

HIGHLANDS SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT MINUTES

May 5, 2009

The regular meeting of the Supervisors of the Highlands Soil and Water Conservation District was called to order by Gregg Hartt at 2:15 p.m., Tuesday, May 5, 2009 in Conference Room 3 at the Bert J. Harris, Jr., Agricultural Center in Sebring, Florida.

Supervisors present: John Causey, Gregg Hartt, Ida Jackson and Jimmy Wohl

Supervisors absent: Wayne Zahn

Staff present: Carlos Torres, District Conservationist
 Jennifer Abbey, Soil Conservationist
 Jackie Bailey, Office Manager
 Corine Burgess, Natural Resources Specialist
 Clell Ford, Lakes Management Specialist
 Erin McCarta, Lakes Management Assistant

Guests: Don Bates (HCBCC), Mark Clifford, Leroy Crockett (RC&D), Bo Griffin (FDACS) and Brian Scofield (FFWCC) and Lynn Topel (FHREDI)

This is the Financial Report for April 27, 2009

DEPOSIT:

Two deposits were made this month totaling \$13,000.00. \$12,500.00 was moved from the MM account to the General Fund account and \$500.00 was a reimbursement from AFCD for Jimmy's travel to New Orleans.

CHECKS WRITTEN:

Check 1401 for \$59.00 to Comcast for internet service.
 Check 1402 for \$297.94 to Petty Cash to replenish funds.
 Check 1403 for \$8.77 to Florida Dept. of Revenue to pay quarterly taxes collected.
 Check 1404 was voided.
 Check 1405 for \$12,500.00 to NCT Group for final bill for the audit.
 Check 1406 for \$150.00 to Connor Angell for first place in the Speech Contest.
 Check 1407 for \$100.00 to Laine Daum for second place in the Speech Contest.
 Check 1408 for \$50.00 to Christina Hendry for third place in the Speech Contest.
 Check 1409 for \$500.00 to Florida Lakes Management Society to sponsor a break at their conference.
 Check 1410 for \$212.00 to Microtel for lodging for the State Envirothon Competition.
 Check 1411 for \$80.00 to Avon Park High School for van rental for the State Envirothon Competition.

HSWCD balances as of April 27, 2009

Highlands Independent Bank	Checking	\$ 5,645.87
Highlands Independent Bank	CD	\$ 1,500.00
Highlands Independent Bank	CD	\$ 1,500.00
Highlands Independent Bank	CD	\$ 2,000.00

Money Market Account

Balance as of March 27, 2009	\$364,598.24
IWMID encumbered	50,000.00
Interest	454.63
Deps – Admin Fees	14,288.10
Check 107 to general fund	12,500.00
Balance as of April 27, 2009	<u>\$366,840.97</u>

Lake Okeechobee Storage and Treatment

Balance as of March 27, 2009	\$210,964.27
Interest	229.47
Balance as of April 27, 2009	<u>\$211,193.74</u>

Avon Park Air Force Range Grant

Balance as of March 27, 2009	\$206,680.00
Interest	268.43
Deps from SFWMD	53,283.59
Check 2007 Enviro Tech Systems	163,660.50
Check 2008 HSWCD	<u>8,183.03</u>

Balance as of April 27, 2009 \$ 88,388.49

FHREDI Contract

Balance as of March 27, 2009 \$ 0.00
Dep State of Florida 5,768.67
Check 1505 FHREDI 5,768.67
Balance as of April 27, 2009 0.00

MiniFarms 13882

Balance as of March 27, 2009 \$ 2.50
Depts State of Florida 8,400.00
Check 102 John Mc Cracken 2,050.00
Check 103 HSWCD 102.50
Balance as of April 27, 2009 \$ 6,250.00

BMP Contract #13929

Balance as of March 27, 2009 \$ 0.00
Depts State of Florida 97,745.67
Check 701 Archbold Buck Island 1,105.59
Check 702 Archbold Buck Island 3,611.11
Check 703 RD Butler 1,360.13
Check 704 Williamson Cattle Co 32,500.00
Check 705 Lykes Bros. Inc 18,800.00
Check 706 HSWCD 2,868.84
Check 707 Alderman-Deloney Ranch 9,000.00
Check 708 Archbold Buck Island 3,611.11
Check 709 HSWCD 630.56
Balance as of April 27, 2009 \$ 24,258.33

Petty Cash

Date	Vendor	Expense	Balance	Project
4/1/2009	Petty Cash	\$ (297.94)	\$ 300.00	Replenish Petty Cash
4/21/2009	Publix	\$ 23.12	\$ 276.88	Volunteer Luncheon
4/22/2009	Micheals	\$ 10.49	\$ 266.39	Area VI meeting

Minutes of April 7, 2009 were approved with the following sentence changed to read June 30, 2009: He reported SFWMD must encumber the \$3.8 million for land acquisition by June 1, 2009.

Today's agenda was approved with the addition of discussing an amendment to Contract 13929 and changing the minutes to be approved from March 3rd's minutes to April 7, 2009 minutes.

An Amendment to the General BMPs Contract 13929 was received from FDACS. The amendment increases the contract value by \$75,000.00 from \$350,000 to \$425,000.00. John Causey made a motion to approve signing the amendment. Ida Jackson seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Istokpoga Marsh Watershed Improvement District's Project (IMWID) Gregg Hartt was unable to attend the last IMWID committee meeting. He reported properties to be purchase for the project had been identified. Landowner submitted their offers to sale their property. A state certified appraisal will need to be conducted before the purchase of lands. Selection of an appraiser is the next step. This process may take 30 to 40 days to complete. Bo Griffin stated individual landowners have been encouraged to implement BMPs through FDACS.

