

HIGHLANDS SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT - BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

MEETING MINUTES

MEETING DATE: 1/16/2024

Meeting Location: HSWCD Conf. Room – Bert Harris Center

FINAL – Approved 2/20/2024

Recorded by: Susie Bishop

MEETING SCHEDULED START: 3:00 P.M. CALL TO ORDER: @ 3:00 P.M.

PUBLIC MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT READ BY CHAIRMAN

I. Welcome & Introductions

Name	Title	Organization	Present
ATTENDANCE			
Dr. John Causey	Chairman	Highlands Soil & Water	Y
Steve Smith	Vice-Chairman	Conservation District	Y
Doug Deen	Secretary/Treasurer		N
Sara Sebring	Supervisor		Y
T.J. Wohl	Supervisor		Y
Scott Kirouac	Liaison	Highlands Co. Board of County Commissioners	Y
Susie Bishop	Executive Director	Highlands Soil & Water	Y
Kayla Nickerson	BMP Tech.	Highlands Soil & Water	Y
Lauren Ahrens	BMP Tech.	Highlands Soil & Water	Y
Andrew Adams	ES I	FDACS-OAWP	N
Chad Harmon	MIL Manager	Highlands Soil & Water	N
Wade Smith	MIL Tech.	Highlands Soil & Water	N
Carlos Torres	District Cons.	USDA-NRCS	Y
Josue Aceituno	Soil Scientist	USDA-NRCS	Y
Don Buchanan	Rangeland Specialist	USDSA-NRCS	Y
Edgar Stokes	Citizen		Y

- II. **Approval of Agenda** – Motion to approve agenda as presented with added item between Agenda Items III & IV to hear concern of Edgar Stokes, citizen. (Causey/Wohl). Unanimous Approval.
- III. **Approval of Meeting Minutes- December 19, 2023** - Motion made to approve the minutes as presented (Wohl/Sebring). Unanimous Approval. **Special Board Meeting on January 9, 2024** – Motion made to approve as presented (Sebring/Wohl). Unanimous Approval.

Citizen Edgar Stokes shared his concerns over the level of water on Lake Istokpoga, causing flooding in cattle pastures and decline in herd health. Commissioner Kirouac stated he will address the concern with County Administrator and SFWMD Board Ben Butler and Government Liaison Libby Pigman. Supervisor Smith expressed the same concern for his cattle pastures.

IV. **Financial Activity**

- a. **Overview & Approval of Financial Reports- December 2023:** Review of bank statements & financial reports. Motion to approve the financial reports as presented (Wohl/Smith). Unanimous Approval.

V. **Agency Partner Updates**

- a. **FDACS** – Nickerson & Bishop reported the new Statewide Bureau Chief of Field Services, Steve Smith, started today. There are cost share dollars available for projects, Nickerson asked Supervisors to share this with fellow producers, but to be sure they know not to purchase anything or start a project without prior approval. No Action.
- b. **MIL** – Bishop reported a statewide training for MILs will be conducted tomorrow on Lateral Irrigation Systems on a sod field. Following the training the ICC meeting will take place at the Bert Harris Center. Part of the discussion will be the SOW and SOP documents. Evaluations in excess of their required number per contract have been completed. No Action.
- c. **NRCS** – Torres introduced two new members to his team – Don Buchanan, Rangeland Specialist and Josue Aceituno, Soil Scientist. Both will be based in the Sebring office. The deadline for Easement applications is Jan. 31. There are funds for CSP still available and Torres encouraged producers to apply. No Action.
- d. **HCBCC** – Kirouac reported Commission is monitoring the Legislative Session regarding the bill about taxing special districts – IMWID needs to be taxed so maintenance can continue and monitoring of a Bill to make term limits on County Commissioners is being proposed. There is a communication tower being proposed for the Lorida area and a potential Organic Sugar Refinery at the corner of Hwy. 98 and 721. The LOCAR project was discussed. No Action.

VI. **Old Business**

- a. **Update on Filed Legislation** – Bishop reported Lobbyist Dave Ramba has been secured. The desired Amendments to Representative Truenow’s House Bill 1075, by HSWCD priority, have been provided to Ramba. Ramba’s opinion is they are all attainable. Bishop reported there is a divide among Districts as to what the Amendments should be with concerns including list of HSWCD and other Districts want Supervisors to remain elected or have a hybrid Board of both elected

and appointed. Staff retaining jobs is a major concern too. Bishop will update Ramba on the concerns. Ramba predicts the Bills will be on Committee Hearing agendas by next week and Bishop plans to attend all of the hearings in person. Okeechobee SWCD will be hiring their own lobbyist with overall intention to stop the Bill and if not stopped, some amendments. Bishop shared the concerns of Okeechobee SWCD. Suwannee SWCD list of Amendments is similar to Highlands as is Gilchrist. No Action.

VII. New Business

- a. Annual Report 2022-2023 – Bishop presented the Annual Report. Motion made to accept the Annual Report as presented (Wohl/Sebring) Unanimous Approval.
- b. Election of Officers – Motion to retain all officers as they are currently – Chairman – John Causey; Vice-Chairman – Steve Smith; Secretary/Treasurer – Doug Deen (Wohl/Sebring). Unanimous Approval.

VIII. Executive Director's Report - Items presented:

- Website – Updates are completed.
- OPPAGA has started and Supervisors should be aware they will be contacted in the coming weeks. Bishop's opinion is the OPPAGA results will show all the inactive Districts so it is critical HB 1075 gets passed WITH Amendments or could face abolishment again following OPPAGA Report.
- Bishop will teach Leadership Highlands Ag Day with Ray Royce on January 18.

IX. Citizens Not on the Agenda – None

X. Supervisor Comments -

Smith – None
Sebring – None
Wohl – None
Causey – None

Meeting Adjourned at 4:48 p.m.

John Causey, Chairman

Doug Deen, Secretary

POST MEETING ACTION ITEMS

<i>Action</i>	<i>Assigned To</i>	<i>Deadline</i>
<i>Monitor Legislation regarding Florida SWCD Reorganization</i>	<i>S. Bishop</i>	<i>Spring 2024</i>
<i>Monitor and Manage SOW and SOP for the MIL Contract & Project Manager Concerns</i>	<i>S. Bishop & C. Harmon</i>	<i>Jan. 2024</i>
<i>Discard old SWCD Records. Organize permanent SWCD Records</i>	<i>All Staff</i>	<i>January 2024</i>
<i>Rebuild of Website</i>	<i>K. Nickerson & S. Bishop</i>	<i>January 2024</i>
<i>Complete FY 2022-2023 Annual Report</i>	<i>S. Bishop & K. Nickerson</i>	<i>January 2024</i>
<i>Assist with Transition to Staff for Ag Venture Program</i>	<i>S. Bishop</i>	<i>January 2024</i>
<i>Monitor updates to the BMP Manuals</i>	<i>S. Bishop</i>	<i>Year 2024</i>
<i>Manage DEP Stolen Saddle Ranch Contract</i>	<i>S. Bishop</i>	<i>Ongoing</i>