

THOMAS JEFFERSON SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES
February 23, 2022

Remote Participants:

Directors: Joseph Thompson (Chair), David Collins, Carolyn Daughters, John Easter, Julie Jones, Stephen Lucas, Steven Meeks, Angus Murdoch (joined at 10:08 a.m.), Lonnie Murray, Thomas Pratley

Assoc. Directors: Navarre Bartz (joined at 10:13 a.m.), Kelsey Cowger, Clement Tingley, Mark Wastler

Staff: Anne Coates, Lisa Hyatt, Luke Longanecker, Tim Talley

Agencies: Dana Bayless (NRCS), Debbie Cross (DCR), Kory Kirkland (NRCS)

Absent:

Directors: Mark Campbell, Carrie Swanson

The Board of Directors convened a decentralized meeting via Zoom due to the COVID-19 public health emergency.

CALL TO ORDER: Mr. Thompson called the meeting to order at 10:04 a.m.

ROLL CALL: Ms. Hyatt called the roll to confirm a quorum of Directors. Director attendance was confirmed as listed above.

Motion to Conduct Electronic Meeting:

MOTION: Mr. Lucas moved that the Thomas Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Directors certify that the nature of the local state of emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, as declared by the City of Charlottesville and County of Albemarle, makes it impracticable or unsafe for the Board to assemble in a single physical location, and further that the purpose of the meeting, including all agenda items as reflected in the meeting's prepared agenda, is to transact or discuss business that is statutorily required or that is necessary to continue operations of the Board and the discharge of the Board's lawful purposes, duties, and responsibilities. Mr. Murray seconded the motion. The motion passed 9-0 by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Collins, Daughters, Easter, Jones, Lucas, Meeks, Murray, Pratley, Thompson

Nays: None

Absent: Murdoch

STAFF, PARTNERS, and GUESTS PRESENT: Staff and partners present were identified as listed above. No guests were present.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: Mr. Thompson announced that there will be a brief meeting of the Personnel/Operations Committee following the Board meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None.

ADDITIONS/CHANGES TO AGENDA: None.

ACTION ITEMS:

Directors Meeting Minutes:

MOTION: Mr. Pratley moved to approve the Directors Meeting Minutes for January 26, 2022. Ms. Jones seconded the motion. The motion passed 10-0 by the following roll call vote:
Ayes: Collins, Daughters, Easter, Jones, Lucas, Meeks, Murdoch, Murray, Pratley, Thompson
Nays: None

Budget/Finance Committee Report:

Mr. Meeks reported that the Budget/Finance Committee did not meet this month. Financial reports were provided to Committee members. Information was also shared by email regarding the purchase of truck bed covers.

Treasurer's Report and Financial Statements – January 2022:

MOTION: Ms. Daughters moved to approve the financial reports for December 2021. Mr. Lucas seconded the motion. The motion passed 10-0 by the following roll call vote:
Ayes: Collins, Daughters, Easter, Jones, Lucas, Meeks, Murdoch, Murray, Pratley, Thompson
Nays: None

Purchase of Truck Bed Covers with Locks (\$3,058.88):

MOTION: Mr. Lucas moved to purchase the truck bed covers for the indicated amount. Ms. Daughters seconded the motion. The motion passed 10-0 by the following roll call vote:
Ayes: Collins, Daughters, Easter, Jones, Lucas, Meeks, Murdoch, Murray, Pratley, Thompson
Nays: None

Committees and Delegated Authority:

Ms. Coates outlined revisions to the delegated authority list to reflect membership changes. Mr. Thompson offered to take delegated authority for the Resource Management Plans Committee, with Mr. Pratley as the alternate. Ms. Jones offered to serve as the alternate for the Public Relations Committee. Mr. Lucas will be the alternate for the Water Resources Committee.

The delegated authority list was added to the consent agenda.

Water Resources Committee Report:

Mr. Murray reported that two Tye septic projects were approved by delegated authority, one of which was an emergency replacement. There were no CAP approvals.

Ms. Hyatt noted that the Water Resources Committee agreed to have a standing meeting on Tuesday the week before the Board meeting each month at 3:00 p.m.

Personnel/Operations Committee Report:

Job Description – Education Assistant:

Ms. Coates explained that a job description is required, given the decision to classify the education assistants as employees effective January 1, 2022. The position is at pay grade 9. The job description may change later based on future program plans.

