

**AISWCD Chairman Meeting**  
**February 15, 2016: Northfield Inn, Springfield, IL**  
***Meeting Minutes***

**Districts Present:**

Bond, Brown, Carroll, Cass, Champaign, Christian, Clark, Clay, Coles, Crawford, Cumberland, DeKalb, DeWitt, Douglas, Edwards, Effingham, Fulton, Grundy, Hancock, Henderson, Henry, Iroquois, Jersey, Kane/DuPage, Kankakee, Kendall, Knox, LaSalle, Lawrence, Lee, Livingston, Logan, Macon, Macoupin, Madison, Marion, Marshall/Putnam, Mason, McDonough, McHenry/Lake, Menard, Mercer, Montgomery, Morgan, Moultrie, North Cook, Peoria, Perry, Piatt, Pike, Pulaski/Alexander, Randolph, Richland, St. Clair, Sangamon, Schuyler, Scott, Shelby, Stephenson, Tazewell, Union, Vermilion, Wabash, Warren, Washington, Wayne, Whiteside, Will/South Cook, Woodford

**AISWCD Board Members Present:**

Myron Kirby  
Tom Beyers  
Kenny Vosholler  
Van Bitner  
Jerry Snodgrass  
Steve Stierwalt  
Glen Bowers  
Barb Klinger  
Terry Bogner  
Lee Bunting  
Terry Davis  
Dan Duval  
Jason Anderson  
Dan Doedtman  
Steve Fulling  
Don Beisiegel  
Roger Johnson  
Dale Shumaker  
Gerard Fabrizio

**Others Present:**

Kelly Thompson, Executive Director  
Gina Bean, Administrative Coordinator  
Thad Eshleman, ISWCDEA  
Spring Duffey, ISWCDEA  
Melissa Cauble, Insurance Committee

AISWCD President, Myron Kirby, started the meeting at 10:07 am. He explained that the meeting was for SWCD Chairman or their Director designee and invited guests. He asked anyone that had not been invited to take this time to exit the meeting. He then welcomed the group to the meeting. He explained the meeting was informational only and that voting could happen at the March 3, 2016 quarterly board meeting where the Land Use Council representatives would represent their Districts. At this time, Steve Fulling gave the invocation.

There was some discussion from the floor and Myron Kirby took the time to answer some questions. He explained again that the meeting was only informational and that no voting would take place. Myron let the group know that the Employee's plan had not gone through the taskforce and would not be discussed in full and that only the graphs would be discussed. The taskforce would be meeting after the meeting and would discuss it then.

AISWCD Secretary, Van Bitner, took roll.

Myron Kirby explained to the group that a new taskforce had been appointed by him that would be attaching details to the plan that would be discussed. Those members included: Kenny Vosholler (Chairman), Tom Beyers, Van Bitner, and Lee Bunting.

Myron Kirby went over a timeline with the group since 2014. This timeline explained new AISWCD employees and their positions and meetings with IDOA, Governor's Office, Farm Bureau, and others. He talked of a phone call he had with Steve Stierwalt and when he formed the Reorganization Taskforce which consisted of Lee Bunting, Steve Stierwalt, Jerry Snodgrass, and Terry Bogner. Steve Fulling was later added to that group as well. He thanked the group for their time and effort on the project.

Myron Kirby mentioned that at this current time, a dedicated source of funding will not be supported by the Governor. The Governor has said that he will not sign any new tax or fee.

On January 28, 2016, there was an SWCD Advisory Board Meeting. In this meeting, AISWCD was asked to attach details and numbers to the plan that was formed by the taskforce.

Myron Kirby took that time to speak on truth. He stated that he honestly did not think SWCDs would be given \$7.5 million next year. He is in honest hopes that they will receive \$5 million, but is concerned they will receive no funding. He let the group know that he had carried the message that the more funding Districts receive the less soil loss is seen. He has let Legislators, IDOA, and the Governor's office know that SWCDs need enough funding to save the system.

Melissa Cauble, with the insurance committee, spoke on insurance and informed the group that recently six resource conservationists left the SWCD offices for other employment that offered health insurance.

