

# **HIGHLANDS SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT - BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

## **MEETING MINUTES**

**MEETING DATE: 10/17/2023**

Meeting Location: HSWCD Conf. Room – Bert Harris Center

**FINAL – Approved 11/21/2023**

Recorded by: Susie Bishop

**MEETING SCHEDULED START: 3:00 P.M. CALL TO ORDER: @ 3:01 P.M.**

**PUBLIC MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT READ BY CHAIRMAN**

Name	Title	Organization	Present
Dr. John Causey	Chairman	Highlands Soil & Water Conservation District	Y
Steve Smith	Vice-Chairman		Y
Doug Deen	Secretary/Treasurer		Y
Sara Sebring	Supervisor		Y
T.J. Wohl	Supervisor		Y
Scott Kirouac	Liaison		Highlands Co. Board of County Commissioners
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

**I. Welcome & Introductions**

- II. Approval of Agenda** – Motion to approve agenda as presented (Smith/Sebring).  
Unanimous Approval.

**Presentation – David Royal, Nutrient Stewardship Project Manager  
The Nature Conservancy**

Due to an unavoidable conflict for Royal to present at the meeting, Bishop presented the request for funding of 24 months of connectivity fees for soil moisture probe system on a cover crop research project TNC is conducting with Buck Island Ranch. Motion to provide the funding with the condition Royal attends the November Board meeting to answer questions regarding the project (Wohl/Smith). Unanimous Approval.

III. **Approval of Meeting Minutes – September 19, 2023** - Motion made to approve the minutes as presented (Smith/Wohl). Unanimous Approval.

IV. **Financial Activity**

- a. **Overview & Approval of Financial Reports- September 2023:** Review of bank statements & financial reports. Motion to approve the financial reports as presented (Deen/Smith). Unanimous Approval. Bishop presented a CD due and options Motion to reinvest the CD in an 11 month CD with JP Morgan at 5.7% (Sebring/Deen). Unanimous Approval.

Bishop shared information regarding the Annual Public Depositor Report required to file with the Florida CFO. There is question of two finance institutions CDs are held with that are not Qualified Public Depositors. Bishop will seek further information and report back at the November meeting. No Action.

V. **Agency Partner Updates**

- a. **FDACS** – K. Nickerson & Bishop provided updates on field staff work. HSWCD staff is ahead on their IV Completion List. Applications are being sought for Cost Share projects. No Action.
- b. **MIL** – The MIL Team is ahead of schedule for completed evaluations. A SOP is being developed. MIL Manager made some suggestions to improve the Data Reporting Format and they were well received. No Action.
- c. **NRCS** – C. Torres reported 2024 applications are being accepted. NRCS in Florida has been notified of increased funding expected for 2024 & 2025 projects. Torres asked Board to share the information with their fellow farmers in an effort to gather numerous applicants. Discussion of programs took place. No Action.
- d. **HCBCC** – Commissioner Kirouac reported budget was adopted and mileage rate was reduced by 3%. IMWID was discussed. No Action

VI. **Old Business**

- a. **Strategic Work Plan** – Bishop distributed the 2023-2028. Motion to approve plan as presented with assurance plan will be reviewed annually, if not quarterly. (Wohl/Deen). Unanimous Approval.
- b. **Staff Salary Increase vs Bonuses** – requested this item be discussed under Item VII. e.

VII. **New Business**

- a. **Community Garden/Extension** – Bishop explained in detail issues with the the Extension bee program/hives and gardeners being stung. Various solutions and options were discussed and Bishop was directed to implement safety measures as warranted. No Action.
- b. **Proposed Legislation/Lobbyist** – Bishop reported nothing confirmed as of now about future legislation regarding the future of SWCDs in Florida. No Action.
- c. **Holiday Schedule 2024** – Bishop presented the County approved 2024 Holiday Schedule for HCBCC, Clerk of Courts, and the Courts System. Motion made to adopt the HCBCC Holiday schedule of 11 paid holidays and the addition of Christmas Eve, December 24 for all HSWCD staff. (Wohl/Sebring) Unanimous Approval.
- d. **November Board Meeting Date/State Time** – Motion made to adjust start time to 1:00 on November 21 following a Board Lunch at Noon (Wohl/Sebring) Unanimous Approval.

- e. **Executive Director Annual Evaluation** – Bishop first requested the 5% increase voted on last month for staff be changed to a 5% Bonus for easier bookkeeping separate from the FDACS contracts for the staff. Motion to grant 5% bonuses and not a salary increase to staff (Smith/Deen) Unanimous Approval. Dr. Causey reported the Executive Director Annual Evaluation score as 418 out of 420. Motion to grant a 5% bonus to Bishop (Smith/Sebring) Unanimous Approval. Succession planning for the ED was discussed in detail. No Action.

**VIII. Executive Director's Report - Items presented:**

- Oct. 20 & 21 Bishop will attend AFCD Training in Gainesville.
- Presented thank you letter from Ag Venture for 2 yr. commitment.
- Presented letter ED provided to the Highlands County Fair Assoc. for a Grant application.
- Taught Team Building to Leadership Highlands last month, will be teaching Agriculture to class in January incorporating HSWCD too
- Inquiry from a Fisheating Creek Landowner was received. Bishop reported she will assist with history and documents, but not lead the reorganization of group.
- Inquiry about Weather Station program from FDACS. Bishop will follow up with OAWP.

**IX. Citizens Not on the Agenda – None**

**X. Supervisor Comments -**

Smith – Announced Wad Purvis is nominated for SE Farmer of the year  
Deen - None  
Sebring – None  
Wohl – None  
Causey – Expressed interest in seeking Commissioner's Kirouac's Potential projects for the District to be involved in.

Meeting Adjourned at 5:38 p.m.