

James River Soil and Water Conservation District
Board of Directors Meeting
March 16th, 2023

The James River Soil and Water Conservation District held its monthly Board Meeting at the Chesterfield Central Library on March 16th, 2023

Attendees:

Directors: *Carey Allen, Gregory Powers, Andy Petik, Scott Reiter, Laura Thompson*

Associate Directors: *Sierra Seekford*

Agency Partners: *Olivia Leatherwood, Scott Hammond*

Staff: *Brianna Moring, Joseph Gerdes, Anne Devine*

Absent: *Zane Bernard, Avis Bennett*

Public: *Marlie Creasey-Smith, Heath Locke, Kimberly Locke, Madison Guyton, Lexi Howard, Louis Theik*

Call to order/Invocation: Carey called the meeting to order at 6:10 PM.

Public Comments: Laura thanked her interns for joining the meeting

Chairman's Comments: Due to the number of new people, Carey asked everyone to introduce themselves

March 16th Board of Directors Meeting Agenda:

Edit agenda to include Heath Locke's name to the Approval of Associate Directors

- Laura moved to approve the Agenda, Greg seconded: Passed

February Board of Directors Meeting Minutes:

2/16/23 BOD Minutes

- Greg moved to approve the February Board Meeting Minutes, Scott seconded: Passed

Treasurers Report:

Scott asked about our coverage with the FDIC on our bank accounts. Brianna will look into that prior to next meeting.

- Greg moved to accept the Treasurer's Report and file it for audit, Laura seconded: Passed

Conservation Report:

- Andy moved to approve VACS contracts 12-23-0006, 12-23-0027, and 12-23-0028, Scott seconded: Passed

- Laura moved to approve VCAP contracts 12-23-008, 12-23-009, 12-23-010, and 12-23-011 and forward them to the VCAP Steering Committee for final approval, Scott seconded: Passed

VACS Transfer to Appomattox River SWCD

- Greg moved to transfer \$195,000 of OCB VACS and \$40,000 of CB VACS to Appomattox River SWCD, Laura seconded: Passed

Strategic Plan:

The Board reviewed the Strategic Plan for PY23-26

VCAP: Start-Up Payment Pilot Program (SUPPP):

- Laura moved to participate in the new VASWCD SUPPP Program, Greg seconded: Passed

Associate Director Applications:

Marlie Creasey Smith, the Assistant Director of Chesterfield Parks and Recreation, has applied for the Associate Director position. Her interest stems from her background with Cooperative Extension and her passion for conservation. She hopes to be a resource for the District and to bridge the gap with Chesterfield.

- Andy moved to accept Marlie's application, Laura seconded: Passed

Heath Locke, a Prince George Farmer, has applied for the Associate Director position. His interest in the District comes from his work as an Erosion Sediment Control Inspector for VDOT and his work with Henrico Parks and Schools and the MS4 program.

- Scott moved to accept Heath's application, Andy seconded: Passed

Partner Reports:

Olivia Leatherwood, Conservation District Coordinator (DCR)

ADMINISTRATION & OPERATIONS

- Attachment D – FY25 Budget Template: training is tentatively scheduled for May 9 in-person at the Drury Hotel in Glen Allen. Registration information is forthcoming from the VASWCD.
- Interview Panels & FOIA: As districts continue to hire new staff, please remember that FOIA rules apply to conducting interviews. Interview panels made up of 3 or more directors, or a quorum of Committee members, constitutes a public meeting. The interview panel must be advertised as a public meeting and minutes should be recorded accordingly. However, the actual interviews are protected and should be conducted in a closed session. Once the interviews are completed, the meeting will need to certify the closed session and enter back into an open meeting. Please be sure to carefully follow the closed meeting guidance, which can be provided by your CDC.
- FY24 Budget Preparations: Finance committees should begin preparations for FY24 annual budgets for District Board discussions. Budgets should be approved by boards by June 30. Page 6 of the *Desktop Procedures for District Fiscal Operations* provides information useful in the development of annual budgets.
- 3rd Quarter Reports: are due Monday, April 17 – Attachment E, Cash Balance, and P&L.

