



AISWCD

ASSOCIATION OF ILLINOIS SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS



AISWCD Quarterly Meeting of the Board of Directors
Friday, September 13th, 2019 | 8:30am – 10:00am
Via teleconference call: 605-472-5770 | Access Code: 303289

The meeting was called to order at 8:31AM.

A roll call was taken. The following members of the Board of Directors were present;

- President Steve Stierwalt
- Vice President Tom Beyers
- Treasurer Dan Duval
- Secretary Dale Shumaker
- Past President Myron Kirby
- Jerry Snodgrass
- David McCormick
- Steve Fulling
- Barb Kingler
- Josh Curry
- Lee Bunting
- Terry Davis
- Chuck Schafer
- Joe Rothermel
- Terina Coffey (ISWCDEA)
- Ben Schmidt (NRCS)
- Natalie ----- (FSA)

A quorum was reached at 8:40AM.

A motion was made to approve the agenda, motion carried. A motion was made to approve the meeting minutes, motion carried.

Executive Director Report

Executive Director Report – Hammer provided a report on major highlights from the previous quarter (July-September).

1. Events:

- Summer Conference - For the first time in 7 years, positive financial position—greater sponsor participation, better alignment of food & beverage expenses. Revenues doubled. 80% of esurbey respondents rated the event as as excellent or good. 90% rated venue excellent or good.
- Ag Media Day - AISWCD conducted several interviews with radio stations & Prairie Farmer highlighting recent success and award winners frm conference.
- Ag Day at State Fair – AISWCD honored Farm Families at this annual event. Ag Director John Sullivan gave shout out to SWCDs on Prevent Plant this spring (in front of about 700 people).
- SWCD Soil Heath & Cover Crop Workshops (4 through state) - 100% of survey respondents rated workshops valuable; 100% rated workshops as excellent or good. Workshops were made possible by a grant.
- Farm Progress Show - AISWCD was responsible for putting together the Partners in Conservation tent. AISWCD went through 40 gallons of lemonade & 500 cups at the event.
- Future Events – Hammer foreshadowed upcoming events which include; IDOA meetings, NRCS webinar, ISWCDEA Winter Training, December Quarterly Board Meetings.

2. Legislative & Policy:

- Health Insurance - IDOA designating funding for health insurance.
- CREP – The program is funded in state budgets and now is staffed. AISWCD and districts held an informational roundtable recently.
- Advocacy – Senate Ag Chair and AISWCD Lawmaker of the Year, Sen. Scott Bennett, met with AISWCD and partners at Steve Stierwalt’s house in July.
- Ag Policy Forum - Attended Ag Policy Forum hosted by local Congress members and Secretary of Ag Perdue at the Farm Progress Show. AISWCD spent time with with Reps. Davidsmeyer and Miller.
- Rural Green Partnership – AISWCD poke with Congresswoman Cheri Busto’s ag policy staffer, who is a soil health scientist. Boost resources for ag conservation. Supported by ag, environment, and labor groups
- Soil Health Bill - Gov. Pritzker signed soil health bill in August.

- Question from Terry Davis: Is there any language in legislation addressing future financial security of Districts? In Bustos' efforts, Dept's position toward Districts, the Soil Health Bill? Hammer Response: Ag conservation is a hot topic now, so it is a good time to match words with action; environment looks good.

3. Personnel:

- Sarah Jones transitioned out in August and Rebecca Osland has fully transitioned in. Things on a good track with the NRCS grant.

4. Communications:

- President Stierwalt featured in Bloomberg News. Association has conducted several interviews in radio, Prairie Farmer. New S.T.A.R. press coming out this week.

5. Miscellaneous:

- Hammer will attend NACD Executive Director conference in September.
- He will make a presentation on the S.T.A.R. program.
- Hammer will be on vacation from November 6th -15th.

6. Grants

- Third year's NRCS grant documents are fully executed. Payments through July going out now and renewal documents have gone out to Districts. Informational sessions upcoming at IDOA workshops in Oct, NRCS webinar Oct, ISWCDEA meeting December.

7. Financial Report

- Alan Howard gave updates
- A first draft of the AISWCD 2020 operating budget was presented.
- It's a conservative allocation, and it will be available for adjustments over the next three months before adoption at the December meeting.
- Statement from Myron Kirby: Would like inclusion of expenses for Board travel. Should not expect travel to come out of the pockets of Board members.
- Question from Treasurer Dan Duval – The office/building maintenance—expenses will probably be higher? Response from Alan Howard: Seeking to transfer less monthly to the capital development fund because expected immediate expenses could just be paid directly.

- Property Casualty & Workers Comp renewal invoices have been sent to Districts (\$88,000 receivable).
- Lee Bunting: Is there a financial report? Hammer response: It was sent 2 weeks ago with the monthly report. Grant will forward the report to Board members.
- Terry Davis: Association has done good job of getting financially sound; need to focus on Districts next.

8. Audit Updates:

- Auditor working on reconciliation to true-up reserve of restricted and unrestricted.
- Auditor took a pause to do school audit period of year, but back to work on ours now. Finalized Foundation's 990 and tax filings. Board packets contain update letter

Area Vice President Reports

Jerry Snodgrass:

- Councils switching to conference calls and working well; easier to reach quorum than in person.
- Has received some complaints about grants: confusion over billing, length of time before getting paid. Hammer response: Working aggressively to address grant issues.
- Ben Schmidt: Agrees with Grant; and, some of the District staff pushing the limits on what is billable, so NRCS has to push back. Other Program Tasks pays for 2 things, but some Districts billing for other work

David McCormick:

- Concern over getting staff to be Certified Conservation Planner

Committee Reports:

1. Financial

- Nothing new to report

2. Educational

- Supports rehiring Sondra Baker for Envirothon Coordinator.



