

**LUZERNE CONSERVATION DISTRICT
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
325 SMITHS POND ROAD, SHAVERTOWN, PA 18708
May 21, 2020**

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Timothy Ference, Chairman, called the meeting of the Luzerne Conservation District Board of Directors to order at 6:05 PM, noting that the meeting was being held via video/phone conference and was being recorded to aid in the preparation of the meeting minutes.

ROLL CALL - BOARD MEMBERS:

Timothy Ference	Chairman	Present via phone
John J. Wilkes, Jr.	Vice-Chairman	Present via video
Tracey Chonko	Secretary	Excused
Leonard J. Burger, Jr.	Member	Present via phone
Walter Griffith	Member	Present via video
John P. Hanish, Jr.	Member	Present via phone
Gary A. Moyer, Sr.	Member	Present via phone

DISTRICT EMPLOYEES:

Hunter Bednarczyk, E&S/NPDES Program Technician	written report submitted
Heather Graham, E&S/NPDES Program Coordinator	written report submitted
Deborah Josuweit, Office Administrator	Present via video/written report submitted
Jennifer Lauri, Ag Conservation Specialist	written report submitted
John Levitsky, Watershed Specialist	written report submitted
Joshua Longmore, Executive Director	Present via video/written report submitted
Amber Martin, Conservation Specialist (MDC Program)	written report submitted
Michael Schlauch, Conservation Specialist (Ag & Roads Programs)	written report submitted

AGENCY REPRESENTATIVES:

Andrew Kears	NRCS	Present via phone
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ORDER OF BUSINESS

(Denotes motion or action taken by the district board)**

PUBLIC COMMENT: Ference noted that no members of the public called in to participate in the meeting.

MINUTES: Submitted by Josuweit.

****Motion by Griffith, seconded by Moyer to approve the April 16, 2020 meeting minutes as submitted.
The motion carried.**

FINANCIAL REPORTS: Submitted by Josuweit.

Longmore noted that E&S fees are still trending a little lower than budgeted at the end of April, but there has been some larger deposits in May.

****Ference ordered the Financial Reports to be filed for audit.**

ACTION ITEMS:

NRCS Civil Rights Responsibilities for Partners Checklist

Ference noted the checklist included as Item 3a in the board packet. Kears explained a review of the checklist is to comply with USDA and NRCS civil rights requirements and was developed to serve as an internal guide to assist with responsibilities and expectations between NRCS and its partners. Longmore noted this is an annual review that requires board members to acknowledge it was presented. Longmore will list the present board members' names on the form, and with the board's consensus, Ference will sign and date the Affirmation of Review.

Update on District Operations During Pandemic

Longmore reported that the Continuity of Operations Plan that was approved by the board last month has been guiding the district's operations and is functioning quite well. The physical office remains closed to the public, but staff are in communication with the public through emails and phone calls which are being forwarded to employees' cell phones. Josuweit is still going into the office daily to check the mail, notifying staff members if they need to pick up items, and taking care of financial bookkeeping. Longmore is visiting the office weekly to sign checks, process deposits, and check the building and grounds. Staff is scheduling their office visits to minimize the presence of multiple people at the same time. Some field operations are being allowed if there aren't direct face-to-face interactions with other people for most programs, but Longmore presented a proposed update to the COOP pertaining to E&S Program field inspections. The E&S Program staff continue to follow DEP guidance for virtual inspections for construction activities, but Longmore and the program staff believe that in some cases field inspections would be more effective and can be done safely without direct personal interaction with others and while following any safety plans that contractors have in place as it relates to COVID-19. Longmore has been able to purchase PPE to provide to the staff. Longmore requested approval for the following minor revisions (in italics and underlined) to the COOP:

D. Meetings & Field Work During Office Closures:

- In-person interactions will only be considered if necessary. If staff members believe this is the case, they should request permission from the Executive Director.
 - o If the Executive Director approves an in-person interaction, staff members should practice social distancing - keep at least 6 feet of distance between people, stay outdoors, and have no personal contact such as handshakes, sharing pens, touching common surfaces, etc. Also, CDC and PA Department of Health recommendations for the use of personal protective equipment should be followed, including the use of face masks and gloves/hand hygiene measures. If a person is visibly sick, staff members should inform them they've been directed not to meet with anyone with symptoms of communicable illness and reschedule the meeting or arrange a phone call after the inspection or other field work is conducted.

