

**Walsh County Three Rivers Soil Conservation District
Board Meeting – December 12th, 2024 – 9:00AM
Held at USDA Building 417 Park St W, Park River ND**

Attendance

Joel Hylden, President
Jay Gudajtes, Vice President
Brent Riskey, Supervisor
Allen Zidon, Supervisor
Jacob Suda, Supervisor
Josh Anderson, District Conservation Manager
Brandon Mathiason, Business & Operations Manager
Bob Lundquist, NRCS
Dennis Skorheim, County Commissioner
Brad Brummond, Advisor
Kristi Brintnell, County Commissioner
Lori Zahradka

President Hylden called meeting to order with roll call at 9:01AM and asked for modifications to the agenda. Zidon wanted to add Raises back in March to the agenda

Minutes

The minutes for November 14th, 2024, were reviewed, Gudajtes moved to approve, and Suda seconded; motion carried.

Reports

Anderson gave the conservation report, Hylden discussed the information he received while attending the convention in Bismarck in reference to the working lands cover crop initiative grant. Skorheim asked about how much grass plantings does this year compare to last year. Anderson stated that the number of acres were down over last year however the number of customers stayed the same. Anderson also gave the watershed report. Mathiason gave the business operations report, Riskey asked how the tree orders and plantings are coming along and the amounts there are. Mathiason stated that the tree order time has ended and that the number of plantings and tree orders are not as many as years prior. Lundquist gave the NRCS report.

Financials

Hylden asked for a motion to approve and pay the bills, Suda motioned to approve and pay the bills; Riskey Seconded, and motion passed

Skorheim asked if we were behind on our building lease, and Mathiason stated no that we are not behind. Skorheim then asked when the contract is up for the building. Hylden stated that it is for three more years then a balloon payment. Skorheim then asked how big of a balloon payment it is. Mathiason stated that he thinks it would be about 20 thousand. There was more discussion on the lease. Hylden discussed about purchasing a 30 foot drill and a pickup through the lease company with the grant, Anderson stated that the drill will be purchased with the grant and the pickup will be leased for the grant. Skorheim asked why we needed a 30 foot drill

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for 250 acres. Anderson stated it is because of the grant and the 10 thousand acres that we will have to do through the grant as we will have a 60 mile radius for plantings. There was more discussion about the grant.

Mathiason presented the Budget vs Actuals report, Zidon stated that we should have the loans listed on the bottom.

New Business

Hylden presented a letter that he would like to write on behalf of the board allowing Mathiason to be a Director with the NDCDEA. There was discussion on the costs and what this position entails. Risky made the motion to approve the letter; Suda seconded motion carried.

Hylden presented the letter our office received from the office of Attorney General, there was discussion on the letter and Hylden asked for a motion to act on sending a letter back to the Attorney General's office. Zidon motioned to send a letter to the Attorney General's office requesting fees and what they will provide us for the fees; Suda Seconded motion carried.

Hylden presented the information from our insurance company that supervisors are covered by liability insurance through the Soil Conservation District.

Old Business

Hylden spoke about the operating loan and how we do not need it any longer. Risky motioned to rescind the motion for getting a operating loan, Gudajtes motioned to table it again to the next meeting; Suda Seconded, there was discussion from Skorheim asking why it keeps bouncing around why we keep wanting it and then not wanting it, Hylden stated that it was because we keep receiving funds that were not expected and that we are no longer needing the loan. Hylden asked all in favor of tabling to the next meeting signify by saying Aye, all supervisors stated Aye; motion passed.

Other Business

Hylden spoke about the legality of the Walsh County Three Rivers Soil Conservation District is a political subdivision of the state and that the County Commissioners are here because we want them to be part of helping us and work together on making our county a better place to live and very grateful that they are here at our meetings. Hylden also noted that we are our own authority. Skorheim stated that the commissioners recognize the fact that they have no say at the table so to speak, but as a producer they have every right to be here and they on the county level hear what is going on and heard from a past employee that she was considering a lawsuit for hostile work environment and mismanagement and when they see that we are having trouble working with Bob on the plans that he is putting out, there was a time that you were even having trouble measuring tree rows, and throwing away \$2000 dollars' worth of trees, and when he looks at the past practices with strip tilling with the beat farmers and all that doesn't seem to be taking place anymore, it seem like this whole program is going backwards. We have got water quality issues, well head issues, conservation issues because trees aren't being planted anymore, and the program is going backwards. Hylden stated that his question would be then how do you fix it? Hylden also stated that there was talk about getting different employees, but we have taken care of the situation with Bob. Hylden asked Lundquist (Bob) if everything is working out? Lundquist stated for the most part. Anderson stated that we have