AG COST SHARE

- 90% VACS Obligation: Districts unable to obligate 90% of their FY23 cost share allocation can either transfer allocation to other districts or return allocation with proportional TA to DCR before

the end of June. Consider checking records for expired SL-6s, WP-2s, and WP-4s for possible CCI sign-up.

- Carryover Practices: Encourage BMP Participants to complete their projects in time for payment prior to the close of the fiscal year to minimize carryover into FY24. Please review pages II-41-44 in the VACS Manual regarding carryover procedures as well as the Logi report (“Cost-Share Program Carryover Report for BMPs To Be Completed, Canceled, or Carried Over into FY24”). Practices nearing completion but requiring a 4th year carryover are due for review to Sara Bottenfield by May 15.
- CCI Reminder: CCI practices “must not be in lifespan from any other conservation program.” VACS practices that are out of lifespan (including piggybacks) are eligible for CCI. Projects that were federal only are only eligible for CCI after the practices are out of their program lifespan. Note that in terms of EQIP, a “practice” is the same as a “component” in DCR terminology. Districts should be careful to use the longest practice lifespan that applies to the project, which may be up to 20 years for components like fencing.
- Changes & Updates to Conservation Application Suite: Updates are being pushed out for the Conservation Application Suite, so please keep an eye out for emails from Jen Edwards detailing what changes are being made.

CONSERVATION PLANNER CERTIFICATION

- Below is a list of trainings and dates for those who are working towards Conservation Planner Certification; times are TBD
 - April 25-26 – Conservation Selling Skills, Lynchburg
 - May 16 – Perennial Stream Identification, 9:00am – 4:30pm, James City County Library. Register with Carl Thiel-Goin by March 17
 - October 17-18 – Virginia Rare, Threatened, & Endangered Species Protection and Cultural & Historic Resources Protection webinar series, must participate in all three to receive credit

GRANT DELIVERABLE REMINDERS

- Outreach Event: plan, coordinate, and deliver an outreach event that meets required criteria
 - Market event through at least three venues of which one must be directed towards small farmers or socially disadvantaged producers
 - Include at event SWCD history, mission, introduction of directors and staff, and offered programs
 - Must include a discussion featuring ag producers who have participated in the VACS program
 - Notify and invite all agency partners, including the VSU Small Farm Outreach Program, to participate

SWCD DIRECTOR ELECTIONS – ELECTED DIRECTOR POSITIONS

- The general election is scheduled for November 7, 2023. The filing deadline is 7:00pm Tuesday, June 20, 2023
- Information can be found on the State Board of Elections website:
<https://www.elections.virginia.gov/candidatepac-info/candidate-bulletins/index.html>
 - Choose the Local and Constitutional Offices Bulletin
 - Instructions for Candidates – provides links to resources and forms
<https://www.elections.virginia.gov/candidatepac-info/becoming-a-candidate/index.html>
 - Below are the forms you will need to complete
 - Certificate of Candidate Qualification – Local Offices
https://www.elections.virginia.gov/media/formwarehouse/campaign-finance/2018/candidates/SBE_501_4_rev7-18.pdf
 - Declaration of Candidacy – Local Offices
https://www.elections.virginia.gov/media/formwarehouse/campaign-finance/2018/candidates/SBE_505_520_Declaration_of_Candidacy_Rev1_15.pdf

- Petition of Qualified Voters
https://www.elections.virginia.gov/media/formswarehouse/campaign-finance/2018/candidates/Petition-of-Qualified-Voters-SBE-506_521_letter.pdf
 - *The number of petition signatures required is 25, see page 12 of the bulletin. Recommend at least 30. The petition must be printed two sided! (front and back)*
- Campaign Finance Reporting Exemption Form (NEW requirement for all candidates seeking election):
https://www.elections.virginia.gov/media/formswarehouse/campaign-finance/2018/candidates/Cidate_Exemption_Request.pdf
 - If a director/candidate is not going to campaign, or their campaign will raise or spend less than \$1,000, they must file this exemption form to be exempt from filing campaign finance information. The form should be filed at the local registrar office.
 - If a candidate does plan to campaign, there are very specific reporting requirements that they need to familiarize themselves with. Information about those requirements is in the Bulletin. All election financial reporting must be done through the Department of Elections online portal, Comet.
 - This is a separate issue from the Statement of Economic Interest. Directors are exempt from filing the Statement of Economic Interest. Expect more information to come out from either DCR or VASWCD in the coming weeks as we are seeking more clarity about campaign finance reporting for those who wish to campaign.
Contact your local General Registrar if there are any questions