MOTION: Mr. Pratley moved to adopt the Education Assistant job description as presented. Ms. Jones seconded the motion. The motion passed 10-0 by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Collins, Daughters, Easter, Jones, Lucas, Meeks, Murdoch, Murray, Pratley, Thompson
Nays: None

Professional Services Contract for Payroll and Administrative Support:

Ms. Coates shared that Sarah Adams may process payroll or provide other support during temporary staff absences due to vacation or illness. Ms. Coates noted that Ms. Adams knows the District's finances well, and hiring a consultant who regularly uses QuickBooks is preferable to trying to cross-train in-house staff on QuickBooks and payroll. Payroll is estimated at one to three hours.

Mr. Meeks asked what the hourly rate is. Ms. Coates replied \$135.

Mr. Pratley noted that the budget includes a line item for professional services.

Mr. Thompson commented that he is glad to see something structured so there is potential for staff to take time off. Mr. Tingley agreed that it is good to anticipate in advance so that it does not have to be dealt with on an emergency basis. Mr. Meeks noted that he is flexible on his schedule for check signing to work with staff.

FY22 Staff Retreat:

Ms. Coates related that traditionally there has been a staff training and team-building event at least once a year. She would like to plan an event for this spring and possibly another during the summer for new employees to get to know everyone. Options include an outdoor event at Wintergreen, boating at Lake Anna, and a farm visit. Ms. Coates asked for a cost range to plan an event.

Mr. Murray suggested visiting the nature center at Wintergreen.

Ms. Jones expressed support for an ongoing line item for this purpose. Mr. Thompson agreed.

Ms. Coates suggested \$1,000 for FY22 and then adding an annual amount to next year's budget.

MOTION: Ms. Jones moved to approve up to \$1,000 for a staff retreat in this fiscal year. Ms. Daughters seconded the motion. The motion passed 9-0 by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Collins, Daughters, Easter, Jones, Lucas, Murdoch, Murray, Pratley, Thompson
Nays: None
Not Voting: Meeks

Mr. Thompson asked the Budget/Finance Committee to look at this and adopt a dollar figure for future budgets for this specific activity.

Computer Replacement Needs:

Ms. Coates explained that the District has hired new staff and had a number of staffing changes, and several aging computers are due for replacement. The IT company recommends replacing six computers for about \$8,000, or at least the three most critical computers for about \$4,000. Ms. Coates said Audrey Kirshner's desktop computer is nine years old, and she does GIS work, so the loss of productivity would be a significant issue. Staff have different computer hardware needs depending on whether they use GIS. Ms. Coates said she discussed the possibility of leasing with Ms. Jones but is concerned it may take too long to explore, with some computers already at high risk.

Ms. Cross suggested laptops with docking stations that can be used both for teleworking and at the office. Ms. Coates replied that desktops are less expensive, so staff have laptops for teleworking and remote into the main server through their office desktops.

Ms. Jones shared that she is converting her office to leased computers, and the cost is the same as purchase but spread over a three-year lease. Leased computers come with a warranty and can be bought at the end of the lease or replaced with new leased machines. Ms. Jones agreed that it may be cheaper for everyone to have one laptop that travels with them, rather than an office computer and a laptop. She said leasing was a day-long process.

Mr. Murray suggested buying rebuilt computers for cost savings. He also likes the idea of a laptop with a docking station.

Mr. Meeks commented that Mr. Murray, Ms. Jones, and Ms. Cross raised good questions that he would have hoped they could raise in a Budget/Finance Committee meeting. When he asked for additional information in December, he did so with the idea that they would discuss it at the next Budget/Finance Committee meeting. He expressed concern that information was distributed less than 24 hours before this meeting, without enough time for review. He asked what the IT costs would be for setup.

Ms. Coates explained that some work such as QuickBooks is done on office computers only, rather than having that travel on a laptop, but staff who use VPN to access network storage could use a single computer. She noted that the District has a long-standing contract with the IT company, but if there are questions about cost, they can schedule a meeting or ask for a quote for setup. The District uses discounted software when available. Ms. Coates suggested putting together a group of qualified individuals to review costs and operations aspects.

Mr. Pratley commented that this would not have been brought to the Board so quickly if there was not a certain sense of urgency. He asked Ms. Coates to speak to this.

