

**LUZERNE CONSERVATION DISTRICT
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
325 SMITHS POND ROAD, SHAVERTOWN, PA 18708
December 7, 2023**

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Chairman Wilkes called the meeting of the Luzerne Conservation District Board of Directors to order at 6:05 PM, noting that the meeting was being held in person and via video/phone conference and that it was being recorded. He then led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL - BOARD MEMBERS:

John J. Wilkes, Jr.	Present
John P. Hanish, Jr.	Present
Tracey Chonko	Present via phone
Leonard J. Burger, Jr.	Present via phone
Thomas Herbert	Present
Gary A. Moyer, Sr.	Present
Gregory S. Wolovich, Jr.	Excused

DISTRICT EMPLOYEES:

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

AGENCY REPRESENTATIVES:

Dustin Detweiler	NRCS	Present/written report submitted
Caitlin Skibiell	DEP	Present/written report submitted

ORDER OF BUSINESS

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

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

MINUTES:

****Motion by Hanish, seconded by Herbert to approve the October 19, 2023, meeting minutes as submitted. The motion carried unanimously.**

FINANCIAL REPORTS:

Wilkes noted the financial reports that were provided and invited questions. It was noted that updated financial reports were provided at the meeting.

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

COOPERATING AGENCY REPORTS:

NRCS – Detweiler provided a written and verbal report.

DEP – Skibiell provided a written and verbal report.

PACD – A written report was included in the board packet. Longmore and Herbert reported that PACD is experiencing some financial strains related to new DEP grant requirements that have significantly reduced funding for administrative overhead. PACD leadership is evaluating ways to cover the unreimbursed costs to maintain the current level of service provided to districts.

STAFF REPORTS: Wilkes noted that staff reports were included in the board packet as item 4.

BUSINESS ITEMS:

LV Roads Project Contract Amendment – Chicks Ln, Black Creek Twp

****Motion by Hanish, seconded by Moyer to approve the contract amendment providing an additional \$15,000 for Black Creek Township’s Chicks Lane Low-Volume Road Project. The motion carried unanimously.**

DG Roads Project Contract Amendment – Baer Rd, Union Twp

****Motion by Moyer, seconded by Hanish to approve the contract amendment providing an additional \$6,000 for Union Township’s Baer Road Dirt & Gravel Road Project. The motion carried unanimously.**

Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Projects Sponsorship

Longmore reported NRCS did preliminary evaluations of three streambank erosion sites along Toby Creek in Shavertown, Kingston and Dallas Townships and determined they would be eligible for EWP Program funding. NRCS inquired of the district’s willingness to act as the local sponsor for the projects. NRCS would fund 75% of the project costs, and the district’s sponsorship responsibility would be the remaining 25%. DEP’s Stream Improvement Program has provided the 25% match for past projects, but if those funds do not become available, the district could use existing Toby Creek Growing Greener grant funds to cover the match. Longmore recommended moving forward as the local sponsor. If the board approves, NRCS will develop a formal contract and submit it for board approval.

****Motion by Herbert, seconded by Moyer to sponsor the EWP projects and to authorize Longmore to proceed with the process for facilitating funding for projects as discussed. The motion carried unanimously.**

2024 CAP Implementation Grant Application

Longmore announced that DEP awarded the district an additional \$200,000 in the CAP Implementation Projects grant for 2024. This is an amendment to the grant agreement that was approved in 2022. In October, the district applied for \$208,357 for the following projects:

- Eric Stevens Agricultural Best Management Practices with an estimated cost of \$185,000 to match ACAP and GG grant funds that are available to complete the project.
- Susquehanna Riverbank Stabilization Project with an estimated cost of \$3,407.
- Kingston Borough Urban Tree Planting with an estimated cost of \$19,950.

****Motion by Hanish, seconded by Herbert to accept the additional \$200,000 for the Countywide Action Plan Implementation Projects grant agreement. The motion carried unanimously.**

2024 Mosquito Disease Control (MDC) Program Grant Application

Longmore reported that DEP has given preliminary approval of the district’s grant application for \$137,220.65 to operate the MDC Program in 2024.

