

# MORTON COUNTY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT MINUTES OF MEETING

8:00 a.m. Thursday, May 11, 2023

8:00 a.m. CDT – USDA Service Center, 2540 Overlook Lane, Mandan, ND 58554

I. **CALL TO ORDER** – Aaron called the meeting to order at approximately 8:03 am

## II. ROLL CALL

**Staff:** Chance Porsborg, Malissa McKee

**Board Members:** Aaron Steckler, Steve Tomac, George Ferderer, Thomas Osterbauer

**Others:** Kent Belland (invitee, possible advisory board member), Kate Motzko (NRCS acting CDU supervisor), Landon Weiser (NRCS Morton Co DC)

**Absent:** Rocky Bateman, Richard Tokach, Ethan Gress

## III. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

George motioned to accept minutes as submitted by District Clerk. Steve seconded.

**Aye (2) No (0)**

## TREASURER’S REPORT

George motioned to accept the financials as submitted by the District Clerk. Steve seconded.

**Aye (2) No (0)**

## IV. REPORT OF COOPERATING AGENCIES

a. District Conservationist – Landon Weiser

-Landon shared an update regarding the NRCS staff. 6 EQIP contracts obligated, will be getting producer folders out to them, started contacting producers on planning list; currently have 23 on the list

-Two CRP offers in general sign up , will find out soon if accepted. Deadline for CRP grasslands in May 26. Currently have 15 separate offers, some looking to plan water developments in contract.

-Keeping up with contracts, making sure on schedule and have everything needed to complete planned practices for the summer. Three grass seedings went in before the cool season seeding deadline of May 10 for active contracts in the county.

-Have been staking pipelines and heard from several producers that well drillers and contractors are starting to work on some of their projects. Over next week or so will be staking any cost shared tree plantings; four miles of rows have been stakes thus far

-Out finishing up cultural resource walks and re-routes of pipelines that have occurred for various reasons. Janelle Harrison, one of the cultural resource specialists, accompanied to take a deeper look at a pipeline route from a 2022 contract that had known sites in the area

-Personnell updates: Jacob Dummer will be acting DC in Selfridge. Jordan Robinson will be summer intern, student from University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff majoring in Agronomy

b. County Extension Agent – Renae Gress, unable to attend – no report at this time

## V. OLD BUSINESS

a. Women’s Ag Night – post event

-Malissa reported that the total attendance from registration at the event was 129, including 8 staff and board members. The meal and speakers were well received. MCSCD goodie bags with assorted items caused some confusion so feedback would be to have the same items in all of the bags in the future.

-Steve indicated that he had heard some feedback that some speakers seemed long and the evening seemed to go late. Regarding reference to the Leopold Award winner, suggested more explanation as this is a lay group that does not have context of the award. He also heard some procedural feedback regarding the door prizes and that some people were unsure which prize they won.

-Cost breakdown came to \$53.79/person, all expenses included. Sponsorship dollars of \$1020 included.

## VI. REVIEW WORK PLAN/CALENDAR

- a. May 19 – hand plant pick up 10-5, New Salem shop
- b. May 20 – hand plant pick up 9-noon, New Salem shop
- c. May 23-25 – Farm Safety Camp, Western ND Williston
- d. May 29 – Memorial Day, offices closed
- e. May 30-June 1 – Farm Safety Camp, Eastern ND Fargo
- f. May 30-June 3 – Livestock Camp, Washburn
- g. June 10-11 – 40<sup>th</sup> Buggies & Blues
- h. June 13-16 – Range Camp
- i. June 29 – Landscaping with Pollinators, Burleigh SCD – Menoken Farm

## VII. NEW BUSINESS

- a. BCBS health plan renewal
  - Malissa reported that the BCBS plan is up for renewal June 1, deadline for paperwork May 30. Premium increase is roughly \$50/month. A couple of minor changes on the benefits primarily related to Covid measures and prescription drugs.
  - Steve motioned for acceptance of the updated policy with the District Clerk signing the required paperwork.

**Aye (2)                  No (0)**

- b. Range Camp
  - Malissa wanted to clarify the districts policy and requirements for documentation for sponsorship of attendees of Range Camp. Confirmed up to 5 sponsored each year, require some form of confirmation that payment and attendance of full camp.
  - Malissa created a sponsorship form for submission along with documentation to clarify what the documentation is being submitted for, last year was not able to distinguish
    - \*recommended add 'receipt of payment' to form as a cancelled check is not always easy to obtain
- c. Local Work Group Process – Landon & Kate
  - Landon and Kate presented the local work group topics and had staff and board members rank the 18 subcategories. Kate stated that this will help ranking NRCS projects at application
  - Conversation generated in regards to ranking subcategories:
    - \*Steve made a recommendation regarding over grazing being seen in the county, perhaps a maximum number of cattle per specific amount of land
      - \*\*George commented that cross fencing does help with this concern
      - \*Aaron stated that degraded plant condition is high on his list
      - \*Landon will be compiling ranking numbers of all from this meeting and bring to the next meeting
  - Existing ranking questions reviewed, can add or submit with the current 5 questions but must have 5 total
    - \*Thomas asked for Landon's opinion on the current questions, if he felt any should specifically be in or out of the list
    - \*Steve noted a recommendation on need for rotation of 4 crops per conservation plan
      - \*\*Kate clarified the 4 indicating cool season and warm season
      - \*Added - application includes a full season cover crop
      - \*Steve suggested adding this process to the long term planning meeting
- d. QuickBooks renewal – 6/7 \$799
  - George motioned to renew the QuickBooks subscription, Steve seconded.

