

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission met March 3, 2008, in the Agriculture Building Board Room, 2800 N. Lincoln Boulevard, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. by Chairman Dan Lowrance. 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 February 28, 2008, at the front entrance of the building.

ROLL CALL

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

Dan Lowrance, Chair
Virginia Kidd, Vice Chair
Matt Gard, Secretary
Mike Rooker, Member
George Stunkard, Member

Others in attendance were:

Mike Thralls, Executive Director
Ben Pollard, Assistant Director
Sheryl Gibson, Grants Accountant
Robert Toole, Conservation Programs Director
Shannon Phillips, Water Quality Program Assistant Director
Mike Kastl, Abandoned Mine Land Program Director
Mike Sharp, Information Technology Director
Lisa Knauf, District Services Director
Mark Harrison, Information Representative
Regina Switzer, Assistant Attorney General
Ron Hilliard, Natural Resources Conservation Service State Conservationist
Rick Maloney, Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry
Larry Harden, Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry
Kim Tweed, Executive Secretary

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Ms. Kidd led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

A motion was made by Ms. Kidd and seconded by Mr. Rooker to approve the minutes of the February 4, 2008, Commission meeting as written. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

DISTRICT DIRECTOR RESIGNATIONS AND APPOINTMENTS

Mike Thralls, Executive Director, reported that Alec LeGrand, Upper Washita, submitted his letter of resignation. He then presented recommendations for appointment of conservation district directors as listed in Exhibit #1. A motion was made by Mr. Stunkard and seconded by Mr. Gard to approve district director appointments listed as First Recommendation in Exhibit #1 with terms to expire as indicated. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

CLAIMS/FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Sheryl Gibson, Grants Accountant, presented the claims and financial statement as listed in Exhibit #2. After discussion, a motion was made by Ms. Kidd and seconded by Mr. Stunkard to approve the claims and financial statement. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

RECOGNITION OF EMPLOYEE

Mark Harrison, Information Specialist, was recognized for being named Employee of the Quarter.

OUT OF STATE TRAVEL REQUESTS

A motion was made by Mr. Stunkard and seconded by Mr. Rooker to approve out of state travel requests as listed in Exhibit #3. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

CONSERVATION DISTRICT DIRECTOR ELECTED POSITION #1

Kim Tweed, Executive Secretary, presented Conservation District Director Election Position #1 information as listed in Exhibit #4. A motion was made by Ms. Kidd and seconded by Mr. Rooker to certify candidates elected in districts where only one eligible person filed. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

A motion was made by Mr. Stunkard and seconded by Mr. Gard to declare Elected Position #1 vacant, effective April 1, 2008, in districts where no eligible candidate filed. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

A motion was made by Mr. Rooker and seconded by Ms. Kidd to authorize the Executive Director to declare candidates receiving the highest number of votes during the district director election as elected to Position #1. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

CO-SPONSORSHIP OF CONSERVATION EDUCATION EVENTS

A motion was made by Mr. Stunkard and seconded by Ms. Kidd to co-sponsor the Oklahoma Envirothon Contest, April 7-10, 2008 in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma and the National Land and Range Judging Contest, May 5-7, 2008, in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

CONSERVATION COMMISSION'S NEWLY ADOPTED EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

Ms. Gibson presented the newly adopted employee handbook for approval and recognized Lynn Weldon, Human Resources Specialist, for her work. Members did not have a copy of the handbook to review prior to the meeting so this item was tabled until the April meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEMBERS

All members attended the recent National Association of Conservation Districts annual meeting in Reno, Nevada and stated that it was a very good meeting with good attendance. Tulsa County Conservation District received a national NRCS Earth Team award.

Members also attended the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts annual meeting and reported that it was one of the best meetings.

Mr. Stunkard was pleased that Paula Templeton received the OACD Hall of Fame award. He stated that the Wagoner County Soil Stewardship Breakfast will be held on April 11 at 7:00 a.m. Ed Fite, Scenic Rivers Administrator, will be the speaker.

Mr. Gard reported on attending an eggs and issues meeting with local legislators as well as the Northwest Alliance legislative day at the State Capitol. He reported that Kay County was also recognized nationally at the NACD annual meeting. GIS Day at the Capitol is scheduled for March 12, Conservation Day at the Capitol is March 19, and Ag Day at the Capitol is April 2.

Mr. Rooker reported on visiting with Gary Mast during the NACD annual meeting. He will be attending the Murray County Conservation District banquet on March 15.

Mr. Lowrance reported on meeting with NRCS Chief Lancaster during the NACD meeting regarding the watershed program. He attended a breakfast with NRCS Associate Chief Dana York, NRCS Deputy Chief for Programs Tom Christensen, and Doug McCaleb. Mr. Lowrance commended Commission staff on their work with the state meeting. He congratulated Rick Jeans for receiving the Hall of Fame award.

OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION STAFF

Administration: Mike Thralls, Executive Director, expressed appreciation to the staff for their work with the state meeting. He recognized Ben Pollard, Lisa Knauf, Kim Tweed, Mark Harrison, Dianne Ireton, Charlotte Stieber, Kelly Mockabee, and Karla Beatty for the planning of the meeting.

