



Board Meeting Minutes February 20, 2024

The Hamilton County Conservation District Board of Supervisors met on February 20, 2024, at the District office located at 1325 E. Kemper Rd., Ste. 115, Cincinnati, OH 45246.

Jane Wittke called the meeting to order and invited everyone to say the Pledge of Allegiance at 3:33 pm.

Jane Wittke requested a roll call.

Chairperson	Jane Wittke
Vice-Chairperson	Laura Boyd
Treasurer	Lisa Soper
Secretary	Steven R. Korte (absent)
Program Chairperson	Kenneth Petren

The following were in attendance: Executive Director, Sara Fehring; Business Service Officer, Melinda Hartley; Education & AmeriCorps Program Manager, Gwen Roth; Conservation Program Specialist, Aaron Habig; Marketing & Outreach Coordinator, Rachel Cranmer; Associate Board Supervisor, Michael Miller; and ODA Area IV Program Specialist, Liz Cline.

Agenda Changes/Approval: Lisa Soper moved that the board approve the amended agenda. Kenneth Petren seconded the motion. A roll call vote approved the motion: Jane Wittke, yes; Laura Boyd, yes; Lisa Soper, yes; Steven R. Korte, yes; and Kenneth Petren, yes.

Audience to Visitors: All Hamilton County Conservation District Board meetings are open to the public. It is the policy of the District that anyone wishing to speak during the open board meeting must sign up ten minutes before the start of the meeting. The Board may limit visitor comments to five minutes per speaker and/or topic to ensure adequate time to conduct all business on the agenda.

Chris Hall, Watershed Program Manager candidate, was introduced to the board.

Request for Leave: The following leave balances were presented to the board and are available for review by any interested party.

Pay Periods 1, 2						12/21/2023-01/17/2024					
Name	Begin	Earned	Used	Paid Out	End	Name	Begin	Earned	Used	Paid Out	End
Aaron Habig						Jim Gleason					
Vacation	317.54	9.20	19.50	0.00	307.24	Vacation	308.13	9.20	2.50	0.00	314.83
Sick Time	556.72	9.20	0.00	0.00	565.92	Sick Time	205.42	9.20	27.00	0.00	187.62
Comp Time	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	Comp Time	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Chey Alberto						Melinda Hartley					
Vacation	578.46	15.40	15.50	0.00	578.37	Vacation	127.43	6.20	32.00	0.00	101.63
Sick Time	726.66	9.56	1.50	0.00	734.72	Sick Time	119.75	9.52	7.00	0.00	122.27
Comp Time	0.00	9.38	0.00	0.00	9.38	Comp Time	0.00	8.25	0.00	0.00	8.25
Christopher Hall						Rachel Cranmer					
Vacation	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	Vacation	9.22	5.89	8.00	0.00	7.13
Sick Time	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	Sick Time	5.41	8.77	6.50	0.00	7.67
Comp Time	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	Comp Time	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Emily Hoskins						Sara Fehring					
Vacation	13.99	3.41	8.00	0.00	9.40	Vacation	300.94	9.20	19.00	0.00	291.14
Sick Time	41.27	5.06	4.00	0.00	42.33	Sick Time	306.19	9.66	5.50	0.00	310.35
Comp Time	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	Comp Time	0.00	12.00	0.00	0.00	12.00
Gwen Roth						Sarah Meadows					
Vacation	283.08	15.40	40.00	0.00	258.49	Vacation	95.41	6.20	33.50	0.00	68.12
Sick Time	870.46	9.46	0.00	0.00	879.91	Sick Time	122.70	9.20	10.50	0.00	121.40
Comp Time	0.00	6.75	0.00	0.00	6.75	Comp Time	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Haley Golsch						Teresa Slonaker					
Vacation	76.93	6.20	19.75	0.00	63.39	Vacation	9.29	6.20	0.00	0.00	15.50
Sick Time	139.90	9.20	10.00	0.00	139.10	Sick Time	13.77	9.20	10.00	0.00	12.97
Comp Time	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	Comp Time	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Review and approve the Consent Agenda, including the December Board Minutes and Request for Leave Report. Laura Boyd moved that the board approve the Consent Agenda. Lisa Soper seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a roll call vote: Jane Wittke, yes; Laura Boyd, yes; Lisa Soper, yes; Steven R. Korte, (absent); and Kenneth Petren, yes.

