

Orleans County Natural Resources Conservation District

Thursday, November 14, 2024

Newport USDA office & TEAMS

In Attendance: Joanna Lidback, Alyssa Conn, Chris Steel, Emily Dehoff, Bruce Urie, Walter Medwid, Sarah Damsell (staff), Ted Sedell (staff), Bevin Barber-Campbell (staff), Kathi Sanville (staff)

Absent Members: David Fox, Jared Nunery

New Business (not on Agenda):

VACD Annual Meeting - Bruce Urie is giving Walter his voting proxy, as he will be in attendance at the meeting.

Signature item for Passumpsic Bank - to add Kathi Sanville, Business Operations Manager, to bank accounts for day-to-day operations (and remove Stephen Mengel & Timothy Buzzell). Per Alyssa, this needs to be returned to Tammy at Passumpsic. Kathi will call David Fox to request his signature on this paperwork. Sarah, Joanna, and Kathi will need to sign this as well.

Action Item: Sarah, Joanna, David, and Kathi need to sign bank paperwork (Kathi will call David).

Walter brought up whether we should have more than one person to sign to cash out, for example, a CD, etc.,...we need to check our Financial Policies and report on financial controls at the next Board Meeting - Sarah, Alyssa, and Kathi need to meet about it.

Action Item: Sarah, Alyssa, and Kathi need to review the District's Financial Policies to see what controls are in place with respect to signature authorizations for various financial transactions related to its bank/credit union accounts (**note**, see Passumpsic paperwork for authorizations...should we keep a copy of this paperwork on file for our records?)

Introduction to new staff - Kathi Sanville, the new Business Operations Manager, was introduced to and welcomed by the Board.

New NRCS MOU - Joanna reviewed the new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) entered between NRCS and OCNRCDD. This MOU covers four major areas to include the office space for 4-7 full-time employees, vehicle use, equipment use to include computers (OCNRCDD positions listed). These are all things that are needed by the District to help support its mission and work alongside NRCS. Walter asked if all

Districts in the state reside within an USDA building and Sarah explained that some Districts have moved out of USDA offices and maintain their own office spaces. This could be a possibility for OCNRCD (Sarah mentioned a house at the location of the Barton Fairgrounds). Walter also asked if there was a possibility of the office being reconfigured. Sarah says it's a conversation that could be had with USDA and that, ideally, District staff should be at the front of the building, greeting people as they come in. There also could be a possibility of USDA renting a larger building for expansion.

FY2025 Budget - per Sarah, the budget is 75% complete. She shared what was completed, thus far, and will email the completed version a week before the next Board Meeting.

Action Item: Sarah will email the Board the completed FY2025 Budget a week before the next Board Meeting.

New Website - Bevin gave everyone a tour of the new OCNRCD website that was launched on November 12, 2024. She has been working with a new website company known as Streamline that specializes with Districts of all kinds. It has an easy interface to work with and Streamline websites are compliant with the American Disabilities Act (ADA) and state transparency requirements. The website has been reorganized and includes new items, such as, Board Meeting Agenda and Minutes (**we need to be mindful of privacy & confidentiality of customers**), District partners, and FAQs. Bevin mentioned that the District is not required to display financials. The hope is that more Districts will use Streamline, which would allow for more consistency across them. Chris asked if VACD content will disappear so that we only have one website to eliminate confusion for those searching for District information. It sounds like there will still be a "landing place" on VACD about the District. Chris asked that David Fox, as Board Secretary, review Board Meeting minutes before they are uploaded to the website to ensure that they are professional in nature and protect privacy and confidentiality of anyone the District works with. Joanna asked what the next steps would be. Bevin asked that everyone look over the website to check for errors, etc. Bevin will be leaving soon; however, Sarah is familiar with the website work. Everyone thanked Bevin for her hard work on the website.

Action Item: David, as Board Secretary, will review Agenda & Board Meeting Minutes prior to any being uploaded onto the website to ensure professionalism and protection of privacy and confidentiality.

Update on OCNRCD Projects (Compliance) - Ted and Sarah updated everyone on current Professional Services Farm Compliance work. Chris stressed the importance of being disciplined on paperwork, keeping a paper trail, to legally protect the District and to ensure that there are formal contracts in place. Currently, if there is any EPA

involvement with a customer, EPA and the District are both present at meetings with the customers. Joanna suggested that any time there is a meeting with a customer about what tasks need to be done, that a follow up email goes out to a customer outlining what was discussed and expectations on what needs to be done. There was discussion on setting up a spreadsheet for tracking and it's possible that our current time sheet tracking allows for this and acts as a papertrail. Joanna wondered what the protocol would be if any District employee were approached for an interview, etc.? If this does occur, we need to seek Joanna and Sarah's guidance.

Action Item: Ted and/or Sarah to ensure that there are formal contracts in place for each customer location.

Action Item: Sarah will review our timesheet practices to see if this will serve as a papertrail on contract work.

Action Item: Joanna and Sarah to address what our policy/procedure would be if anyone asks us for an interview.

Note: moved customer specific notes to separate document - "executive session" part of meeting

Health and Unemployment insurance - HR Committee - Chris sent an email to the Board regarding health insurance and FMLI. At this time, the District is **not** legally obliged to provide health and FMLI insurance, and it will be costly. The District already contributes the maximum amount to an HSA. Currently, health and FLMI insurance is not budgeted and significant costs are involved...to allow for such expenditures, there would need to be an adjustment to the current rate calculation for fees. It is otherwise recommended that we switch to VLCT's reimbursable plan for state unemployment tax, as it will be a 36% savings.

Motion: To approve the HR committee's recommendation to switch from a taxable employer (paying state unemployment tax to the state) to a reimbursable employer via VLCT's unemployment compensation program. Joanna made a motion to accept this recommendation, Bruce seconded. All in favor. Approved

Action Item: Sarah will need to sign a POA for the Vermont Department of Labor, which is to be notarized (Hannah Roberts, USDA Employee) and witnessed (Kathi) and Sarah and Joanna will sign the respective Participation and Indemnification Agreement with VLCT. Kathi will draft a letter to the Vermont Department of Labor about this change. Kathi will forward all documents to Kelley Avery at VLCT ASAP.

Performance review for District Manager - staff left the Board Meeting for the Board to discuss the District Manager's performance review and pay scale adoption.

Meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m.

Minutes submitted by Kathi Sanville, Business Operations Manager, 10/18/24.