****Motion by Hanish, seconded by Moyer to approve the 2024 grant application in the amount of \$137,220.65 and the execution of the grant agreement when it is provided by DEP. The motion carried unanimously.**

Sponsorship of Abandoned Mine Land (AML) Reclamation Grant for SGL260

Longmore reported that a grant application was developed by Larson Design Group as part of the Countywide Action Plan for Clean Water for \$100,000 to fund design and permitting of an AML reclamation project on State Game Lands (SGL) 260 near Shickshinny. The application was submitted to the DEP Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation’s Sub Grant Award program, which is funded through the federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

****Motion by Hanish, seconded by Moyer to approve the sponsorship of the SGL260 AML reclamation grant. The motion carried unanimously.**

2024 Board Meeting Schedule

Wilkes proposed a new meeting schedule for 2024. The meetings would continue to be held on the 3rd Thursday of each month. In November, December, January, February, March, and July they would start at noon; and in April, May, June, August, September, and October they would start at 6:00PM. Discussion was held.

****Motion by Hanish, seconded by Moyer to approve the 2024 Board Meeting Schedule as presented. The motion carried unanimously.**

2024 Insurance Proposal w/ Addition of Cyber Liability Coverage

Longmore noted that DGK Insurance’s annual renewal proposal for the district’s commercial and auto insurance is for \$11,304. The addition of optional cyber liability insurance, which Longmore recommended, would be another \$1,000.

****Motion by Moyer, second by Hanish to accept DGK’s 2024 insurance proposal with the addition of cyber liability coverage for \$12,304. The motion carried unanimously.**

2024 District Budget Presentation

Longmore handed out an updated 2024 draft district budget and provided a review of the proposed financial plan for next year.

****Motion by Moyer, second by Hanish to approve 2024 district budget as presented. The motion carried unanimously.**

Executive Committee Personnel Recommendations

Wilkes noted the board would go into executive session to discuss personnel recommendations from the Executive Committee at 7:19 PM.

The board returned to regular session at 7:43 PM.

Executive Committee Personnel Recommendations

Wilkes noted the five personnel recommendations from the Executive Committee that were discussed by the board in the executive session (see attachment).

****Motion by Moyer, seconded by Herbert to approve the recommendations from the Executive Committee with the addition of \$250 to full time employees over the 2022 bonus amounts. The motion carried unanimously.**

Employee Step Increase Acknowledgment

Wilkes acknowledged that Graham and Levitsky have successfully achieved a step increase within the district’s Employee Pay Schedule.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- 12/8/2023 – LCD Municipal Workshop at LCCC from 8:30 AM – 2:15 PM
- 1/18/2024 – LCD Board of Directors Meeting at noon.
- 1/25/2024 – PACD Executive Council Video Conference at 10:00 AM.

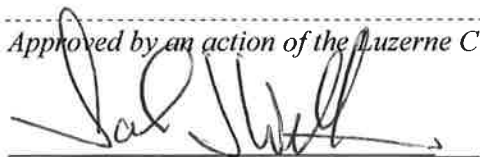
PUBLIC COMMENT: None

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:47 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Deborah Josuweit, Office Administrator.

Approved by an action of the Luzerne Conservation District Board of Directors on January 18, 2024.



Chair or Vice Chair



Treasurer/Secretary

ATTACHMENT

**Luzerne Conservation District
Executive Committee Recommendations
December 7, 2023**

Committee Recommendations:

1.) 2024 Budget approach for salary and benefit costs

- a. 3.2% COLA following longstanding practice of using SSA COLA as a basis.
- b. Maintain current high deductible health insurance plan which will have a 3.85% premium increase in 2024 with deductible reimbursement policy.
 - i. Increase is mostly offset by \$3,277.04 premium rebate recently received from Highmark (approx. 2.85% of 2024 budgeted amt. for premiums)
 - ii. Continues approximate \$11,000+ savings over prior lower-deductible plan without reimbursement
- c. Budget for potential performance-based step increases and bonuses in 2024.

2.) Promotion for Special Projects Coordinator

- a. Provide 3-step promotion to Keith George for exceptional performance – from Program Coordinator/Step 10 to Step 13, effective January 1, 2024.

3.) End-of-year performance bonuses at same amounts as 2022

4.) Josh Longmore’s annual evaluation and step increase eligibility

- a. Approve step increase from Executive Director, Step 17 to Step 18 based on favorable performance, effective immediately.

5.) Hiring process for new E&S staff position

- a. Phase 1 – Executive Director will review/screen resumes and conduct initial phone interviews.
- b. Phase 2 – Executive Director will check references and schedule interviews with potentially viable candidates.
- c. Phase 3 – Interview Committee will interview candidates and report results to Executive Committee.
- d. Phase 4 - Executive Committee will recommend a candidate and offer package to the District Board.