E. Program-specific Guidance:

1. E&S/NPDES Program Implementation:

- f) Field work/inspections will be limited as noted above. If complaints are received, program staff members should discuss them with the Executive Director and regional DEP representatives. DEP protocol for site visits during the emergency situation will be followed to the extent possible. If it is necessary to visit a site, then the work should be done without direct interaction with others to the maximum extent possible. Discussions via phone before or after a site visit should be used to communicate as needed. However, the Executive Director should be consulted prior to conducting any such field activities.

Longmore continues to monitor the recommendations from state and federal agencies, since the board decided to follow the guidelines from the government agencies. As those recommendations progress, the district will adjust operations accordingly.

****Motion by Griffith, seconded by Burger to approve the revisions presented by Longmore. The motion carried unanimously.**

Technology/Cyber-Security Considerations

Longmore noted that some adjustments were made to the district's technology to accommodate remote working capabilities. After participating in a recent cybersecurity webinar, he feels that some security improvements should be considered. He has consulted with one of the webinar presenters and received a proposal for comprehensive IT support. This would come with a monthly per user fee and would cover all IT needs, such as security, continually monitoring and upgrading software, and troubleshoot and repair/maintenance of hardware. The cost was higher than expected and is not in our budget at this time. He will continue to research the issue and explore other options for technology/cyber-security consideration.

Tax Reporting Issue Regarding Retirement Plan

Ference reminded the board of the discuss at the last meeting on the tax reporting issue related to the district's retirement plan. Longmore spoke with the PA Municipal Retirement System's attorney again and got more clarification as to why employees voluntary retirement contributions should have been treated as post-tax income instead of pre-tax income. Longmore has attempted to contact the IRS, but they are still not providing live support due to restricted operations. He will report back to the board next month after he gathers more information.

Employee Step Increase Acknowledgments

Ference reminded the board of the detailed pay schedule that is in place and there are two employees who, based on this schedule, are eligible for a step increase. Josuweit and Jesse successfully achieved a step increase within the district's Employee Pay Schedule. Josuweit will move from Conservation Specialist 2 Step 1 to Step 2; and Jesse will move from Program Technician Step 14 to Step 15. Griffith requested information pertaining to the district's pay schedule. Longmore offered to email the information to Griffith. Ference noted how well the policy has worked since it was adopted, and Wilkes agreed.

Additional Items

PACD Regional Meeting Summary

Ference summarized the spring Northeast Regional meeting and reported on the following:

- All six PACD regions voted to support a policy on invasive species involvement and funding.
- Armstrong Conservations District requested a change from the Southwest to Northwest region, and all six regions voted in support of the change that requires a PACD bylaws amendment and approval at the executive meeting in July.

Stout Project

Ference reminded the board that action on the Stout stream restoration project that was tabled last month. He noted additional information is still needed, so this item will remain tabled until a future meeting.

Ference noted staff reports are included in the board packets.

COOPERATING AGENCY REPORTS:

NRCS – Kearsse gave a verbal report on the operations of NRCS during the COVID-19 pandemic.

PACD – A draft letter was provided for districts to use in reaching out to state legislators regarding conservation district funding. If board members would like to add ideas, Longmore can incorporate them as he communicates on behalf of the district. He noted that they are working on the state budget in Harrisburg, with a target date to pass it by June 30th. Because of the state of the economy, PACD is suggesting districts to take an approach of just asking to maintain current funding levels. Longmore would follow that approach if the board is in agreement.

CORRESPONDENCE & ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- June LCD Board of Directors Meeting – 6/18/2020 at 6:00 PM.
- Ference noted there will be an employment law webinar series for district managers and directors, presented by Adam Long of McNees Wallace Law, on 6/3, 7/8, and 8/5 from 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM, and a follow-up question and answer session will be scheduled for September.
- PACD Executive Council meeting scheduled for July 23rd will be a virtual meeting through a Zoom video conference at 10:00 AM to Noon.

****Motion by Wilkes, seconded by Griffith to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried unanimously.**

The meeting adjourned at 6:45 PM.

This meeting was recorded to assist in the preparation of the official written minutes.

Respectfully submitted by: Deborah Josuweit, Office Administrator

Approved by action of the Luzerne Conservation District Board of Directors on June 18, 2020.

Timothy Fevenc

Chair or Vice Chair

Lacey Chonka

Treasurer/Secretary