Ms. Coates stated that the first two computers on the list should get a high priority but the others could wait. The Budget/Finance Committee usually meets the morning of the Board meeting, so they would have had this discussion at this morning's meeting if they had met.

Ms. Jones suggested authorizing the money to purchase if needed and then convening a committee to explore options to resolve this across the board within the next two months. Ms. Coates clarified that the rest of the staff's computers are working fine.

Mr. Murray remarked that age is not necessarily as relevant as the hard disk speed, processor speed, operating system, and RAM. He said he recently purchased a gaming computer that would be more than capable of running GIS and cost less than \$1,500.

Ms. Coates commented that they do not have the capacity in-house to know what they are looking for, and the District previously bought rebuilt computers that had issues, had to be discarded early, and lost important data files. She asked if Mr. Murray would assist in picking out computers. She noted that they need to make sure the IT company would support them.

Mr. Thompson commented that refurbished machines bought from a legitimate source come with full warranties. He said computers are a basic tool used by staff, and having equipment that is functional makes sense to maintain efficiency and use of their time.

Ms. Cross suggested developing a staggered replacement schedule. Ms. Coates replied that there is a computer inventory list with replacement dates, but with so many moving parts over the last year, it did not get fully fleshed out in the budget process.

Mr. Collins asked if they are happy with the IT company they currently use. He offered to provide a referral for the IT company he uses.

Ms. Coates replied that, if they were to look at using a different company, she would want to go through an RFP process with a committee to help review. She said the current company is responsive and quick on technical issues. The cost is included in the budget for professional services, and costs do go up when there are new computers set up or new staff members.

MOTION: Ms. Jones moved to approve the budget request of up to \$9,000 for computer replacements, with simultaneous review of the overall approach and services. Mr. Collins seconded the motion.

Mr. Pratley asked for a more modest proposal for a limited number of machines and the amount of money to replace those machines, only to be used in an emergency, because they are planning on having a meeting of committees to discuss this.

Mr. Murray commented that he is okay with the amount but Mr. Pratley makes a good point too. He said most computers get slow not because of the hardware but because of all the junk that gets on them. He suggested asking the IT company to image the new machines so they can be set back to zero if needed.

A roll call vote was then conducted. The motion passed 8-2 by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Collins, Daughters, Easter, Jones, Lucas, Murdoch, Murray, Thompson

Nays: Meeks, Pratley

Mr. Thompson stated that he trusts the staff and their decision-making process and the fact that they will rely on input from members of the Board and the Budget/Finance Committee as this moves forward, and part of reducing staff stress levels is making sure they have adequate equipment to carry out their responsibilities.

Ms. Coates asked for volunteers to serve on an ad hoc review committee for computer replacement and IT services. Mr. Collins, Ms. Jones, Mr. Murray, and Mr. Tingley volunteered. Anne Coates and Amy Moyer will be the staff members.

Agriculture Committee Report:

Mr. Lucas reported on the Agriculture Committee's consideration of VACS approvals. All projects ranked highly and were recommended for approval. The state has asked SWCDs to conduct a tillage survey, which would require considerable time for District employees at a time when they will be busy getting projects off the ground. The Agriculture Committee decided to maybe participate in the tillage survey, depending on the MOU. The Committee also heard updates on Ms. Eiserman's communication with a landowner about an access easement issue, outreach plans, cover crops, and a transfer agreement. Michael Yager, the new Conservation Specialist, will be starting in March.

MOTION: Mr. Murdoch moved to adopt the Agriculture Committee report. Ms. Jones seconded the motion. The motion passed 10-0 by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Collins, Daughters, Easter, Jones, Lucas, Meeks, Murdoch, Murray, Pratley, Thompson

Nays: None

BMP Transfer Agreement – Panamint Farm LLC to Dragonfly Farms LLC (Contract Nos. 02-20-0111, 02-21-0068, and 02-21-0052):

MOTION: Mr. Meeks moved to approve the BMP transfer agreement from Panamint Farm LLC to Dragonfly Farms LLC. Mr. Pratley seconded the motion. The motion passed 10-0 by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Collins, Daughters, Easter, Jones, Lucas, Meeks, Murdoch, Murray, Pratley, Thompson

Nays: None

Tillage Survey:

Ms. Coates stated that Mr. Longanecker requested a copy of the MOU. She noted concerns with carpooling versus the safety of one person trying to drive and do the survey, staffing concerns given the heavy workload in trying to obligate \$3.3 million, and the budget impact on TA versus the tillage survey reimbursement.