Report from the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA)

Liz Cline reported the following:

- Local Appropriations should be moved and sent over to special funds by April 30, 2024.
- ODA will match additional funds for the District relocation up to \$8,000. The deadline to have those included in the State Match is April 30, 2024. If it does not make the match for 2025, it will roll over and be picked up in the 2026 match.
- H2Ohio will roll out on April 15, 2024. In preparation for expanding H2Ohio outside the Western Lake Erie Basin (WLEB), ODA will hold H2Ohio and MyFarms training. This will be the first of several training courses as we move forward with expansion H2Ohio efforts.
- The 2024 Technician Development Program (TDP) schedule has been released.
- Liz Cline reminded everyone that The Ohio Soil and Water Conservation Commission has set aside funds to cover the cost of TDP and ADP (Administrative Development Program) courses for SWCD staff beginning in the calendar year 2024. SWCD staff will be able to sign up for ADP and TDP courses at no cost but will still need to register for meal counts.
- Every five years, a three-way memo is completed between the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), and ODA. This process is currently under review and should be completed and ready for signatures this summer.
- The ODA SWCD Memoriam of Understanding (MOU) for Pollution Abatements is under review.
- HR Area Training – A wonderful opportunity is coming to your area as we kick off area-wide Human Resource Training. These sessions will allow you to spend time with an HR consultant to get info and guidance on a variety of HR topics that are pertinent to your district. How do you recruit to find the best-qualified candidates for your district? What traditional and alternative benefits can you offer to keep your employees? What are the latest trends in our industry? How will things change as the newest generation walks into the workforce? HR assistance is not usually in our financial budgets, so we thank OFSWCD for providing this resource. We are encouraging the District Administrator and at least one board member to attend. The first one will take place on March 28, 2024. More information will come out closer to the event.

Activity Reports

Marketing Report

Rachel Cranmer reported the following:

- Project Updates
 - District Brochure – The deadline for feedback on the district brochure is March 1, 2024.
- Soil Your Undies Challenge
 - Audience – The target audience for the “Soil Your Undies” Challenge is farmers, gardeners, and schools with gardens.
 - Goals – The goals for the “Soil Your Undies” Challenge are to increase district visibility, educate on soil awareness and health, collect data, and raise awareness of district services.
 - Timeline - The plan is to launch the “Soil Your Undies” Challenge in early spring 2024.
 - Bahr Farm is looking to plant three pairs of underwear to help kick off the “Soil Your Undies” Challenge.
- Midwest Regional Sustainability Summit Planning Committee
 - Green Umbrella is assembling a planning committee for the 2024 Midwest Regional Sustainability Summit.
 - Rachel Cranmer asked the board if she could join the planning committee. With Rachel on the committee, the District would be recognized as a planning partner.
 - Rachel Cranmer's commitment would be 2 -3 hours of planning time per month (depending on which committees she would be a part of).
 - The board agreed that this would be a great opportunity for Rachel Cranmer and the District.
- Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion (EDI) Employee Group
 - Rachel Cranmer has developed an EDI Employee Group with Rachel Cranmer, Sarah Meadows, Teresa Slonaker, Maiya Miller, and Gwen Roth as current members. The group is open to any staff member who would like to participate.
 - The group's top priority is to develop EDI policies for the district.

Agriculture Report

Aaron Habig reported the following:

- Aaron Habig answered a few of the board's pre-sent questions regarding the Stakeholder's meeting on February 8, 2024.
- Aaron Habig gave an update on the H2Ohio Voluntary Nutrient Management Plan (VNMP) and Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) Development and Implementation.