**Aye (2)                  No (0)**

e. 319 Watershed Shop Talk – July 10

- Chance has been planning a shop talk with Jim Collins of ND Grazing Lands Coalition as part of the NWQI assessment, looking at Glen Ullin parish rental and need to add to our liability insurance for the day per their facility agreement
    - \*State Farm liability insurance is above coverage level required, would be additional \$75 to add to policy per agent
    - \*only district cost would be food for the event, facility rental will be out of NWQI grant funds
    - \*need board approval to move forward and add to liability insurance
  - George motioned to approve the use of the Glen Ullin parish rental for the event, adding to our liability insurance policy for the date of the event, Steve seconded
- Aye (2)                  No (0)**

f. Shed for Mandan Community Gardens

- Kelsey Deckert with NDSU Extension indicated that parks are willing to put together any shed that we would donate to the project
  - Steve recommended an 8x12 as an 8x8 seems too small
  - Morton Co SCD signage on the shed, shed will be for storage of hosing, garden tools, etc
    - \*visibly appealing, longevity and durability for the seasons
  - Steve stated that he would be for a motion with flexibility that is dollar based, as long as both participating organizations are good with it, board has no issue if \$1300-\$1500
  - Steve motioned to proceed with a shed, not including signage, not to exceed \$1800; George seconded
- Aye (2)                  No (0)**

**VIII. REPORT OF DISTRICT EMPLOYEES**

a. District Clerk

- Malissa presented a detailed report regarding activities of the month.
- Continuing to supply additional documentation to ND Auditors office for past year annual reports
- Aiding on committee for ND Soil Conservation Districts new employee onboarding checklist for Lindsay Maddock at NDSU Extension
- Continuing to work on setting up Area IV SAMs number
- Co-chair of planning committee with Seth Archer/ARS for Friends & Neighbors Day, Area IV
- Submitted 1<sup>st</sup> quarter NRCS TA agreement online on DART reporting site, new process
- Assisted with tree order unloading from Towner on 5/9
- sent employee handbook to Wendy Bent, Morton Co HR contact, on 5/4 for review for any HR updates
- participated in Morton Co Ag Day put on by ND Farm Bureau, 5/3

b. District Technician

- Ethan presented a detailed report in his absence as he is picking up trees at Lincoln Oaks Nursery
- Picking up trees: Towner 5/9/23, Lincoln Oakes 5/11/23, and Big Sioux 5/12/23
  - \*Lincoln Oakes had some CG lilac shortage again this year but substituting with 3-6" stock
- Site prep tilled for Travis Wolf on 5/5 and tiller worked great
- Hope to start planting week of 5/22
- Recently had tractor driver for season change his mind, will not be working for us
  - \*Chance stated he can assist with tractor driving if needed
  - \*Malissa also willing to assist, noted has a heavy load
  - \*\*Malissa and Landon noted would be an empty office but would make due if needed
- Main intern candidate has remained interested and looking to have him start 5/15
- Weekend tree waterer is ready to start this weekend, she has the door code and she will let us know if she is ever unable to water
- participated in Morton Co Ag Day, 5/3
- Assisted Chance with getting drill out to producer and completing grass seeding through 319 program

-Landon and a few other NRCS employees are assisting with staking tree rows for OHF cost share plantings – very thankful for the help

\* wooden lath purchased from Bismarck lumber

c. 319 Watershed Coordinator

-Chance presented a detailed report showing April and May updates

-Completed grass seeding for producer

-discussed van dorn water sampling process that is a safety option for off bridge sampling

\*cost \$600-\$800, can use DEQ for test

-in absence of Waterfest this year, took book to schools with letter enclosed regarding apologies and book donation for classroom or library

-two producers at check out

\*one need to check project to see if now meeting specs, other need to finalize paperwork

-Water sampling began beginning of May

-discussed possible seeding in Sioux County, 165 acres of grass and 260 acres of cover crop

\*calculating 70 hours on low side, schedule of drill is getting full, cool season deadline for NRCS was yesterday 5/11, tractor not available due to machine planting needs of district tech, staff tied up

\*\*board determined not to pursue due to time management for staffing as well as availability of equipment and prioritizing for Morton Co residents for drill

-Currently at Morton Co Ag Day Pete Gietzen sheers sheep, in future he may not; Chance indicated he does sheer sheep and has his own equipment

\*\*suggested possibility of doing in future with Morton Co SCD tied to this or personal?

\*\*Steve asked how Chance could tie to MCSCD in future conversation

\*\*Kent suggested multiple species grazing?

**IX. PERSONNEL COMMITTEE** – nothing to report nor met regarding at this time

**X. CORRESPONDENCE** –

a. State Farm – policy audit

b. Morton County Fair sponsorship

-Steve motioned to sponsor the Morton County Fair matching the level of 2022, George seconded

**Aye (2) No (0)**

**XI. APPROVE APPLICATIONS AND AGREEMENTS** –

a. NRCS – none at this time

b. 319 – none at this time

**XII. PLANS FOR NEXT MEETING** – June 8, 2023 at 8:30 am CDT

**XIII. SIGN EXPENSE VOUCHERS, PAYROLL, AND CREDIT CARD STATEMENTS**

**XIV. ADJOURN** – meeting was adjourned at approximately 11:00 am CDT

Respectfully Submitted,

Malissa McKee

Recording Secretary

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

Aaron Steckler - Chairman