3. Planning

- Survey from summer conference helpful info; encourages reading the surveys.

4. Legislative

- Nothing new to report

5. NLRS Sub-committee

- Soil Health Workshop was good; 5-year plan ongoing.

6. Executive

- Steve Stierwalt shared staff and exec committee considering how to manage committee structure differently.
- Terina Coffey: Were there committee meetings prior to this call? Stierwalt response: He didn't push the committees to meet ahead of time, so probably not. Hammer: Committees in the past typically met at the time the Board met; looking at examples and models of how others do this. Committees can meet any time, are encouraged to be proactive and do this.

Partner Reports

1. IDOA:

- Brian Rennecker was not able to attend meeting.

2. IDNR:

- Michelle Bloomquist couldn't get onto call
- Grant: CREP waiting for guidelines for CREP under Farm Bill; have to be sent for public comment. CREP staff will be fully staffed Monday

3. IEPA:

- Chris Davis let us know in advance she couldn't make the meeting.

4. NRCS:

- 98% obligation on EQIP
- Fiscal year ends this month
- CSP deadline extended
- CRP has big workload in Illinois; 2nd only to Iowa (5,500 requests; us 3,000). Could not do this without help of Districts.
- Struggling to add staff; met recently about staffing priorities—more aggressive about hiring outside partners. Over 30 requests from areas for staff; bringing on recent grads to build Soil Con pipeline.
- Training Boot Camp—3 weeks of conservation planning training; can get seats via NACD
- Myron Kirby: Computer seats limited to 1; waiver requested & denied. Citrix issues. What's the long-range plan to get the work done? Ben Schmidt: Computer issue is 7-8 years old.
- Terry Davis: Data collected on shared drive, is that SWCD's or NRCS's? Ben Schmidt: If it's on their system, they have access; something to talk about later if more specific concerns.
- Barb Klingler: Does Boot Camp cover eligibility for Certified Conservation Planning? Ben Schmidt: There is more to it. Could do week-long training in Illinois if there were enough people, but there haven't been, so better to send people to Boot Camp.

5. FSA:

- Natalie—waiting on regs for CREP sign up & for changes to CRP under Farm Bill. September 30 deadline for CRP sign-up.

6. ISWCDEA:

- Terina—employee meeting to plan winter training yesterday.
- Rebecca Osland has reached out to Paula Hingson at NRCS about joint-training
- In 2019, Districts have hired about 17 new employees
- IEPA & other state entities seeking to work together (319 grants) on watershed basis
- Summer conference was successful
- Asked Board to compensate Terina and Tara more for their efforts on the conference; did not anticipate how much they would put into it.
- Hammer agrees that additional compensation warrants discussion

7. Auxiliary:

- Judy Beyers sent written report
- Successful annual meeting
- Would like to thank AISWCD for check
- Expenses for Judy to attend NACD meeting in February

Discussion Items

1. 2019 conference survey and fiscal analysis: no further discussion
2. Congresswoman Cheri Busto's "Rural Green Partnership" plan.
 - Steve entertains a motion to authorize staff to support proposal
 - Terry Davis moves; Dan Duval seconds
 - Terry Davis: Talked with Cong. Bustos and she's looking for input on the positive approaches that are occurring
 - Unanimously carried
3. NACD's new leadership program
 - Informational webinar today for state assoc presidents and E.D.s
 - Only 5 or 6 people from whole country, but would be great to find someone in IL
 - Grant will share details after webinar
 - Priority to develop leadership

Old Business

1. Governance item – affirm June Board decision making
 - Dale moves, Terry seconds
 - Unanimously carried
2. Governance item – Call for volunteers to join committee to make recommendations towards office building matters

- Last meeting, considered having executive committee handle this, but would prefer to open this to volunteers
- Dale moves, Dan seconds
- Unanimously carried

New Business

1. Governance item – 2020 conference dates and venue selection
 - Recommend staying with Crowne
 - Only one option left in July 2020
 - Only minor complaints about venue (state rate change, check-in)
 - Dale moves, Lee seconds
 - Unanimously carried
2. Governance item – Chard employment contract renewal
 - Joined team in March 2019. Contract was for 6 months or until terminated. Contract due for reconsideration. Hammer recommends extending for 1-year period with no changes to terms.
 - Steve B. moves, Barb Klingler seconds
 - Unanimously carried
3. Governance item - Envirothon contract renewal
 - Hammer: Plans to talk with Sondra in DeWitt to get this shored up. Need Board approval because exceeds \$5,000 limit (\$8,100 for coordination of services & ancillary costs like registration fees and travel fees, which will all be included at the outset this time)
 - Barb Klingler moves, Josh Curry seconds
 - Unanimously carried
4. Summer Conference Help Appreciation
 - Stierwalt suggests adding item regarding Terina's request for compensation for conference.



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- Hammer suggests bringing this up at the next executive board meeting with concrete numbers.

Announcements

- None were provided

Adjournment

- Klingler moves, Dan Duval seconds
- The meeting adjourned at 10:30AM.