Mr. Thralls stated that staff has been working on a subsidence issue in the Tulsa area. Staff is working with the Oklahoma Geological Survey to prepare a fact sheet.

Staff is working with the state bond advisor and the Attorney General's office on the legality of a bond issue for conservation projects. Bond money would be used to repair the conservation infrastructure damaged by flooding in 2007.

Ron Hilliard, Lisa Knauf and Mr. Thralls will be attending a meeting of the National Association of State Conservation Agencies in Austin, Texas with the focus on the watershed program. Dan Sebert, National Watershed Coalition, and Larry Caldwell, NRCS, are preparing a presentation. OACD representatives Scotty Herriman and Clay Pope will also be attending.

District Services Division: Lisa Knauf, Director, introduced Kevin Varner, District Liaison. She stated that the session for newer directors during the state meeting was very successful.

Ms. Knauf has prepared a new Terms of Employment for district employees to reflect their "at-will" status. She also developed a new Budget Request form that will replace the Statement of Needs and Justification of Funds.

Water Quality Program: Shanon Phillips, Assistant Director, reported on the Stamper project stating that the buildings are near completion and that the equipment will be installed soon. She commended Darrel Dominick who has been a tremendous help in working with the RC&D on this project. The EPA is scheduled to tour the site on March 6.

Ms. Phillips stated the mid-year review with EPA is scheduled for March 12-13. On March 13, a tour of the Fort Cobb watershed project is planned as well as a tour of the flood damaged areas.

Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Program: Mike Kastl, Director, reported on one active project in Wagoner County. He reported on the 2007 Grant stating that staff is waiting on authorization from the Office of Surface Mining to begin a project.

Mr. Kastl attended the AML Conference recently. It was reported that the FY2009 grant will be available on December 15 in the amount of \$1.8 million; the following year the amount will be over \$2 million.

Mr. Kastl reported on an emergency in Pittsburg County stating that Henry Roye is meeting with officials in that area.

Financial Management and Human Resources Division: Sheryl Gibson, Grants Accountant, stated a written report was submitted.

Information Technology Division: Mike Sharp, Director, stated that Chris Dunlevy, Database Administrator, resigned last month. He has received approval from the Office of Personnel Management to reclassify the position. Mr. Sharp stated that GIS Day at the Capitol is scheduled for March 12.

Conservation Programs Division: Robert Toole, Director, reported that staff is working with Congress to fund the watershed program and letters have been sent in support of the program.

Under cost-share program, Mr. Toole stated that it is going well and that some districts have requested additional funds.

Mr. Toole stated that staff is launching the tabletop stream trailer on March 19 during Conservation Day at the Capitol. It is configured to illustrate a watershed structure.

Mr. Toole reported on watershed operation and maintenance stating that four Watershed Aide positions have been funded and five additional districts have requested watershed aide positions. An OCC/NRCS Incident Command System Team has been created to assist with emergency management involving watershed structures. He thanked Mr. Hilliard for suggesting ICS and assisting with the training. Mr. Toole also reported on the emergency action plan initiative watershed rehabilitation activities.

A second watershed structure will be decommissioned in Grady County. He reported on Caney Valley Double Creek 3 stating that land rights have been cleared and is ready to proceed with construction.

Administration: Ben Pollard, Assistant Director, stated that the district employees association recognized Mark Harrison for his work with conservation districts during the OACD annual meeting.

The legislature has been in session for a month now. Senator Wyrick is sponsoring a bill containing changes to the Conservation District Act and that bill is on the calendar this morning.

OKLAHOMA ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

Clay Pope, Executive Director, was not in attendance. Mr. Pollard reported that OACD meets with ag groups every Monday during the legislative session to discuss common issues.

Staff and Mr. Pope appeared before Senator Wyrick's committee to answer questions regarding SB 1776. The bill received a do-pass from the committee.

Mr. Pollard stated that Trey Lam is the new vice president replacing Richard Parker. He reported that Conservation Day at the Capitol is March 19.

The state meeting was very positive at the new location. The Executive Board has signed a contract for the 2009 meeting to be held at the Reed Center on February 22-24, 2009. Mr. Pollard appreciates the comments he received about the meeting. Many changes were made and were received positively. The Commission made a concentrated effort in getting staff involved in the meeting and he thanked them for their work.

Savoy Alexander, Area 3 director, has resigned so that position is vacant. Randy Cotten, Hughes County will replace Bob Holley as the Area 5 director.

USDA-NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

Ron Hilliard, State Conservationist, provided copies of a written report. He will be attending the RC&D South Central meeting in St. Louis along with Gary O'Neill. He reported that the NRCS is still waiting on a farm bill. The Oklahoma NRCS has submitted its budget request.

USDA-FARM SERVICE AGENCY

No representative present.

NEXT MEETING

The next regular meeting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission will be held on Monday, April 7, 2008, in the Agriculture Building Board Room, 2800 N. Lincoln Boulevard, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma beginning at 9:30 a.m.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business a motion was made by Ms. Kidd and seconded by Mr. Stunkard to adjourn. Those voting aye were: Lowrance, Kidd, Gard, Rooker and Stunkard. Nay votes: none. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 10:48 a.m.

Approved by the Oklahoma Conservation Commission on April 7, 2008.

CHAIR