

**LUZERNE CONSERVATION DISTRICT
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
325 SMITHS POND ROAD, SHAVERTOWN, PA 18708
September 16, 2021**

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Tim Ference, Chairman, called the meeting of the Luzerne Conservation District Board of Directors to order at 6:04 PM, noting that the meeting was being held in-person and via video/phone conference and that it was being recorded.

ROLL CALL - BOARD MEMBERS:

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

Ference noted Associate Director Tom Herbert and Rob Sax, DEP NERO Local Government Liaison, were in attendance.

DISTRICT EMPLOYEES:

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

AGENCY REPRESENTATIVES:

Andrew Kears	NRCS	Present via phone
Robert Saxe	DEP	Present

ORDER OF BUSINESS

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

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

MINUTES: Submitted by Josuweit.

****Motion by Griffith, seconded by Hanish to approve the August 19, 2021, meeting minutes as submitted. The motion carried unanimously.**

FINANCIAL REPORTS: Submitted by Josuweit.

Ference noted the financial reports in the board packet.

****Motion by Griffith, seconded by Moyer to accept the Financial Report as submitted. The motion carried unanimously.**

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

COOPERATING AGENCY REPORTS:

NRCS – Kears provided a written and verbal report.

DEP – Ference noted a written report was included in the board packet and invited Saxe to speak. Saxe thanked Longmore for his work on the Countywide Action Plan and the district’s support in the effort. The final draft of the plan will be submitted to DEP soon.

Griffith asked Longmore if he had information related to the Butler Mine Tunnel being released from EPA’s Superfund Site List. Longmore noted his best understanding is that EPA has monitored the mine tunnel discharge for years, and the recent testing indicated that the pollutants have been flushed out and they don’t anticipate additional pollutants at this site.

PACD – Ference noted a written report was included in the board packet.

Ference noted staff reports were included in the board packet under Item 4.

BUSINESS ITEMS:

Retirement System Minimum Obligation for 2022 Acknowledgment

Ference noted that Longmore provided the district’s PA Municipal Retirement System 2022 Minimum Municipal Obligation Worksheet as Item 5a in the board packet. Each year, it is required that Longmore, as the plan administrator, complete the worksheet and present it to the board. Longmore explained that he prepared worksheet based on payroll estimates for 2022.

****Ference acknowledged the boards receipt of the worksheet for 2022.**

Approval of the Spotted Lanternfly Grant Agreement with PDA

Ference reminded the board of the discussion held last month on a grant from the PA Department of Agriculture (PDA) for Spotted Lanternfly education/outreach efforts. Longmore reported that PDA approved the grant application for activities between July 1, 2021, and May 31, 2022. A grant agreement was provided in the board packet as Item 5b, and with board approval it will be signed and submitted, and work will start on the project this fall.

****Motion by Griffith, seconded by Wilkes to approve the agreement with PDA for the Spotted Lanternfly education/outreach project. The motion carried unanimously.**

Approval of Countywide Action Plan for Clean Water Final Draft

Ference noted Item 5c in the board packet and asked if anyone had questions pertaining to the draft. Wilkes complimented Longmore for the work and dedication that was put into completing the action plan. Longmore stated it was a team effort with diverse partners from around the county and different stakeholder groups working on the project. Congratulations are really for the whole team and the district’s consultant Josh Glace, who did a good job pulling together everybody’s input, processing the information, and creating the plan document. Ference also acknowledged the tremendous work put forth by Longmore and the district staff for this project.

****Motion by Wilkes, seconded by Griffith to approve the Countywide Action Plan for submission to DEP. The motion carried unanimously.**

Consideration of Vehicle Replacement Options

Longmore stated he is gathering information and hopes to have proposals in a month or two. Vehicle trade-in values are high right now and the district’s finances are very healthy this year. The intention would be to upgrade 3 of the vehicles with mid-sized pickups and an SUV.

Ventilation Need in Upstairs Office Area

Ference stated there is a continuing problem in the upstairs office area. Longmore reminded the board of the previous work for the bat infestation and mold issue. Insulation was replaced, the attic was fumigated, antifungal sealant was applied, and roof ventilation was improved. The area was good until the hot summer humid weather came, and Longmore noticed the return of odors upstairs. He wanted the board to be aware of this issue and that he will be working on a solution this fall. He will contact the district’s HVAC contractor to look for recommendations to add a fresh air exchanger. Once he gets options, he will present them to the board.

Update on 2020 Financial Audit

Longmore reported that Ray Knaub, the district auditor was in our office and working remotely on the audit this summer. Usually, he presents the report at this September meeting, but he reported there were delays in receiving information from the Pennsylvania Municipal Retirement System (PMRS). They had a statewide problem with completing the last couple of fiscal year reports, which Knaub needs to finish the audit. PMRS expects to have all the reports finalized by the end of the month. Knaub should be presenting the audit to the board in October or November.

Alternative Health Insurance Reimbursement Benefit

Longmore stated he is still looking into a process for compensating for health insurance costs related to employees or their dependents who transition to Medicare. He spoke with an insurance broker who indicated that some of her clients reimburse their employees without any problems, but when he told her about information he found online regarding direct reimbursements to employees, she referred him to Knaub. Knaub initially thought it would be fine with the district’s current reimbursement policy. Longmore forwarded the online information to Knaub for review. He is waiting for guidance from Knaub. Wilkes noted that Jackson Township has done something similar for one of their employees and the direction given to them was to renew the policy each year at the township’s reorganizational meeting to make any changes or updates. Longmore will investigate further with Wilkes. Ference entertained a motion to table the matter until the next monthly meeting. ****Motion by Wilkes, seconded by Griffith to table the matter until the next meeting. The motion carried unanimously.**

Griffith asked how much the district pays for the annual audit and if the district does a competitive bidding process for the service. Longmore reported that the 2020 audit will cost about \$7,300 and that a bidding process is not used. When discussed in the past, the board has been pleased with the service and expertise that Knaub provides; and when quotes had been gathered previously, his price was determined to be fair. The board considers Knaub’s audit proposal each year and hasn’t felt the need to request other proposals since it is a professional service. Longmore noted that the audits are submitted to the State Conservation Commission, the County Controller, and County Council each year; and the SCC does a formal review of all district audits. No issues or concerns have been conveyed by the agencies. Wilkes noted that Knaub is recognized as having expertise in conservation districts and the state programs, and the board has been satisfied with his services and prices.

Employee Step Increase Notification

Ference acknowledged that Lauri has successfully achieved a step increase within the district’s Employee Pay Schedule.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- PACD Northeast Region Meeting at DEP NERO either in person or online – 10/8/21 at 10:00 AM
- October LCD Board of Directors Meeting – 10/21/21 at 6:00 PM

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

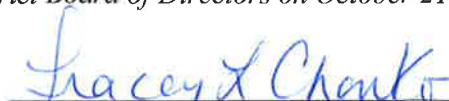
****Motion by Wilkes, seconded by Hanish to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried unanimously.**

The meeting adjourned at 6:39 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Deborah Josuweit, Office Administrator.

Approved by action of the Luzerne Conservation District Board of Directors on October 21, 2021


Chair or Vice Chair


Treasurer/Secretary