Mr. Longanecker said they had a good preliminary discussion and responded to DCR, and he will share further information via email with the Agriculture Committee on the pros and cons to get feedback over the next week or two. They need to make a decision in the next few weeks or look at other options such as contracting out to students.

Ms. Coates asked if the deadline for a response is before the next Board meeting. Ms. Cross replied that training is planned for early March, so there may be a need to be a decision before the next Board meeting. Ms. Cross said they would not need to sign the MOU until after the Board meets but they would need to give a yes or no.

Ms. Coates asked about later training for those who are currently undecided. Ms. Cross suggested that they identify some staff members to get the training materials provided.

Mr. Pratley noted that if it were approved by delegated authority, it would not come to the Board until it had already been decided to go ahead with the carpooling and COVID protocols. He asked if there were any red lines that would say not to go ahead.

Mr. Lucas said that the last state trainings were in a webinar format and available for later review. He has not heard any deadline other than the yes, no, or maybe by March 19.

Ms. Cross replied that there were four maybes, one no, and the rest were yes.

Mr. Thompson asked whether to give the Agriculture Committee delegated authority to provide a response, which may get tricky crossing discipline lines relative to COVID policy, staff time, allocation of resources, etc.

Ms. Coates noted that the new staff member starts March 14 and would not have the opportunity to participate in trainings in early March. Students working as employees or consultants would need to comply with the District's vaccine policy and COVID policies. She has concerns with the \$1.4 million yet to be allocated to meet 90 percent, the need to be a team player, and budget considerations. She noted that Mr. Lucas is chair of the Agriculture Committee and also a member of the Budget/Finance Committee.

Mr. Thompson proposed that the Agriculture Committee filter the information gathered over the next week or two and make a recommendation, while giving Ms. Coates the ultimate decision-making authority.

Mr. Collins expressed concern over the staff workload. He said it is one thing if they have the capability comfortably, but he is not sure about stretching people that much more. He asked if it can be divided up with other Districts more.

Ms. Coates agreed that they are pushed to the limit as far as capacity, and that needs to be added to the list of pros and cons.

Ms. Daughters commented that on the side of the amount of bandwidth available it looks very concerning, and she would say focus on getting 90 percent of funds committed.

MOTION: Mr. Lucas moved to authorize Ms. Coates to make the final decision on the tillage survey. Ms. Jones seconded the motion. The motion passed 10-0 by the following roll call vote:
 Ayes: Collins, Daughters, Easter, Jones, Lucas, Meeks, Murdoch, Murray, Pratley, Thompson
 Nays: None

Mr. Thompson stated that the Agriculture Committee will gather the information when they get the MOU and explore what other resources might be available, put together the list of pros and cons, and give the list to Ms. Coates to provide the response in the timeframe that DCR will provide in the near future.

CONSENT AGENDA

1. **Committee Minutes:** Agriculture Committee (2/15/22); Water Resources Committee (2/16/22)
2. **Consent Items:** Agriculture Cost-Share and Tax Credits (see list below)

CONSENT AGENDA (cont'd.)

2/23/2022

Agriculture Practices

Last Name / Business	Contract #	Instance	Practice Code	Estimated Cost Share	Potential Tax Credit	Final Tax Credit	Conservation Plan Approval
Hegyion Orchard, LLC	02-22-0015	470669	SL-6N	\$ 5,961.08	\$ 496.76	-	-
EB Cattle Company	02-22-0086	470656	CCI-SL-6N	\$ 3,866.25	-	-	-
EB Cattle Company	02-22-0086	470657	CCI-SL-6W	\$ 55,350.00	-	-	-
Attonce Cattle Ranch LLC	02-22-0087	470659	SL-1	\$ 31,762.50	-	-	Yes
Pippins	02-22-0088	470677	CCI-SL-6W	\$ 6,068.75	-	-	-

MOTION: Mr. Meeks moved to approve the Agriculture Committee and Water Resources Committee minutes on the Consent Agenda. Mr. Pratley seconded the motion. The motion passed 10-0 by the following roll call vote:
 Ayes: Collins, Daughters, Easter, Jones, Lucas, Meeks, Murdoch, Murray, Pratley, Thompson
 Nays: None

