

Highlands Soil & Water Conservation District - Board of Supervisors
Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: 12/19/2023

Meeting Location: HSWCD Conf. Room – Bert Harris Center

FINAL – Approved 1/16/2024

Recorded by: Susie Bishop

Meeting Scheduled Start: 3:00 P.M. Call to Order: @ 3:00 P.M.
Public Meeting Announcement Read by Chairman

I. Welcome & Introductions

Dr. John Causey, HSWCD, Chairman
Steve Smith, HSWCD, Vice Chair
Doug Deen, HSWCD, Secretary/Treasurer
Sara Sebring, HSWCD, Supervisor
T.J. Wohl, HSWCD, Supervisor
Susie Bishop, HSWCD, Executive Director
Kayla Nickerson, HSWCD, BMP Technician
Lauren Ahrens, HSWCD, BMP Technician
Andrew Adams, FDACS, ES 1
Chad Harmon, HSWCD, MIL Manager
Wade Smith, HSWCD, MIL Technician

II. Approval of Agenda – Motion to approve agenda as presented with added item IV.B – Budget Amendments (Wohl/Sebring). Unanimous Approval.

III. Approval of Meeting Minutes- November 21, 2023 - Motion made to approve the minutes as presented (Wohl/Sebring). Unanimous Approval. November 29, 2023 – Motion made to approve as presented (Sebring/Wohl). Unanimous Approval.

IV. Financial Activity

Overview & Approval of Financial Reports- November 2023: Review of bank statements & financial reports. Motion to approve the financial reports as presented (Wohl/Sebring). Unanimous Approval. Budget Amendments for General Fund Budget for Fiscal Year 2022-23 – Bishop provided details of the year ending journal entries requiring the budget amendments be approved. Motion to approve Budget Amendments # 3 as presented (Wohl/Sebring). Unanimous Approval.

V. Agency Partner Updates

a. FDACS – Bishop provided updates on vision and goals of the new Director of OAWP, West Gregory. A major goal is to increase technology across the board of OAWP. The position of Bureau Chief of Field Services held by Bonnie Wolff- Peleaz, who resigned earlier this month, will be filled by Steve Smith. Commissioner Simpson has tasked the OAWP to update ALL of the BMP Manuals in 2024. Bishop explained teams in the department are being formed and assigned to a specific manual and she encouraged industry to get involved. No Action
MIL – Bishop & Harmon updated the board on the status of the SOP. The MILs statewide are working to re-write the MIL Handbook into a new SOP to assist the OAWP with this task. The Handbook would no

longer be used. It will be easier to amend an SOP than to the SOW in a contract. No response from the MIL Project & Contract Managers to date regarding this proposed plan. The MIL has completed evaluations in excess of their required number per contract. No Action.

NRCS – No Report.

HCBCC – No Report.

VI. Old Business

a. Proposed Legislation – Bishop reported Representative Truenow’s rumored Bill has not been formally filed. A House Bill, # 7013, relating to Special Districts could possibly add the Soil & Water Conservation District as a section. Causey shared with the Board his directive to the Executive Director of the Heartland Ag Coalition, Ray Royce, to draft a letter to submit to Representative Truenow to not file any Bills to change anything with SWCDs in the State and opposition to regionalizing Districts. Bishop asked for direction from the Board as to how she will testify in Tallahassee should a Bill be filed, her plans were to support the regionalization vs. abolishment. Bishop is supportive of regional Districts as the best solution to save successful Districts and combine the weak Districts with a leading District so the services provided can continue and be stronger statewide. She shared words of Commissioner Simpson in a conversation she had with him... the strong Districts need to step up and lead the cause to save Districts which could well mean regionalizing because there are a whole lot of them who do not function well. As shared last month Bishop has been working to develop re-organization of Districts to Regional in an effort to be proactive and prepared for the Bill being filed and passed. Once a Bill is filed Bishop will distribute to Board for Supervisor review. No Action.

VII. New Business

a. FDACS – OAWP Leadership – Bishop discussed this under Agenda Item V.a. No Action.

b. Audit – Bishop reported the Audit could start as early as February. No Action.

VIII. Executive Director’s Report - Items presented:

Website – K. Nickerson has worked hard with new website company to completely rebuild the site.

Supervisors asked to update their bios.

The Annual Report is in draft and will be presented at the January meeting.

The District records in storage will be sorted and disposed of during the week after Christmas.

The transition of leadership of Ag Venture is going well.

The community garden is flourishing with gardens at full capacity.

Bishop will teach Leadership Highlands Ag Day with Ray Royce on January 18.

IX. Citizens Not on the Agenda – None

X. Supervisor Comments

Smith – None

Deen - None

Sebring – None

Wohl – None

Causey – None

Meeting Adjourned at 3:48 p.m.

Post Meeting Action Items

Action: Monitor Legislation regarding Florida SWCD Reorganization
Assigned to: S. Bishop
Deadline: Spring 2024

Action: Monitor and Manage SOW and SOP for the MIL Contract & Project Manager Concerns
Assigned to: S. Bishop & C. Harmon
Deadline: Jan. 2024

Action: Discard old SWCD Records. Organize permanent SWCD Records
Assigned to: All Staff
Deadline: January 2024

Action: Rebuild of Website
Assigned to: K. Nickerson & S. Bishop
Deadline: January 2024

Action: Complete FY 2022-2023 Annual Report
Assigned to: S. Bishop & K. Nickerson
Deadline: January 2024

Action: Assist with Transition to Staff for Ag Venture Program
Assigned to: S. Bishop
Deadline: January 2024

Action: Monitor updates to the BMP Manuals
Assigned to: S. Bishop
Deadline: Year 2024

Action: Manage DEP Stolen Saddle Ranch Contract
Assigned to: S. Bishop
Deadline: Ongoing