

Chairperson Hess called the meeting of the Indiana County Conservation District to order on Tuesday, February 15, 2022, at 9:32 am at 435 Hamill Road in Indiana. Other Directors present were Commissioner Sherene Hess, Craig Andrie, Janis Long, Vincent Receski, Aaron Simpson via webinar, Richard Stumpf, and Gregg VanHorn.

Also present: Douglas Beri Jr. – Manager via webinar, Tammie Robinson – Administrative Assistant, Brooke Russick – Dirt/Gravel Roads Program Specialist, Samantha Dull – Resource Conservation Technician, Robert Sabo – Watershed Specialist, Marisa Matlin – Agriculture Conservation Specialist, Monica Lee-District Educator, Anna McGonnell and Nola Barton-AmeriCorps, Doyle Freeman, Sarah King, Hunter Overdorff, Cindy Rogers-Associate Directors.

The oath of office was administered to reappointed director Janis Long.

#### PUBLIC COMMENTS - none

Hess turned chair duties over to Beri for election of officers. Simpson moved to appoint Hess for chair, second by Andrie, motion carried. Chair duties were turned back to Hess. Andrie moved to appoint Stumpf for Vice Chair, second by VanHorn, motion carried. Long moved to appoint Simpson for Treasurer, second by VanHorn, motion carried.

Andrie moved to approve the minutes of the January 18, 2022, meeting as presented, second by Long, motion carried.

The treasurer's reports were reviewed and Hess directed they be filed subject to audit.

Long motioned to pay the bills as presented, second by VanHorn, motion carried.

#### CORRESPONDENCE

Notice from County Commissioners regarding American Rescue Plan Act Program Funds requesting assistance in identifying and prioritizing countywide needs.

#### DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION DELEGATED PROGRAMS REPORT

Three erosion and sediment control plans were reviewed, two Chapter 102 site inspections were conducted, two Chapter 105 General Permits were acknowledged, no complaints were received.

#### STAFF/PROGRAM ACTIONS AND REQUESTS - none

#### ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR REPORTS

Rogers reported Evergreen Conservancy is sponsoring Green Drinks in March at Spaghetti Benders.

Overdorff thanked the directors for appointing him as an association director and looks forward to promoting conservation efforts in the county.

Freeman reported he is looking forward to contributing to the work of the District.

King reported on a program planned for February 24 and sponsored by Friends of White's Woods on options to restore forest cover to help combat climate change.

#### FIELD REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT

It is with great sadness Beri reported our DEP Field Representative, John Green, has passed away.

#### COOPERATING AGENCY REPORTS - none

COMMITTEE REPORTS - none

OLD BUSINESS - none

NEW BUSINESS

No nutrient management plans are currently under review. No plans were presented for approval.

Andrie motioned to accept the following donations for the Envirothon Education Grant fund: \$100.00 from Indiana County Farm Bureau; \$50 from Susan Bowers; \$150 from P&N Coal Company; \$50 from Marion Center Area Lions Club; and \$50 from James Resh, second by VanHorn, motion carried.

Beri reported the Conemaugh Valley Conservancy has asked the District to be a sponsor for the annual Stony-Kiski-Conemaugh River's Sojourn. Much of the four-day sojourn is along Indiana County with one of the overnights in Blairsville. Long moved to approve a \$100 sponsorship for the Stony-Kiski-Conemaugh River's Sojourn, second by VanHorn, motion carried.

Stumpf moved to approve Overdorff and Receski to serve on the 2022 board governance and policy committee, second by VanHorn, motion carried. Andrie moved to approve VanHorn and Somonick to serve on the 2022 facilities committee, second by Receski, motion carried.

ICCD has been asked to partner with Respective Solutions Group, Inc. to provide environmental science and agriculture education. They are preparing a grant application for services to K-3 students in the Purchase Line School District in Indiana County, All Saints Catholic School and Forest Hills in Cambria County. Cambria Conservation District stated they are not able to participate in the initiative. It would commit the District to an after school lesson one day per week for a total of 30 sessions per year (10 per school) throughout a one year period for up to 5 years, depending on the grant award. Our staff costs will be covered and reimbursed via the grant. The District Educator, Agriculture Conservation Technician and AmeriCorps will be the staff providing the education sessions. Long moved to approve entering into a partnership agreement with Respective Solutions for Environmental/ Agricultural education programs, second by VanHorn, motion carried.

