

ESCAMBIA SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS' MINUTES

January 18, 2024

Board Members in Attendance

Mr. Travis Tharp, Chair; Mr. Johnnie Odom, Vice-Chair/ Acting Treasurer; Ms. Carollyn Taylor, Secretary; Ms. Whitney Panzik, Member.

Attendees

Mr. Brian Francis, USDA/NRCS; Mr. Joshua McElhane, USDA/NRCS; Mrs. Debbie Williams, Escambia County NRCD.

Call to Order

Mr. Travis Tharp called the meeting to order at 9:19am.

Mr. Brian Francis with USDA/NRCS introduced himself and gave a background of his duties with NRCS.

Those present stated the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag in unison.

Minutes of the Last Meeting

Ms. Taylor made a motion to approve the December 7, 2023 Board minutes. Seconded by Ms. Panzik. With all in favor, the motion carried.

Acknowledgment of Public Notice

Meeting advertisement published.

Treasurer's Report

Mr. Johnnie Odom stated the reimbursement check to Ms. Taylor from AFCD was deposited to the bank. Ms. Taylor was able to receive her reimbursement. Statements from Warrington Bank were received. No additional activity is reported with the bank and all is correct.

Reports

Deferred to end of meeting.

Old Business

Mr. Odom stated due to his work schedule, he would like to table the items listed under old business pertaining to GIS maps, Escambia county workforce program, and contacting FDACS about further SB 1078 clarifications.

Motion was made by Mr. Odom to defer GIS maps, Escambia county workforce programs, and FDACS to the next workshop meeting. Seconded by Ms. Taylor.

With all in favor, the motion carried.

It was mentioned, the Board members still believed all would need to run in the next election.

Workshop meeting location was listed to be reviewed under old business.

Mr. Odom made a motion to table the line item under old business and move to discuss it under the new business line item meeting day/locations/time. Seconded by Ms. Panzik. With all in favor, the motion carried.

New Business

Discussions held on the location of the workshop meetings. Previous discussed locations of certain facilities may not be suitable for Board meetings, therefore other options will need to be available.

Mr. Odom will still look into the possibility of a school facility.

Ms. Taylor stated she did contact City Hall as well and discussion was held on the City Hall location. However, due some limitations such as renovations beginning at some point, this may not be an option at this time.

Further discussions held on the Pensacola Library downtown and the accessibility of using it. In addition to discussing the day and time of workshop meetings, the meeting day, location, and time of their regular meetings were discussed as well.

With all in favor, the workshop meetings will be held on the first Tuesday of each month beginning on February 6, 2024. Time will be from 4:45 to 6:45 and location will be held in a room at an available library.

Mr. Odom stated he would be out of town, but would join the meeting remotely and will have more information on the tabled items.

Any changes will be posted on the Board's official webpage.

With all in favor, the regular meetings will be held on the third Thursday of each month, 9:00am, located in the Molino Farm Bureau building.

Any changes will be posted on the Board's official website.

In regards to the rotation/election of officers, discussed items included, positions available, and the roles and responsibilities of a Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer. Mr.

McElhaney stated at one time the Secretary and Treasurer were held by the one person.

Ms. Taylor stated she would be interested in the Chair position and that Ms. Panzik would be a good member for Vice-Chair or Secretary.

Mr. Odom mentioned he could move from Vice-Chair to Secretary, Treasurer or as Secretary/Treasurer.

Ms. Taylor brought to the floor several issues and concerns of previous approved items not being completed such as confirming workshop meeting locations, current officers not carrying out their duties, and the lack of communications.

Ms. Taylor also mentioned some individual Board members outside activities may look unfavorable. This is one reason she wanted to have the January 4 workshop meeting moved to another location. Additional, Ms. Taylor anticipated a more favorable interaction with having a more diverse set of members when she accepted being appointed.

Ms. Panzik stated she not experienced any negativity/issues from other Board members. Ms. Taylor expressed she has been the one to locate a secure meeting facility, work with other organizations such as AFCD, other districts, and the State's Office of Election's office to clarify the new rules pertaining to conservation districts, and maintain an open communication line with the District's partners. She has been diligent in her efforts to move the Board forward.

Mr. Tharp stated he would resign immediately as Chair, if it would ease the tension Ms. Taylor was expressing toward him.

Mr. Odom stated he would rather make a gradual change as to Ms. Taylor being Vice-Chair. Ms. Taylor did express how she thought Mr. Odom could make a good Chair, as he ran the last workshop meeting smoothly. Ms. Taylor stated the main job is to communicate, show up, and the Board couldn't have 2 officers, Chair or Vice-Chair, not responding.

Ms. Taylor stated she would be fine taking Vice-Chair for purposes of knowing she would show up to communicate or make decisions as needed.

Mr. Odom stated he would make a motion to elect Ms. Taylor as Chair but reminded all 3 votes are needed for a motion to pass.

Ms. Panzik stated she would like to table the election/rotation of officers. There is a lot to process and she wants to have time to review mentioned items, including the roles and responsibilities of officers in order to make an informed decision. Ms. Panzik did state she was in favor to see a change in officers because it's a new year and acknowledged Mr. Odom would also make a good chair. In addition, she would like for the all Board members to be present for the vote.

Mr. Odom made a motion to table the election of officers to the next regular Board meeting in February. Ms. Taylor seconded the motion. With all in favor, the motion passed.

Ms. Panzik made a motion the Board make a finalized decision on election of officers and create an officer rotation, if so desired at the next regular Board meeting in February.

Ms. Taylor asked for clarification of the motion. After clarification, there was no opposition to the motion.

Mr. Odom seconded the motion. With all in favor, motion carried.

With the above mentioned motions approved, the Board's officers will remain as is until the February meeting.

The Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) sent a notification to Mrs. Williams pertaining to the firm who has been hired to conduct performance reviews of each independent Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

Mrs. Williams had forward the email to all Board members and attached a copy of the notification in their January packet

Mrs. Williams asked if a Board member would contact the agency and give their name as contact for the performance review.

Ms. Taylor has contacted the contract manager with OPPAGA to introduce herself. Mr. Tharp stated he would contact the agency as well.

Reports

Mr. McElhaney gave the District Conservationist report The office is working on the FY24 EQIP and CSP applications. He stated Mr. Levi Blackmon had accepted another job in Santa Rosa County. The Board inquired as to the possibility of another Soil Conservationist being hired. Mr. McElhaney believed the position will be open but unsure of the time line.

For now, Mr. Brian Francis from the Santa Rosa NRCS office will be assisting with our counties CSP applications.

Mr. McElhaney reminded the Board of the upcoming Northview Blue Jacket Jamboree. The Board still intends to have a booth if possible. The Board would use the opportunity to introduce themselves to the community.

Ms. Taylor inquired to the support letter for the forestry grant Mrs. Williams said the grant was for an arboretum and was unsure if it was awarded.

Ms. Taylor inquired to any information on logo shirts from Weatherford. Mr. Tharp stated no but he would contact them again.

Mrs. Williams asked if the Board had a moment to review the minutes from the January 4, 2024 workshop meeting in which Ms. Taylor submitted.

After the Board reviewed the workshop minutes. One spelling error was noted but with the correction being made, Mr. Odom made a motion to approve the minutes. Seconded by Ms. Panzik With all in favor, the motion carried.

With no further business coming before the Board, Mr. Odom made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Ms. Taylor. With all in favor, meeting adjourned at 10:11a.

Carollyn Taylor
Secretary