. Motion carried.

Letter of Support for Penn State Extension: Giant Keep America Beautiful: The Penn State Extension is offering homeowners a planter box that can be attached to a downspout. They have offered us a box

that we will place at the Nature Discovery Area. This will show how effective the boxes are at cleaning and disinfecting storm water. Pat asked what volume of water the boxes could handle and Kristina answered that it would be the equivalent of a rain barrel, approximately fifty gallons. It's not as effective as a rain barrel is in holding water. The idea is that the water comes off the roof, infiltrates the soil, and is discharged. Kristina will show the board the planter box before it's placed at the Discovery Area. Annie stated that the planter boxes would hold native plants that are hearty and can tolerate being wet.

A motion was made by Bob Armstrong, seconded by Chuck Gould, in support of the Penn State Extension Keep America Beautiful Grant. Motion carried.

Staff Update: Kristina informed the staff that Annie Polkowski has given her notice, She has worked here as a Watershed Specialist for the past five years. Her position is very specialized, and fills the gap between education and tech. Kristina requested a motion to post the position.

A motion was made by Roger McFadden, seconded by Bob Armstrong, to advertise a job opening for a Watershed Specialist. Motion carried. Sharon Laverdure abstained.

Next, Kristina requested a motion to open the position for Resource Conservation Specialist, currently being held by Alexandra Dutt. She will be moving internally and will be an Environmental Educator.

A motion was made by Roger McFadden, seconded by Chuck Gould, to advertise a job opening for a Resource Conservation Specialist. Motion carried. Sharon Laverdure abstained.

Invoice List as of 6/16/21: The invoice list is included in the board packet. We don't have a finalized list from Barbara so Pat asked for a motion to let Roger Mcfadden approve the final invoice list when it's available.

A motion was made by Roger McFadden, seconded by Randy Rice, to let Roger McFadden approve the final invoice. Motion carried.

Balance Sheet as of 5/31/21: A motion was made Roger McFadden, seconded by Chuck Gould, to approve the balance sheet for 5/31/21. Motion carried.

Other Business: Kristina informed the board that our fire alarm system needs improvements and that it will be covered by grant funds. The security updates which were already approved are occurring now.

Public comment: Paula Heeshan stated that Heidi Secord, a former board member, received a nomination to be on the State Conservation Commission. Paula was nominated for a Lifetime Achievement in Conservation award.

Jack Fossett stated that he continues to have problems with volumes of water coming onto Foundry Street in Hamilton Township. He said the road is eroded and is being torn up. He's worked with John Christy in the past and is looking to get the problem resolved. He's contacted the state but feels nothing was done. Kristina stated that the township should be resolving the issue but that we can work with the municipality. She hopes that our 167 efforts will help to resolve the issue.

Pat Ross adjourned the meeting at 9:22am

Respectfully Submitted,

Diana Flint

Diana Flint
Office Assistant Sr.

**THE NEXT MCCD BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING WILL BE HELD ON THURSDAY,
July 15, 2021 AT 8:00 AM at the Monroe County Conservation District**