There has been a two-year initiative to create and fund a Southwest PA Water Network (SPWN) to facilitate a regional collaboration on water resource issues and increase funding opportunities for mine drainage, drinking water, stormwater, and other water issues. Penn's Corner RC&D submitted an application to serve as the host organization for the network. If they are selected, PC RC&D does not have the ability to actually have an employee and will need a member Conservation District to host the coordinator position and provide employee benefits, all to be reimbursed by the PC RC&D. Beri also noted we would only enter into this arrangement if additional funds were provided to cover the administrative assistant's time associated with the position to onboard and manage the on-going benefits, payroll, tax reports, etc. The person would not physically have an office in the host's facility. Long moved to approve applying to serve as the host of the Southwest PA Water Network Coordinator position by adding the coordinator to the ICCD payroll/benefits, with those and other associated costs to be reimbursed by Penn's Corner RC&D if they are selected to host the SPWN, second by VanHorn, motion carried.

Each ICCD director was provided a copy of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service's Civil Rights Responsibilities for Partners Checklist prior to the meeting for review. Robinson reviewed the District's responsibilities as a USDA NRCS partner with respect to discrimination, equal access, civil rights, customer service, program outreach, etc. All parties agree not to discriminate in any way including based on age, race, color, national origin, sex, marital status, religion, or disability.

## DISCUSSION ITEMS

Beri reported the proposed new DGLVR Stream Crossing Standard standards will be detrimental to our poorer municipalities. Unaffordable engineering costs that will be required under the proposal will impede great environmental benefit projects. There's a need to balance environmental benefits with the available funds. It will also make smaller stream crossings unaffordable by forcing bottomless structures and bridges to be installed when a more affordable cross pipe is sufficient. Freeman noted many of the services the District and Center for Dirt/Gravel Roads are currently providing to municipalities will be required to be done by an engineer at a prohibitive cost. Freeman felt training of District personnel would be more cost effective for the program vs every project relying on contracted engineering. These, along with other comments, have been provided to the State Conservation Commission for their consideration.

Hess requested the District put forth projects for consideration under the American Rescue Plan Act Program Funds (ARPA) program. She reported this is an opportunity for the District to identify projects and show how it will benefit the county within the parameters of the funding stream. Suggestions include projects that the District would want to receive match for an identified priority project. Projects must be in response to the COVID pandemic, such as outdoor pavilions to conduct education outdoors rather than indoors. Beri will collaborate with Indiana County Technology Center on the already identified outdoor amphitheater at the campus. The planned walking trail and canopy walk could be considered since they facilitate outdoor education and social distancing. Beri will prepare a narrative to bring to the board for consideration at the March meeting.

Friends of Indiana County Conservation District will host Green Drinks on February 23, 2022, at Levity Brewing. Donations will benefit the canopy walk fund.

Long reported the Farmland Preservation Program ranking process has halted due to reaching a point of not understanding how to move forward with remaining application components. Long also reported the County Commissioners have contributed funds to match state funds to be applied for the purchase of easements. Long restated her request to the county commissioners to provide funding for administrative support of the program or the board may no longer be able to continue with the program.

Andrie moved to enter executive session at 10:42 am to discuss a personnel matter, second by Stumpf, motion carried.

The regular meeting resumed at 10:47 am.

VanHorn moved to approve a \$750 annual pay increase for Monica Lee due to satisfactory completion of a six-month probationary period, second by Stumpf, motion carried.

The next Conservation District Board of Directors meeting will be held Tuesday, March 15, 2022, at 9:30 am at 435 Hamill Road, Indiana, PA 15701. VanHorn moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:48 am, second by Stumpf, motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Tammie L. Robinson  
Administrative Assistant