MOTION: Mr. Lucas moved to approve the agriculture cost-share and tax credits as listed on the agenda and the delegated authority list as revised during today’s meeting. Mr. Meeks seconded the motion. The motion passed 10-0 by the following roll call vote:
 Ayes: Collins, Daughters, Easter, Jones, Lucas, Meeks, Murdoch, Murray, Pratley, Thompson
 Nays: None

RATIFICATION AGENDA:

1. **Ratification List:** Personnel/Operations Committee, Water Resources Committee (see list below)

Ratification Agenda - February 23, 2022										
Item	Delegated Authority	Last Name / Business	Contract #	Instance	Practice Code	Estimated Cost Share	Potential Tax Credit	Final Tax Credit	Conservation Plan Approval	Approval Date
Water Resources Committee										
1	Murray	Campbell	02-22-0084	470213	RB-4P	\$ 9,600.00	-	-	-	2/2/2022
2	Murray	Vergara	02-22-0085	470216	RB-1	\$ 175.00	-	-	-	2/1/2022
Personnel/Operations Committee										
3	Thompson	Hardware TMDL (PO 17166)		Grant Contract for \$96,131.43 for Agricultural and Septic BMPs and TA						2/18/2022
4	Thompson	Louisa E&S Contract		Minor Correction						2/15/2022

MOTION: Mr. Pratley moved to approve the Ratification Agenda. Ms. Jones seconded the motion. The motion passed 10-0 by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Collins, Daughters, Easter, Jones, Lucas, Meeks, Murdoch, Murray, Pratley, Thompson

Nays: None

STAFF REPORTS:

Ms. Coates thanked Mr. Meeks for representing the District at the NACD conference. She also thanked Ms. Hyatt for putting together the presentation with an embedded video. Courtney Harlow-Humphreys has started and is working with Lauriston DaMitz to get up to speed on the education programs. Ms. Harlow-Humphreys will manage both the education program and the residential BMP program, and Ms. Kirschner will continue to assist on the urban components. Ms. Harlow-Humphreys will be reaching out to the Education Committee soon to coordinate on scholarships. Michael Yager will start on March 14.

Mr. Longanecker spoke regarding Mr. Yager's background.

Ms. Coates noted that Ms. Hyatt just completed the third of four videos funded by the anonymous horse grant and NACD. Ms. Coates shared updates on potentially returning to in-person meetings in March.

COOPERATING AGENCIES REPORTS:

DCR: Ms. Cross summarized information from her monthly written report (*see attached report for details*). She thanked the District for getting the strategic plan done on time without an extension. She called attention to recent DCR staff changes, BMP verification follow-up, and upcoming meeting dates.

NRCS: Mr. Kirkland reported on ranking and application deadlines, program allocations, and office operating status. Mr. Bayless shared staffing updates.

VCE: No updates.

DEQ: DEQ provided a written report.

FSA: No updates.

TJWRP Foundation: Mr. Thompson reported that the Foundation is following up on easement inspections and sending letters to landowners to address any concerns.

VASWCD/NACD: Mr. Meeks reported that VASWCD will hold an in-person board meeting on March 24 in Richmond the day after the SWCB meeting. He attended the NACD annual meeting last week, which was well attended. While there, he gave a presentation prepared by Ms. Hyatt that focused on the technical assistance provided to landowners, generating good questions and feedback. He also prepared an exhibit on NACD history, which was well received. Mr. Meeks shared additional updates on NACD elections, Virginia program staffing, other discussions from the annual meeting, and John Peterson’s addition to the NACD Hall of Distinction.

VSHC: Mr. Thomson noted that Ms. Coates provided information on the number of states that have adopted soil health legislation.

DOF: No updates.

DIRECTOR REPORTS:

Mr. Murray spoke regarding a recent visit to his family farm and meeting with the Duplin County SWCD regarding conservation easements.

Mr. Lucas reported that Tim Talley, Marie Abowd, and he participated in the recent dam owners training, where they discussed easement issues. Mr. Lucas said a new farm purchase will impact one of the District’s dam easements. The next round of dam monitors has been purchased by the state.

Mr. Meeks requested a return to the previous policy of sending out agendas by the Friday before the meeting to allow for review of materials over the weekend.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, the chair adjourned the meeting at 12:14 p.m.

Submitted by: _____
Recording Secretary

Approved: _____
Chair