DATES TO REMEMBER

March

- March 7 – Area VI Meeting, 10:00 – 2:00, Great Bridge Battlefield and Waterways History Museum
- March 15 – VASWCD Quarterly Board Meeting, Drury Hotel, Glen Allen
- March 15 – Envirothon Special Topic Training, virtual at 4pm; register at:
https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZAsf-ypqjsuG9IY5sfAz7_CuFnTJj-79KQ8
- March 23 – VSWCB Meeting, Hungry Mother State Park, Marion, VA

April

- April 12 – VASWCD: HR Trends for 2023, Virtual – see VASWCD website for registration information
- April 23 – VSWCB Meeting, Pocahontas State Park

Other Dates:

- May 9 – Admin/Director Training, includes Attachment D Budget Template Training, Drury Plaza Hotel, Glen Allen; more details to come
- May 15 – Deadline to submit 4th year carryovers to Sara Bottenfield
- May 25 – VSWCB Meeting, Department of Forestry Headquarters, Charlottesville
- June 7 – VASWCD Admin/Ops Committee Meeting: Att. D Training Follow Up, Virtual
- June 20 – Filing Deadline, Last day to file election documents with local registrar

Ariel Coleman, (Acting) District Conservationist (NRCS)

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

- Awaiting preapproval status for 2 livestock and 2 wildlife applications.
- Currently working on obligating 6 applications to contracts for high tunnels.

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

- Received 5 applications for CSP-IRA sign up.

Conservation Technical Assistance/Updates

- Dinwiddie Service Center will undergo 7 FSA compliance reviews (1 Chesterfield, 4 Dinwiddie, 2 Prince George)
- A Direct Hire Soil Conservationist Pathways Recent Graduate is being advertised and closes March 21 (GS 5-9)

Earth Team Volunteer Program

- If you know anyone, (high school age or older) that would like to volunteer pass their info along to me!

VA NRCS Operational/Personnel Changes

- COVID operation status- All three counties in LOW category. Doors are open, masks are not required.

Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)

- Applications are due March 17th and ranking is due by April 21. Attached is fact sheet on IRA practices.

Staff Reports:

Brianna Moring- District Manager

Completed Tasks:

- Signed Scope of Services Agreement with Richmond. I have sent over the letter requesting funds to start VCAP in the City. Funding should be in by the end of next week
- Sent email newsletter with Scholarship Opportunities
- Attended VNRLI session in Farmville
- Prepared for Area VI Spring Meeting (Secretary)
- Delivered VACDE Update at Area VI Spring Meeting and the VASWCD Board Meeting
- Started promoting Spring Rain Barrel Workshops (May 27th & June 24th @ 10 AM)
- Updated website with Richmond VCAP (will publish when \$ is received)
- Created Richmond Site Visit Request Form to share with CRLC

Ongoing Tasks:

- Working with Richmond and CRLC to finalize VCAP
- Working on Envirothon (CTC @ Hull & Clover Hill)
- Working with Area VI on the Area Envirothon (Shirts, Smithfield, Trophies, Ribbons, Gifts)
- Maintaining Invoices
- Maintaining contact with DCR and other partner agencies

Meetings:

- 3/15 VASWCD Board Meeting
- 3/20 RVA Green City Commission Meeting
- 3/21 Area VI Envirothon Meeting
- 3/22 Call 12 NBC for VCAP
- 3/28 VACDE Board Meeting
- 4/12 Admin/Ops HR Training
- 4/18-21 VNRLI (Hungry Mother State Park)
- 4/18 Farm Day
- 4/26 Area VI Envirothon