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had letters published in the paper from former employees on how great it was working with us. Anderson asked what other entity has that? Mathiason stated some of our past employees enjoyed working with us that they want to come back. Anderson stated that they even write to us every holiday and want to come back to work with us. Skorheim stated that he planted trees the last two years and he is lucky if 5% survived and that he planted them the day he picked them up and put drip irrigation on them, so that tells him that the trees were dead before he picked them up. Risky stated that the nursery where we are getting them stated that they had troubles with the stock, and it should not fall on our guys if the place that we are getting them is the issue. There was discussion on the General Mills grant that has now expired. There was discussion on loss of topsoil and loss of residents. There was more discussion about the working lands grant. Skorheim stated then he sees most of the problem personally is with Brandon then, with the management of the office and his personal posts on Facebook. Mathiason stated that there it is it being my personal Facebook and has nothing to do with the soil conservation. There was more discussion on Mathiason's personal posts of an article that was in the Walsh County Record. Suda stated that he is not sure what Skorheim is upset with as he seen the same article in the Walsh County Record. Skorheim stated that they are upset with Todd Morgan on the way he posted that because it was very one sided. Brintnell stated to Suda that first of all you should see the post before you comment. Mathiason stated again that he does not know what his personal stuff has to do with this board. Skorheim stated that Mathiason did not know the whole story. Mathiason asked if the paper corrected the article. Skorheim stated no he did not, and he has a problem with him. Mathiason stated that he would have posted the correction if there was a correction in the paper. Skorheim stated that this is the problem and Mathiason is not having any good will towards them at all, and they as a commission have to deal with this. Hylden stated to Skorheim that in fairness this has happened at the commission meeting, and you made a comment that there was mishandling of funds which is not a true statement. There was more discussion on the 319 Grant Audit. There was more discussion on the relationship between the SCD & County Commission on how going forward to work together and approach each other prior to making false statements. Skorheim asked as to why he has the Soil Conservation on his portfolio, Hylden stated that he does not know why, and it was not correct to have, Gudajtes stated that it is correct about Skorheim having the conservation as a portfolio, but that it was the county that made it one of their items of interest and the county is sending someone here to watch and not to inject guidance but to observe. Gudajtes also stated that to have personal issues between people in the room is highly unnecessary and we all need to work together for the conservation efforts in our county. Hylden thanked both Gudajtes and Zidon for their time on the board. Suda stated that he learned a lot from both Gudajtes and Zidon and thanked them as well. Risky also thanked both Gudajtes and Zidon. Mathiason stated he, Anderson and Norris Severtson also thank both Gudajtes and Zidon for their leadership and the three pooled together their money to provide lunch from Subway in appreciation. Anderson also thanked both Gudajtes and Zidon. Hylden welcomed Lori Zahradka as one of the new board members coming on in January. Zahradka stated that she will bring her experience from education and that one of the things that is in their job is to make others look good and she thinks that should be the job between Soil

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Conservation and the County Commission as well, because everyone sees the dirt blowing. Zahradka thanked the SCD for allowing the kids to be taught by the office staff and by even employing them for summer internships. There was more discussion on The Working Lands grant. Brummond stated that to get things done we need to mend our differences and to come together and work together.

Hylden asked all board members to turn in their year-end paperwork.

Hylden mentioned raises on the agenda, and Zidon asked when the raises were implemented, Hylden responded by saying March, and Mathiason stated that the handbook states it to be implemented in March. Zidon then asked where the motion is that was made to give the 5% raise. There was discussion, and Hylden stated that we as a board gave the 5% raise and he does not know why there is not a motion and that it was probably because he did not ask for a motion. Risky stated that he can recall when the board hired both Anderson and Mathiason it was stated that if they got us out of debt because the SCD was so far in debt that they were going to get a raise. Risky also stated that the board had steps for Anderson and Mathiason to get the raise and they were met. Gudajtes stated that he is positive that if they hit the goals but does not remember discussing what kind of raise. Hylden read the minutes of the February 8th, 2024, meeting where Hylden, Gudajtes, and Risky were all present, he read the portion under old business pertaining to Mathiason and Anderson evaluations. Hylden stated that he does not know why they did not make a motion for the 5% but knows that at the February meeting it was approved to give the raise. There was discussion about how to make this right. Gudajtes made a motion that as of today we affirm the raise that was given on March 1st, 2024, to Anderson and Mathiason and that they will retain the money that was already given and that raise will stay in effect until the time in which the board deems another raise is due at that time. Suda seconded; motion passed unanimously. Gudajtes made another motion that our full-time employees and seasonal employees raises, or income changes are to be handled at the board level. Risky seconded; Hylden conducted a roll call as follows, Gudajtes – Yes, Zidon – Yes, Risky – Yes, Suda – Yes, Hylden – Yes, motion passed.

Next Meeting

Regular board meeting January 9th 9am to be held at 417 Park St. W Park River, ND 58270

Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 11:23 AM