Administrative Report

Sara Fehring reported the following:

- County Appropriation
 - The District received a \$5,000 increase in county appropriations. The district received \$320,000 for 2024.
- Board Retreat
 - The board retreat is planned for March 5, 2024, from 8:30 am-1:45 pm. The retreat will take place at the Hamilton County Educational Service Center.
- Watershed Program Manager Position
 - Chris Hall was offered and accepted the Watershed Program Manager Position. If approved, Chris will start on March 7, 2024.
- American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funds
 - On January 16, 2024, ARPA funds were presented and approved by the Hamilton County Board of County Commissioners. Sarah Adams will handle contracts and will reach out with any questions.
- Legislative Planning Committee
 - On February 6, 2024, Rachel Cranmer, Gwen Roth, Chey Alberto, Laura Boyd, and Sara Fehring met with Rep. Thomas, Rep. Miranda, Rep. Baker, and Rep. Seitz and staff members from the offices of Rep. Isaacsohn and Rep. Abrams. In the District, meetings are planned with Rep. Denson and Rep. Isaacsohn on March 4, 2024.

Earthwork Report

Sara Fehring reported on the following:

- East Miami River Road
 - The complaint was filed with Hamilton County Prosecutor.

- Forestview Garden Lots 5&6
 - The complaint was filed with the Hamilton County Prosecutor.
 - The new homeowner has reached out to Haley Golsch and Jim Ginocchio Jr. for guidance.
- Vista View
 - An email was sent on January 22, 2024, from Jim Ginocchio to Vista Views' legal counsel with the following demands.
 - A remediation approach will be provided in 30 days.
 - Once the remediation approach is approved, work will be completed within six weeks.
 - The retaining wall must be completed within 60 days, which is June 2, 2024.
 - The Earthwork Remediation must be completed in 120 days, which would be August 1, 2024.
 - If the proposed schedule is not possible, we request an alternative schedule be provided within 30 days.

Board Reports

Urban Networking Committee

Laura Boyd reported the following:

- No updates. The focus of the monthly meeting is to get more participation and reorganization.

Legislative Committee

Laura Boyd reported the following:

- No updates.
- Laura Boyd asked the Board if there was any legislation that the board wanted to follow. Laura will contact Janelle Mead for updates.

Long Range Plan Committee

Sara Fehring reported the following:

- Liz Cline suggested we do an extension to the current plan into 2026, giving us a whole year in our new location.

The board agreed with the suggestion to extend the current LRP by one year. The next Long-Range Plan will be 2026-2030.

Annual Meeting Committee

Lisa Soper reported the following:

- There was an idea to move the Annual Meeting to January, allowing the opportunity to swear in new board members.
- Moving the Annual Meeting to January would allow for a review of 2024.
 - The Board requested that Melinda Hartley pull annual meeting data from previous years to see how many people who attended the annual meeting voted.
 - Laura Boyd requested we table the annual meeting discussion until the next board meeting.
 - Sara Fehring will set up another meeting with Lisa Soper and Steven R. Korte to go over more options.

Relocation Committee

Lisa Soper and Sara Fehring reported the following:

- The Draft Lease has been included in the board packet.
- There will be a meeting with David Parker and Rose Goering from Cushman & Wakefield on February 27, 2024, to discuss the draft lease.

Nomination Committee

Ken Petren and Sara Fehring reported the following:

- The Options for the 2024 Election Dates are as follows:
 - August 1, 2024, to August 30, 2024
 - July 18, 2024, to August 16, 2024
 - Aug 16, 2024, to September 4, 2024
 - July 25, 2024, to August 23, 2024

The board asked the questions ‘Could we do it around the OKI tour?’ and ‘What would it interfere with if we moved the dates?’

The board discussed the options to have the election dates moved to September/October.

