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Pondera County Conservation District

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The Pondera County Conservation District Board of Supervisors met on **Tuesday February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2024, at 8:00 am** at the USDA Service Center in Conrad, Montana.

**Call to Order:** Chairman Paul Jones called the meeting to order at 8:02 a.m.

**Present:** Roger Paulsen

Paul Jones

Eric Gunderson

Kaysie Steele

Ramsey Offerdal Jr.

Pam Converse- Pondera Weed District

Ethan Kalinowski- NRCS

Kesler Martin

Sarah Zielke

Tory Chulyak- NRCS

Dan Severson- MSU Extension

**Absent:**

**Previous Minutes:**

- Roger Paulsen moved to approve the previous meeting minutes. Ramsey Offerdal Jr. seconded the motion. Motion carried.

**Bills and Financial Statement:**

- Kaysie Steele presented the financial statement. Roger Paulsen moved to accept the financial report. Eric Gunderson seconded the motion. Motion carried.

**Public Comment:** Topics not on the agenda may be discussed, but if action is required, the topic must first be placed on the next meeting agenda.

**NRCS:** Ethan Kalinowski introduced Victoria “Tory” Chulyak as the new Acting Supervisory District Conservationist for the Conrad-Cut Bank-Browning work unit, replacing Stacy Thornburgh’s position. Ethan shared that the ranking deadline for Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is February 23rd. Ethan mentioned that the CSP contracts are in the planning process and that there are 13 applications in total. Ethan shared that the NRCS staff was in Billings, MT last week for the MT Soil Health Symposium. Ethan shared that Josh Young with Pheasants Forever, is in the process of submitting the TIP for predator fencing around farmsteads in Pondera County. This TIP passed the area wide ranking and now needs to get approved by the state office. This TIP program is excluding the reservation land due to a lot of “red tape” areas that Ethan mentioned they were not expecting.

**MSU Extension:** Dan Severson reported that the cropping seminar in Conard last month was a great turn out with around 30 people in attendance. Dan also mentioned that he attended the Next Generation Ag Conference in Shelby, MT a few weeks ago and that also was a great turnout with over 200 people. Dan mentioned that in the upcoming years, the event will need to look for a new location due to outgrowing the previous site. Dan mentioned that they are continuing the “Lettuce Grow Together” grant this year at the Conrad Community Garden and that MSU Extension is now accepting applications for individuals interested in joining. Dan gave an update on the Seed Library that is being created at the Conrad Library in town. He mentioned that progress has been made on the initiative and that the focus will be on vegetable seeds hardy to our area. Lastly, Dan shared how FFA is fundraising for a country dance band that will be coming to Whoop-Up this June, along with food vendors, and more.

**Pondera Weeds District:** Pam Converse reported on this past year for the Pondera Weeds District. Pam mentioned that they finally got more employees hired for the upcoming season. She mentioned that she would love to be able to offer employees more incentives to work for them such as housing opportunities, etc. Pam mentioned that she put in a grant that will be ready for next year for spraying noxious weeds around Swift Dam. She mentioned that they are expanding the grant along the Marias River, out of Toole County, to the Dry Fork of the Marias here in Pondera County. Pam mentioned that most of the spraying done for this grant is by helicopter due to the rough terrain of the country. Pam mentioned that she is currently the President of the Montana Weed Control Association. She mentioned that they held their annual conference at the beginning of February and had roughly 200 people in attendance. Pam mentioned that the Weeds District would love to work more with the Conservation District for weed projects in the future.

**PCCD:** Administrator

- Kaysie Steele submitted a written report.

**Old Business:**

- January Newsletter

- Review of Supervisor 10-minute Training: Elections & Recruitment
- NACD Conservation Investment 2023-24
- New Oath of Office forms to be completed for Eric Gunderson
- New Board Members Interested: Kessler Martin & Sarah Zielke
- A letter from RMIS about Covering Elected Supervisors with Work Comp
- 310 Permit for PCCRC Birch Creek Project for Stream Channel Maintenance
- Montana Conservation District Employee Organization Quarterly Report
- Water Reservations
- Operations Audit
- Long-Range Plan & January Supervisor Training: Strategic Planning

