

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission met April 2, 2012, at the Agriculture Building Board Room located at 2800 N. Lincoln in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. by Chairman George Stunkard. He stated this was a regularly scheduled meeting in accordance with the Open Meeting Law, Title 25, Sections 301 and following as amended. The agenda for this meeting was posted March 29, 2012, at the front entrance of the building.

ROLL CALL

Kim Tweed, Executive Secretary, took roll call and the following members were in attendance:

George Stunkard, Chair
Dan Lowrance, Vice Chair
Jim Grego, Secretary
Karl Jett, Member
Mike Rooker, Member

Others in attendance were:

Mike Thralls, Executive Director
Ben Pollard, Assistant Director
Steve Coffman, Financial Management and Human Resources Director
Robert Toole, Conservation Programs Director
Shanon Phillips, Water Quality Program Director
Mike Kastl, Abandoned Mine Land Program Director
Mike Sharp, Information Technology Director
Lisa Knauf Owen, District Services Director
Mark Harrison, Information Representative
Janet Stewart, General Counsel
George Moore, Watershed Technician
Ron Hilliard, Natural Resources Conservation Service State Conservationist
Clay Pope, Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts Executive Director
Blayne Arthur, Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry Associate
Commissioner
Frank Acker, Little River Conservation District Manager
Steve Thompson, American Farmers and Ranchers
Kim Tweed, Executive Secretary

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mike Thralls, Executive Director, led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

A motion was made by Mr. Grego and seconded by Mr. Rooker to approve the minutes of the March 5, 2012, Commission meeting as written. Those voting aye were: Jett, Rooker, Stunkard, Lowrance and Grego. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

DISTRICT DIRECTOR RESIGNATIONS AND APPOINTMENTS

Mike Thralls, Executive Director, presented the recommendation for appointment of conservation district director as listed in Exhibit #1. A motion was made by Mr. Grego and seconded by Mr. Jett to approve the recommendation as listed. Those voting aye were: Jett, Rooker, Stunkard, Lowrance and Grego. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

CLAIMS/FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Steve Coffman, Financial Management and Human Resources Director, presented the claims and financial statement as listed in Exhibit #2. A motion was made by Mr. Lowrance and seconded by Mr. Rooker to approve the claims and financial statement. Those voting aye were: Jett, Rooker, Stunkard, Lowrance and Grego. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

PRESENTATION OF AGREEMENTS

Ben Pollard, Assistant Director, presented agreements for approval as listed in Exhibit #3. He recommended approval of the continued agreement listed as (a). A motion was made by Mr. Lowrance and seconded by Mr. Jett to approve the continued agreement as listed. Those voting aye were: Jett, Rooker, Stunkard, Lowrance and Grego. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

Mr. Pollard recommended approval of the new agreement listed as (b). A motion was made by Mr. Grego and seconded by Mr. Rooker to approve the new agreement as listed. Those voting aye were: Jett, Rooker, Stunkard, Lowrance and Grego. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

OKLAHOMA ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

Mr. Stunkard moved this report up on the agenda. Clay Pope, Executive Director, reported on attending the White House Rural Council meeting in Washington, D.C. to discuss Oklahoma's water quality program. He also attended the National Association of Conservation Districts Fly In meeting in Washington, D.C. and met with Oklahoma's congressional delegation to discuss the Farm Bill and the Environmental Protection Agency's 319 (EPA) budget.

Mr. Pope stated that work continues on the National Land and Range Judging Contest. The Chesapeake Energy is again sponsoring Stewardship Week. The Western Farmers Electric Cooperative will be hosting Earth Day activities at Grady County. Conservation Day at the Capitol is April 16 with the Awards Ceremony scheduled for 1:30 p.m. in the Blue Room. The Conservation Leadership Program class will be meeting during conservation day as well. Mr. Pope stated that a dues notice will be sent to all districts as well as information on the Association's micro-grant program. He has been working with the Oklahoma Farm Bureau to schedule a tour with their board of directors to view water quality work, carbon sequestration projects and wildlife habitat restoration.

Mr. Pope met with the WFEC board regarding the carbon credit program, which has been named the best program in the world, by one publication, to thank them for their support. Over 50,000 acres have been signed up in the program.

Mr. Pope continues legislative work particularly working on nonpoint source monitoring funding and extending the gross production tax for watershed rehab work and the cost-share program.

OUT OF STATE TRAVEL REQUESTS

Mr. Thralls presented travel requests for approval as listed in Exhibit #4. A motion was made by Mr. Lowrance and seconded by Mr. Jett to approve the requests as listed. Those voting aye were: Jett, Rooker, Stunkard, Lowrance and Grego. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

LITTLE RIVER CONSERVATION DISTRICT'S REQUEST FOR A FULL-TIME BENEFITTED DISTRICT SECRETARY POSITION

Frank Acker, Little River Conservation District Manager, appeared before the Commission to request a full-time benefitted district secretary position. He stated that the secretary resigned and the Commission has authorized a 999 hour temporary position at \$10.50 per hour without benefits. He has received five applicants and of those he feels three are qualified. He stated the importance of getting a qualified person in the position with benefits. Mr. Acker believes that this position receiving no benefits will cause a morale problem.

Questions arose over the cost of benefits and staff advised that it averages around \$10,000 per district employee but that it could range from \$7000 to \$18,000 depending on what the employee selects at enrollment.

