HIGHLANDS SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT - BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

MEETING MINUTES

MEETING DATE: 10/20/2026

Meeting Location: HSWCD Conf. Rm.– Bert J. Harris Jr. Ag. Center

4505 George Blvd., Sebring, FL 33875

FINAL – Adopted 11/10/2026

Recorded by: Kayla Nickerson

Meeting Scheduled Start: 3:00 P.M.

Call To Order: 3:01 P.M.

Public Meeting Announcement Read By Chairman

I. Welcome & Introductions

List of Attendees			
Name	**Title**	**Organization**	**Present**
Dr. John Causey	Chairman	Highlands Soil & Water	Yes
Steve Smith	Vice-Chairman	Highlands Soil & Water	Yes
Doug Deen	Secretary/Treasurer	Highlands Soil & Water	No
Sara Sebring	Supervisor	Highlands Soil & Water	Yes
T.J. Wohl	Supervisor	Highlands Soil & Water	Yes
Scott Kirouac	Liaison	Highlands County BCC	Yes
Kayla Nickerson	Executive Director	Highlands Soil & Water	Yes
Chad Harmon	MIL Manager	Highlands Soil & Water	Yes
Wade Smith	MIL Technician	Highlands Soil & Water	Yes
Jared Smith	Conservation Technician	Highlands Soil & Water	Yes
Lauren Ahrens	Environmental Specialist III	FDACS-OAWP	Yes
Michael Lebron	District Conservationist	USDA-NRCS	Yes

II. Approval of Agenda - Motion to approve as presented (Sebring/Smith). Motion passed unanimously.

III. Annual Ethics Overview – K. Nickerson presented Florida Commission on Ethics annual training requirements and provided resources for Supervisors to complete required training. No action was taken.

IV. Approval of September 15, 2026 Meeting Minutes: Motion to approve minutes as presented (Wohl/Sebring). Motion passed unanimously.

V. Financial Activity

a. **Overview & Approval of Financial Reports – September 2026:** Review of financial reports. Motion to approve financial reports as presented (Smith/Sebring). Motion passed unanimously. K. Nickerson will begin working with accountants on final FY 2025-2026 budget amendments and audit preparation.

b. **Investment Options –** K. Nickerson reported Seacoast CD matures on Friday and provided renewal rates offered by various qualified public depositors. Discussion. Motion to move funds from Seacoast CD to Seacoast Money Market account (Wohl/Smith). Motion passed unanimously.

VI. Agency Partner Updates

a. **FDACS –** L. Ahrens reported manager, K. Deuberry has resigned and her last day is Friday. FDACS Highlands' MIL hire has also resigned, and the position has been advertised. No action was taken.

b. **AACT –** C. Harmon reported team is still awaiting response on three grant proposals submitted. Three additional grant opportunities have been identified and proposals are being developed. 2021 Chevrolet Silverado purchased. Many vehicle options were explored and estimates obtained before making the purchase. Team completed first service for fee and determined need to establish standardized service fees. Discussion. K. Nickerson provided proposed Fee-for-Service Policy & Fee Schedule and Invoice AACT 01. Motion to adopt Fee-for-Service Policy & Fee Schedule and Invoice AACT 01 as presented (Wohl/Smith). Motion passed unanimously. K. Nickerson expressed looming December program deadline may halt positive momentum of program. Discussion. Motion to extend AACT program development deadline to September 30, 2027 (Wohl/Smith). Motion passed unanimously.

c. **NRCS –** M. Lebron reported 2027 Program deadline is October 30th and NRCS FL is expecting a high level of funding for the coming year, including a dedicated $350k funding pool for Highlands County applicants and a separate $500k statewide fund for Improved Pest Control (IPC – namely, protective bag coverings for young citrus trees). Staffing changes are still postponed due to federal court motions filed. No action was taken.

d. **HCBCC –** S. Kirouac reported HCBCC is continuing to pursue a local bill to restore IMWIM funding, however they may require funding for a lobbyist. At today's HCBCC meeting, a resolution was proposed to update the structure of NRAC. The item was removed from the agenda due to concerns regarding member qualifications and lack of agricultural representation on the committee. HCBCC is awaiting results of November election which may result in significant change for the county, including but not limited to their ability to continue supporting the district financially. K. Nickerson asked for the intent of Invitation to Negotiate 27-003-RDV, regarding use of IWMID Phase 2 property. Discussion. No action was taken.

VII. Old Business

a. **SFSC Grant Request –** K. Nickerson presented the request that was originally brought to the board last fiscal year. Discussion. Motion to approve South Florida State College's grant request of $3,500 for *Testing a Proposed Method to Reduce Nutrient Load Into Lake Glenada from Non-Point Sources at South Florida State College* (Smith/Wohl). Motion passed unanimously.

VIII. New Business

a. **Annual Review of Work Plan –** K. Nickerson presented proposed amendment to work plan and performance evaluation. Discussion. Motion to approve work plan amendment and performance evaluation, with extension of AACT program timeline date to Sept. 2027 (Smith/Wohl). Motion passed unanimously.

b. **Executive Director Evaluation –** Chairman causey announced results of written performance evaluation totaling 525 of possible 525 points. Appreciation expressed. No action was taken.

IX. Executive Director's Report

- Garden workday with inmates was successful, however water restoration has been delayed until mid-November.

- Former ED, Susie Bishop, was honored with a Wedgworth Leadership Award as well as the Highlands News, Sun Women in Business - Lifetime Achievement Award for her work with HSWCD.
- K. Nickerson will attend SECDEA Annual Conference in Pigeon Forge, TN Nov. 2-6.
- Appreciation lunch will be served prior to next board meeting.

X. Citizens Not on the Agenda – None

XI. Supervisors Comments

Smith – None.
Deen – Absent
Sebring – None.
Wohl – Question regarding Oath of Office Letter received. K. Nickerson informed board that Highlands Supervisor of Elections, Karen Healy, will attend January Meeting to perform swearing in ceremony.
Causey – None.

Meeting Adjourned at 4:52 p.m.

Next Board Meeting: November 10, 2026 – 1:00 p.m.

John Causey, DVM, Chairman **Doug Deen, Secretary**

POST MEETING ACTION ITEMS

Action	***Assigned To***	***Deadline***
Close Seacoast CD and transfer funds to MM account	*K. Nickerson*	*Oct. 23, 2026*
Correspondence and payment to SFSC for grant award	*K. Nickerson*	*Oct. 23, 2026*
FY 2025-2026 Budget Amendments and Audit Prep	*K. Nickerson*	*Nov. 10, 2026*
Review of Garden Plot Rental Agreements	*K. Nickerson*	*Dec. 15, 2026*
FY 2025-2026 Annual Report	*K. Nickerson*	*Dec. 31, 2026*
Completion of Annual Ethics Training	*Supervisors*	*Dec. 31, 2026*
AACT Program Development & Additional Grant Applications	*K. Nickerson, C. Harmon, W. Smith*	*Sept. 30, 2027*

Monitor, review and discuss FDACS-OAWP operations, revised procedures, policies, contract language, scopes of work.	*K. Nickerson*	*Ongoing*
AFCD Committee Work	*K. Nickerson*	*Ongoing*
REPI Partnership DWM Program outreach and meeting facilitation	*K. Nickerson*	*Until Complete*
Review and updates to Employee Handbook	*K. Nickerson*	*Until Complete*