**New Business:**

- Kaysie Steele mentioned that the board should plan a day this month to conduct an operations audit. Ramsey Offerdal Jr. and Dan Severson from MSU extension mentioned that they would both be available. Ramsey mentioned that he would follow up with an email to plan the day.
- Sarah Zielke shared that she was appointed by the Valier Mayor for the Urban Supervisor board position for PCCD last night at the Valier City Council Meeting. Sarah mentioned that the mayor was going to forward the meeting minutes to Kaysie for documenting the appointment of Sarah to Urban Supervisor position. Kaysie mentioned that once she received the meeting minutes, she would pass them along to the county Clerk & Recorder for records. Sarah mentioned that she would then take her Oath of Office form into the Courthouse for notary and filing. Kaysie will be notified when this occurs. From here, Kaysie mentioned that she will send the updated letter to the bank indicating the current board members for signing authority and all the board members will go into the bank to sign the document. Kaysie mentioned that Bryce Johns has resigned from the board and that we will need to find a replacement for his position to complete our board.
- Kaysie Steele mentioned that Heather Rice, Canal Manager at PCCRC, could not attend the meeting due to being sick. Kaysie shared how Heather was curious if a 310 Permit was necessary for PCCRC Birch Creek Project for Stream Channel Maintenance. Paul Jones mentioned that he never remembers in years past that RRG projects done with PCCRC needed a 310 permit, since the stream maintenance would most likely already be set forth in the plan of operations for the RRG project.
- Ramsey Offerdal Jr. shared his findings from reaching out to RMIS for the work comp coverage for elected supervisors. Ramsey mentioned that RMIS was seeking an expensive annual cost for the coverage and after working with Kaysie, they found that the previous work comp coverage the district had with MT State Fund was able to be kept and is cheaper than the quotes RMIS gave the district. Kaysie Steele mentioned that RMIS was seeking a minimum annual fee of \$1500, whereas the MT State Fund Policy was \$470/year. Kaysie Steele shared that the Montana State Fund policy account has a credited amount of money because of overpayment from July.
- Kaysie Steele shared some information she collected from other Conservation Districts pertaining to their fee schedule for Water Reservations in their district. The board

members reviewed the handful of fee schedules attached in the meeting binders. After board deliberation over fees our district should charge, Ramsey Offerdal Jr. made a motion that PCCD would start fresh and not seek back pay from the two producers for the years missed payments and form submissions. Roger Paulsen seconded the motion. Motion carried. Eric Gunderson made a motion to charge \$500 for a water reservation new application and/or transfer of water reservation form, and \$300 for the yearly maintenance fee. Ramsey Offerdal Jr. seconded the motion. Motion carried. Kaysie Steele will inquire with the state and other districts as to what the DNRC fee is and how the producer pays this fee. The board decided that site visits to the two developed water reservation sites will be made around March and April. Paul Jones, Roger Paulsen, and Sarah Zilke will be available to make these site visits.

- Kaysie Steele shared the CD Admin Grant needed approval before Submission for the MACD Dues of \$3,500. The board reviewed the completed DNRC grant application that was in their meeting binders. Roger Paulsen made a motion to approve the CD Admin Grant application for \$3,500 to cover MACD Dues. Eric Gunderson seconded the motion. Motion carried.
- Kaysie Steele shared that the Long-Range Plan and Annual Plan for PCCD needed approval. The board reviewed these two documents that were in their meeting binders. Ramsey Offerdal Jr. made a motion to approve the Long-Range Plan for PCCD. Roger Paulsen seconded the motion. Motion carried. Roger Paulsen made a motion to approve the Annual Plan document for PCCD. Ramsey Offerdal Jr. seconded the motion. Motion carried. Eric Gunderson gave an update regarding PCCD's Annual Plan goals. He mentioned that he reached out to Pam at the Pondera Weeds District about the Annual plan goal of helping reduce noxious weeds in Pondera County. Eric asked Pam if there was anything going on currently that we could advertise for or assist with. Pam shared that there are things upcoming and further discussion will be made. Eric mentioned that he has not reached out to the local FFA group yet but plans to.
- Kaysie Steele shared her maternity leave proposal with the board and the desire of working from home more when the baby arrives. The board commented on keeping everything flexible for the employee to be able to retain the individual.
- The board reviewed the Supervisor 10-minute Training: Project Development & Grants. Paul Jones shared a project idea he had that he recently heard Hill County CD did, which involved a drone for weed spraying, and wondered if a grant could be pursued for this to go along with our Annual Plan for the district.
- Kaysie Steele shared that she sent the student scholarship letter and applications out to the high schools in Pondera County for senior individuals seeking to pursue a higher education in an agriculture related field. Kaysie Steele shared that applications will be due by May 1<sup>st</sup> and then the board can decide as to what two individuals they want to sponsor.
- Kaysie Steele inquired with the board if the employee health stipend is an HSA or HRA or anything of the sort that would be taxable income. Paul Jones mentioned that it was not one of those but rather an extra amount of money added to the employee's paycheck. The board encouraged Kaysie to investigate making the health stipend an HSA or HRA if she desired too.

Executive Session: None

Correspondence:

- CDB February Report
- National Watershed Coalition Membership Form
- Letter from MSCA
- Montana Biocontrol Coordination Project 2023 Annual Report

Adjournment:

- Ramsey Offerdal Jr. moved to adjourn the meeting. Eric Gunderson seconded the motion. Motion carried.
- Paul Jones adjourned the meeting at 9:20 a.m.

CALENDAR

- March 12<sup>th</sup> PCCD Board Meeting

Respectfully submitted,

Kaysie Steele, PCCD Administrator



CHAIRMAN