Laura Boyd moved that the 2024 Election Period be September 30, 2024, to October 29, 2024. Lisa Soper seconded the motion. The motion was approved by: Jane Wittke, yes; Laura Boyd, yes; Lisa Soper, yes; Steven R. Korte, (absent); and Kenneth Petren, yes.

Treasurer's Reports and Bills for Payment:

Lisa Soper reported on the Treasurer's Reports as follows:

Treasurer's Report	
Balanced Reports as of 01/31/2024	Cash Balance
HCSWCD District PNC Checking Account	\$ 78,005.79
HCSWCD District PNC Money Market	\$ 71,227.47
Soil and Water 920017	\$ 698,699.80
Storm Water 920027	\$ 291,548.26
Save Local Waters 920042	\$ 68,363.91
Caring For Our Watersheds 920058	\$ 26,438.89
OEEF Electrolinefisher 922203	\$ 4.58
ORBCorps - AmeriCorps 922413	\$ 29,794.91
CWA Section 319 Grant 922415	\$ -
Cooper Creek Detention Basin Retrofit (2) 922205	\$ 51,369.82
Financial Obligation = Vacation/Sick/Comp	\$ 59,945.13

as of 1/31/2024

Bills for Payment:

Lisa Soper reported that the Bills for Payments are as follows:

Bills for Payment	
HCSWCD District Account	
Total of 5 vouchers processed	\$ 7,647.41
Soil and Water 920017	
Total of 14 vouchers processed	\$ 9,823.90
Storm Water 920027	
Total of 6 vouchers processed	\$ 954.73
Save Local Waters 920042	
Total of 1 vouchers processed	\$ 10,562.48
Caring For Our Watersheds 920058	
Total of 0 vouchers processed	\$ -
OEEF Electrolinefisher 922203	
Total of 0 vouchers processed	\$ -
ORBCorps - AmeriCorps 922413	
Total of 1 voucher processed	\$ 561.00
CWA Section 319 Grant 922415	
Total of 0 voucher processed	\$ -
USFW - Cooper Creek Detention Basin Retrofit (2) 922205	
Total of 0 voucher processed	\$ -

Kenneth Petren moved that the board approve the January 2024 Treasurer's Reports for the District's PNC, the Special Accounts, and the January 2024 Bills for Payment. Laura Boyd seconded the motion. The motion was approved by: Jane Wittke, yes; Laura Boyd, yes; Lisa Soper, yes; Steven R. Korte, (absent); and Kenneth Petren, yes.

Melinda Hartley reported that the 2023 Cash Basis statement will be completed by the end of the week. Sara Fehring will do a final review, and then it will be submitted by 2/28/2024. The chairperson and treasurer will be notified through the Hinkle System that it has been submitted.

New Business

1. *Permission to add Stripe as a payment processor for the 2024 Rain Barrel Art Project Auction.*

Laura Boyd moved that the board approve adding Stripe as a payment processor for the 2024 Rain Barrel Art Project Auction. Jane Wittke seconded the motion. The motion was approved by: Jane Wittke, yes; Laura Boyd, yes; Lisa Soper, yes; Steven R. Korte, (absent); and Kenneth Petren, yes.

2. *Approve Hamiton County Soil and Water Conservation District Administrative Guide.*

Kenneth Petren moved that the board approve the Hamiton County Soil and Water Conservation District Administrative Guide. Lisa Soper seconded the motion. The motion was approved by: Jane Wittke, yes; Laura Boyd, yes; Lisa Soper, yes; Steven R. Korte, (absent); and Kenneth Petren, yes.

3. *Approve the sponsorship letter for the 2024 Stormwater Float.*

Jane Wittke moved that the board approve the sponsorship letter for the 2024 Stormwater Float. Laura Boyd seconded the motion. The motion was approved by: Jane Wittke, yes; Laura Boyd, yes; Lisa Soper, yes; Steven R. Korte, (absent); and Kenneth Petren, yes.

4. *Approve Dress Code Policy contingent on Prosecutor approval.*

The board requested that this item be moved to next month's meeting.