Long Range Plan Review - Bo Griffin stated the Long Range Plan (LRP) is a tool to provide direction to the District. A reporting system is needed to reflect accomplished goals. From the LRP an annual plan should be created showing the progress of the plan. The plan should be reviewed every six month to help keep on task of accomplishing our goals.

Lynn Topel from FHREDI volunteered to facilitate our review of the LRP. Before updating the plan the District needs to decide the following:

How are you running the District? Who is going to lead the charge?

The District Conservationist is no longer allowed to oversee day to day operation of the District. The District needs leadership. Employees want to do well and need direction to succeed. There are four county employees and two federal employees in the office.

Is it time for the District to hire an employee in the position of Director? Chapter 582 states that a district may hire employees. A District employee would be a state employee eligible to participate in the FRS retirement system.

What is the process for hiring an employee? Hiring process must conform with state statues. A job description for the new position would need to be developed. This person would report directly to the Board. New employee would be responsible for the day to day operation. Employee duties could include looking for new partnerships and funding sources. Would the position be full or part time?

Hiring an employee would cost a substantial amount of money. Who are our funding sources? Do we have a stable income stream? Is funding available through NRCS? Will the FDACS contracts administered through our office in years to come be enough to support the position? Will FDACS help pay for the position? What are the benefits to the tax payers? What is SWCDs return on their investment?

Who is the person going to supervise? This would be spelled out in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

The decision to hire an employee should not be made unless all five supervisors are present.

Job description should be developed first, then update MOUs and then revise the LRP.

The County and the NRCS MOUs in place now are archaic and old and in dire need of updating. MOU would be a mutual document discussed and agreed upon by all signing parties. The new MOUs will be reviewed by attorney.

A few recommendations for writing a new MOU. Find good examples and templates to follow. Look at other SWCDs MOUs to see: how they are funded, what relationships they have with other entities. Are their MOUs effective? Look at MOUs from other states and other organizations. Has the MOU been reviewed by the Governor's office?

A bit of our history: Sam Polston, District Conservationist held dual responsibility for NRCS and the County. Under his leadership Highlands County was first in the state to construct four watershed projects with federal money through the PL-566, Small Watershed Act.

Jimmy – with so many agencies tax payer dollars are wasted, need to save tax payers money. Be cognoscente of other agencies. The National Association of Conservation District is a strong organization but the Florida Association of Conservation Districts is weak.

The LRP is a good document that needs few changes. The statistics need to be updated or deleted. A good system of measuring goals is important for the success of the LRP. Jackie

stated she does send annual reports to NRCS and the County. There are methods in use to measure goals.

Carlos stated that Carlos Suarez, the state conservationist visited the field office on Monday. Carlos Torres stated that communication between the state office, area office and field office has improved. Don Bates and Jimmy Wohl attended the meeting. The age of the NRCS MOU was discussed at that meeting. Carlos Suarez would like to see a strengthen partnership between NRCS and SWCDs.

John Causey made a motion to explore the options of hiring a director for HSWCD with the caveat Jackie pursue model for hiring, job description, MOUs and all background information needed to make a wise decision on this position. Ida Jackson seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Lynn Topel stated the option of hiring a director was a bold move. The move shows confidence and integrity. Hiring a director will be doable but not easy. This decision may bring in more money to the district and give the tax payers of Highlands County a bigger bang for there bucks.

Community report – Office staff was out in the community this month participating in the Speech Contest, the Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon, Earth Day at Lake Jackson, AFCD Area VI/NRCS Area IV meeting, first time at the SFCC Volunteer Appreciation Event, the State Envirothon Competition and National County Government Day.

Contract Activity report. Jackie has added all payments made for the month to the report.

Clell reported the contractor is substantially completed with material placement for the Avon Park Air Force Range Levee Project. Contractor has placed more than 75,000 cubic yards of material. An amendment to the contract for a time line extension has been requested by SFWMD. The search continues for funding from the Department of Defense to install a shell rock cap on the levee. The County budget for F/Y 2009-2010 has been submitted. Three budgets were prepared, one with no reduction in funding, one with a five percent reduction and one with a ten percent reduction. Public Hearing will be held after June 2009. Staff met with FDEP to specify disposal sites and issues relating to permitting for the Istokpoga Residential Canal Maintenance project. Three applications for DEP 319 money for projects in Highlands County have been submitted; they are IMWID, Lake Clay Stormwater project and for the Spring Lake Improvement District.

Erin informed the board the Earth Day event held on April 22 at the Lake Jackson Shoreline Restoration Project area was a big success. Volunteers planted cordgrass and yellow canna lilies. Representatives for each of the funding sources were present at the event. We are in the last phase of the project. Great press coverage. Fish and Wildlife granted funds from their Aquatic Habitat Restoration program to re-vegetate the Lake Glenda shoreline. The Career Academy students will install the plants on May 19, 2009.

Carlos stated the deadline for the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) will be June 1, 2009. Staff continues farm visits for Resource Inventory Evaluation for all new EQIP applications. Performing follow up with EQIP contracts – practices scheduled for 2008 and 2009. Five people were served through Conservation application, five people were served through conservation planning, one person was served through conservation technical assistance and eleven people were served through inventories and evaluations.

Corine reported she and Erin assisted SFWMD with completing the Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV) and sediment mapping. Corine has given two presentations for the Rain Sensor Give Away Grant. She has distributed about 40 sensors to the citizens of the County. Corine organized the training for staff and volunteers for the MIL grant.

The next board meeting was set for June 2, 2009 in Conference Room #3 at 3p.m. There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:15p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Recording Secretary

Chairman

DRAFT