Chesterfield PY24 Budget:

- Dr. Joni reached out to inform us that \$23,000 is included in their PY24 Budget

Greg: Introduced a USDA Grant Opportunity to connect local farmers with the school food systems in Chesterfield. The Board discussed the work that goes in to adding a new program to District operations. The Board requested he put together an official proposal to outline who the responsible party is and who would do the work on this new program. Olivia stated that Colonial SWCD has an employee whose job is

to run only that program. She said she would reach out to see what the process is to get involved in a grant like this. Carey asked him to reach out to the Farm Bureau to see if this is a program, they have interest in.

Joseph Gerdes- Conservation Specialist

VCAP:

- Completed ten site visits in Chesterfield.
- Did infiltration test for *Contract #12-23-009(RG)*

AGRICULTURE:

- Field Work
 - Sierra, Anne, & I met with Jody Conway of Dandelion Springs Apiary/Farm about rotational grazing and incorporating natives into pasture/hay system for her horses
- *Contract #12-22-0014 (WQ-12 – Roof Runoff Management)*: Install finished. I did initial walk-thru and will do verification with DCR on 3/22
- Updating NMPs and recommending other agronomic practices to interested producers.
- Mark & Steve have been keeping me updated on the drill, they have gone above and beyond with repairs. Still waiting on a few additional parts from James River Equipment to finish up.

MISC:

- VACDE Meeting – March 28th

Anne Devine- Conservation Technician

Completed:

- Scheduled and completed seven VCAP site visits in Chesterfield
- Compiled Spring 2023 Newsletter
- Attended VA Ag BMP Cost Share Program Course 2/23
- Attended DCR's Tracking Program and Conservation Training 3/10

Ongoing:

- Scheduling/completing site visits for VCAP
- Preparing maps and reports for various VCAP applications

Meetings/Events:

- GreenScapes Symposium with Montgomery Parks 2/14
- Envirothon Meeting in Wakefield 2/21
- Area VI Meeting at Great Bridge Battlefield & Waterways Museum 3/7
- WSA's 12th Annual Conference in Annapolis 3/25
- Farm Day 4/18

Committee Reports:

Legislative:

- Seven VCU students are getting college credit and I submitted their midterm grades this week. Currently, I have 25 interns and fellows, 9 of which are High School Students.
- Madison has successfully finished the internship program and will be starting a Volunteer Fellowship in Management with me.

- Madison - “Part of what I plan to do is focus on nonpoint pollution, remedies such as VCAP and VACS and promoting those programs, networking with community organizations, and some marine research projects. I plan to try to go into Marine conservation, so that is why some of the research will be marine based.
- James River Soil & Water donated 232 fruit and vegetable seed packets, and Laura donated 77 Virginia Wild Flower seed packets with a total of 309 packets to the little free seed library today.
- We plan to send emails to the Senators and Delegates that we met with to thank them for meeting with us and to remind them of our budget priorities. We met with 5 of the 12 of our representatives or their staff. We will also be emailing the representatives that we weren’t able to meet to tell them our priorities. The reconvened session is scheduled for April 12 and will be the approval of the budget bill.
- We are also promoting the Donald Bagshaw and Statewide Soil and Water scholarships to the Chesterfield High School counselors and science classes. We are also emailing the counselors about the Sheriff scholarship because Sheriff Karl Leonard said they receive a lack of applicants so we agreed to help promote it.
- Laura gave a report on Chesterfest / Midlothian Day / Chesterfield County Fair and their demographics

Staff/Director Comments:

Olivia: March 31st Cover Crop Field Day 8:30-3:00 Tidewater ARC (Suffolk)

Laura: I had Izzy the week before the last Board Meeting, and I’m sorry to have missed it. Her room is garden/farm themed!

Anne: Thanks for supporting me doing outside agency training

Joe: Anne has been a great fit with the District

Adjournment:

- Laura moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:49 PM, Greg seconded: Passed

Respectfully submitted,

Brianna Moring, Secretary

Carey Allen, Chair