Discussions then centered around the Little River Conservation District and the Valliant Conservation District sharing a district secretary position. It was noted that the Woods County and East Woods County districts are now sharing two positions and it is working well.

After further discussion, Mr. Stunkard directed staff to visit with the districts about sharing a position. He thanked Mr. Acker for appearing before the Commission to address his concerns.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEMBERS

Mr. Grego reported that May 21 is the date for his district to move into their new building.

Mr. Lowrance attended Dean Bob Whitson's Advisory Council meeting. Dean Whitson will be retiring July 1. Dr. Mike Woods has been named interim director.

Mr. Rooker attended Murray County Conservation District's 57th annual meeting and dinner.

Mr. Stunkard stated that the Wagoner County Stewardship Breakfast is scheduled for May 11 at 7:00 a.m. at the 1st United Methodist Church in Wagoner. Terry Detrick will be the speaker.

OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION STAFF

Administration - Executive Director: Mr. Thralls stated that the Commission paid for Mr. Pope's travel to attend the White House Rural Council meeting and it was a benefit to the Commission for him to tell the water quality success stories. He stated that in the next two months 11 streams will be removed from EPA's 303(d) list. He commended Shanon Phillips, Water Quality Program Director, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service on this accomplishment.

Mr. Thralls stated that a bill to include \$400,000 for the Commission's monitoring program is being heard this morning and that is welcome news considering the 20% cut from the EPA. He stated that the Commission's 2013 budget will probably remain level and that a bill extending the Conservation Infrastructure Revolving Fund is being considered to 2016 with \$2.6 million for the Commission.

Mr. Thralls stated that a Field Office of the Future teleconference will be held on April 18 at the NRCS State Office in Stillwater.

District Services Division: Lisa Knauf Owen, Director, sent a notice to all districts and board chairs at home regarding the required personnel evaluations which are due to be completed by June 15. These are necessary in order to receive FY2013 personnel allocations.

Ms. Owen reported that the Oklahoma Association of Conservation District Employees held a two-day training and that it was a big success. There were 97 employees in attendance.

Water Quality Program: Shanon Phillips, Director, also reported on the White House Rural Council meeting in Washington, D.C. and stated that they highlighted working through local conservation districts as the ideal model for 319 projects. There have been several follow up inquiries from this meeting. She also reported that 11 streams will be de-listed this year.

Ms. Phillips stated that the annual fish school training was held for field staff.

Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Program: Mike Kastl, Director, stated there are five active reclamation sites in the three grants they have.

Financial Management and Human Resources Division: Mr. Coffman stated that an exit conference was conducted with the State Auditor's office regarding the purchase card audit.

Information Technology Division: Mike Sharp, Director, stated that GIS Day at the Capitol held on March 14 was very successful and he commended Shellie Willoughby, GIS Specialist, for coordinating the event.

Conservation Programs Division: Robert Toole, Director, referenced the written report submitted. He reported that this week is a bid opening which will result in ten construction contracts in progress. He also stated that in addition the division will be overseeing four construction management contracts. Mr. Thralls stated that he and Mr. Toole viewed maintenance work performed on Lake Jean Neustadt (Caddo Creek Site #18) which was a joint venture involving the City of Ardmore, the Arbuckle Conservation District and the Commission.

Administration - Assistant Director: Mr. Pollard reported that the Kiowa County and Washita County Conservation Districts boards have formalized their border changes and the Administrative Order and appointment for new directors in Kiowa County will be on the May Commission meeting agenda.

USDA-NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

Ron Hilliard, State Conservationist, stated that a national conservation partnership leaders video conference will be held on April 18 at the NRCS State Office to discuss the Field Office of the Future directive.

Mr. Hilliard attended the recent OACDE training and stated that he was impressed with the quality of training sessions.

Mr. Hilliard reported that Ag Certainty has been escalated to the USDA Secretary level and is now with Undersecretary Ann Mills.

Mr. Hilliard reported on attending a ribbon cutting ceremony for the Nature Conservancy's new preserve on Blue River.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND FORESTRY

Blayne Arthur, Associate Commissioner, stated that the legislature is keeping them busy and they are tracking legislation regarding burn bans and county commissioner authority to implement a ban.

Ms. Arthur stated that Ag Day at the Capitol is Thursday with the Ag Hall of Fame award being held at 1:00 p.m. She stated that Jack Givens is this year's recipient.

Ms. Arthur also stated that Secretary of Agriculture Jim Reese has returned from a 12 day trade mission to China.

NEXT MEETING

It was recommended that the date of the May 7, 2012 meeting be changed to May 3, 2012 to coincide with the National Land and Range Judging Contest. After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Grego and seconded by Mr. Lowrance to change the meeting to Thursday, May 3, 2012 beginning at 2:00 p.m. in the Agriculture Building Board Room, 2800 N. Lincoln, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Those voting aye were: Jett, Rooker, Stunkard, Lowrance and Grego. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business a motion was made by Mr. Rooker and seconded by Mr. Jett to adjourn. Those voting aye were: Jett, Rooker, Stunkard, Lowrance and Grego. Nay votes: none. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 11:10 a.m.

Approved by the Oklahoma Conservation Commission on May 3, 2012.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gary Stuber", written over a horizontal line.

CHAIR