#### **Testimony, Support, Verification, Testament, and Fact**

Tom Beyers took the floor and spoke about the meetings he had attended. He let the group know he had heard "look different and change" more than once. He stressed that Myron Kirby had pushed for \$7.5 million for Districts all the way until after the December Quarterly Board Meeting. He pointed out that NRCS is one of our best partners and they are downsizing. He talked on the employees' insurance and how IDOA had stepped up and offered to pay the insurance and when there was no longer funding for insurance the funds were taken out of cost-share funding. Tom stressed that SWCDs need to come together and not publically show a division.

The meeting took a break at 11:10 and rejoined at 11:24. Prior to adjourning for break Myron Kirby notified the group that the ISWCDEA plan would be presented following the conclusion of the Chairman's Meeting. Myron welcomed everyone back to the meeting.

Van Bitner took the floor and explained that the Governor's office does not care that SWCDs are losing employees and insurance. He has also joined many meetings and has heard the message being delivered that SWCDs operate cheaply and that they are being asked to fix something that is not broken.

Kelly Thompson took the floor and reminded everyone that the AISWCD mission is "To represent and empower Illinois' 97 Soil and Water Conservation Districts." AISWCD has been fighting for all 97 Districts and they know that the SWCDs have passionate employees and they are thankful for them. She listed groups that SWCDs are up against for funding in the state. AISWCD has been told that they have met with the Governor's Office on Management and Budget more than any other organization.

Myron Kirby pointed out that without Districts, the Association will vaporize. Iroquois County stood up and thanked the Association for the job they have done.

### **Funding Plans**

Myron Kirby talked about two funding plans. He explained that the first plan had a base level funding for all 97 Districts and performance based funding. The second plan would include project funding through an affiliate membership. Both plans were simple due to Legislators needing to look at it and the fact that they will not look at a 14 page plan.

### **Question and Comments**

- The question of how can Districts not have to fight for funding each year was brought up. Steve Stierwalt let them know that we need to focus on the short term so that Districts are there to for the long term. Myron Kirby followed up with saying that Legislators say that right now is not the time for a dedicated source of funding through a tax.
- The question of why does the plan not have more detail was brought up and Myron explained that a basic plan had to be made first to see if it would be approved before more time was spent on it. Now is the time that details could be added and the taskforce would be adding those details later in the day at their meeting.
- AISWCD has not been told what the groups holding the funding want the SWCDs to look like.
- Steve Fulling encouraged the group to join AISWCD at this year's Legislative Day event to spread the word to Legislators about SWCDs and the issues they are facing.
- There was concern about the affiliate membership from the floor and AISWCD Board Member, Jerry Snodgrass, stood up and explained that according to the current by-laws only District delegates can serve on the Board.
- Discussion from the floor asked that the plan be fair to all Districts and to not throw away the urban Districts. Myron Kirby stated that they know that urban areas are important and that is why a plan of work would be important.
- AISWCD has told the Governor's office on Management and Budget that SWCD's administer \$300 million in federal funds.
- The plan that is given to Districts can be tweaked at the March Quarterly Board meeting.
- DeKalb County pointed out that Farm Bureaus can set up foundations for districts.
- North Cook explained that Legislators need to see a picture of what SWCDs do.

### **ISWCDEA Plan (Presented by Thad Eshleman and Spring Duffey)**

Spring Duffey showed the group an Annual Report put out by IDOA. She suggested to Directors that they obtain a copy yearly. ISWCDEA took information from the report and turned that information into graphs that she presented and explained. Thad Eshleman also explained the ISWCDEA's plan for funding and what SWCDs would be able to achieve at different levels of funding.

They explained that IDOA has seen their plan and suggested some changes.

Insurance was brought up from the floor and employees reported that according to the Affordable Care Act, since the SWCD IL insurance group has over 50 employees, that insurance would have to be covered. An SWCD Director asked who would have to cover the insurance and Melissa Cauble, with the SWCD insurance group, reported that IDOA would be responsible for covering that cost.

For additional details on the ISWCDEA plan, please visit [www.aiswcd.org](http://www.aiswcd.org) for meeting audio.

Myron Kirby concluded the meeting at 1:28 pm and let Districts know that the SWCDs are the heart of conservation.

***Minutes taken and transcribed by: Gina Bean, AISWCD Administrative Coordinator***