- 5. Approve the second installment of ORBCorps Program Policies contingent on Prosecutor approval.*

Laura Boyd moved that the board approve the second installment of ORBCorps Program Policies contingent on Prosecutor approval. Lisa Soper seconded the motion. The motion was approved by: Jane Wittke, yes; Laura Boyd, yes; Lisa Soper, yes; Steven R. Korte, (absent); and Kenneth Petren, yes.

- 6. Approve the hiring of Christopher Hall as the full-time Watershed Program Manager at the pay rate of \$32.00 per hour with the following benefits: OPERS, holidays, vacation time, and sick time. The starting date has been set for 03/07/2024, and the work schedule will be Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.*

Lisa Soper moved that the board approve the hiring of Christopher Hall as the full-time Watershed Program Manager at the pay rate of \$32.00 per hour with the following benefits: OPERS, holidays, vacation time, and sick time. The starting date has been set for 03/07/2024 with a work schedule of Monday through Friday from 7:30 am to 4:00 pm. Kenneth Petren seconded the motion. The motion was approved by: Jane Wittke, yes; Laura Boyd, yes; Lisa Soper, yes; Steven R. Korte, (absent); and Kenneth Petren, yes.

- 7. Permission for Relocation Committee to work with Cushman & Wakefield, Hamilton County Prosecutor, and Plymouth Orange Point LLC to execute lease agreements for 2702 and 2710 E Kemper Road.*

Laura Boyd moved that the board permit the Relocation Committee to work with Cushman & Wakefield, Hamilton County Prosecutor, and Plymouth Orange Point LLC to execute lease agreements for 2702 and 2710 E Kemper Road and coordinate with Jane Wittke for needed signatures. Kenneth Petren seconded the motion. The motion was approved by: Jane Wittke, yes; Laura Boyd, yes; Lisa Soper, yes; Steven R. Korte, (absent); and Kenneth Petren, yes.

8. Approve purchase order for SSA Group for \$7,611.80 for the Caring For Watersheds (CFW) Final Event (920058)

Lisa Soper moved that the board approve the purchase order for SSA Group for \$7,611.80 for the Caring For Watersheds (CFW) Final Event (920058). Kenneth Petren seconded the motion. The motion was approved by: Jane Wittke, yes; Laura Boyd, yes; Lisa Soper, yes; Steven R. Korte, (absent); and Kenneth Petren, yes.

Executive Session – Personnel Performance

Laura Boyd moved that the board members enter an Executive Session to discuss Personnel Performance. Lisa Soper seconded the motion. A roll call vote approved the motion: Jane Wittke, yes; Laura Boyd, yes; Lisa Soper, yes; Steven R. Korte, (absent); and Kenneth Petren, yes.

Sara Fehring and Liz Cline were invited to attend.

The executive session started at 5:41 pm.

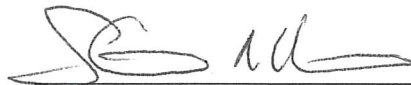
The board members returned to the regular session at 6:56 pm.

Adjournment: Kenneth Petren moved that the board members adjourn the board meeting at 6:58 pm. Laura Boyd seconded the motion. A roll call vote approved the motion: Jane Wittke, yes; Laura Boyd, yes; Lisa Soper, yes; Steven R. Korte, (absent); and Kenneth Petren, yes.

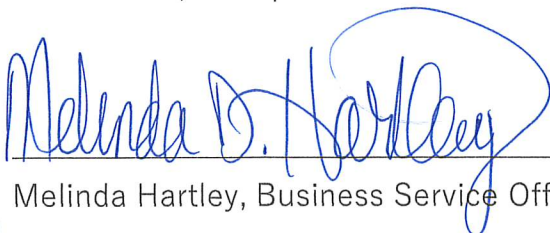
Respectfully submitted,



Jane Wittke, Chairperson



Steven R. Korte, Secretary



Melinda Hartley, Business Service Officer