



**Board Meeting Minutes
February 18, 2025**

The Hamilton County Conservation District Board of Supervisors met on February 18, 2025, at the District Training Center at 2710 E Kemper Road, Sharonville, OH 45241.

Laura Boyd called the meeting to order and invited everyone to say the Pledge of Allegiance at 4:06 pm.

Laura Boyd requested a roll call.

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

The following were in attendance: Sara Fehring, Executive Director; Melinda Hartley, Business Service Officer; Chey Alberto, Urban Conservationist; Rachel Cranmer, Marketing & Outreach Coordinator; and Alison Manning, Ohio Department of Agriculture Area IV Program Specialist.

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

Audience to Visitors: All Hamilton County Conservation District Board meetings are open to the public. The district policy is that anyone wishing to speak during an open board meeting must sign up ten (10) minutes before the start of the meeting. The Board may limit visitor comments to five (5) minutes per speaker and/or topic to ensure adequate time to conduct all business on the agenda.

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

2025 Vacation, Sick, and Comp Time Report

Pay Periods 01, 02

12/19/2024 to 01/15/2025

Name	Vacation Time					Sick Time					Comp Time				
	Begin	Earned	Used	Paid Out	End	Begin	Earned	Used	Paid Out	End	Begin	Earned	Used	Paid Out	End
Aaron Habig	410.36	12.40	24.00	0.00	398.76	669.59	9.20	16.00	0.00	662.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Chey Alberto	598.25	15.40	35.00	0.00	578.65	757.19	9.20	8.00	0.00	758.39	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Christopher Hall	28.42	11.55	16.00	0.00	23.97	96.60	6.90	24.00	0.00	79.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Gwen Roth	307.12	15.40	61.50	0.00	261.03	991.25	9.20	0.00	0.00	1000.45	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Haley Weisbrodt	36.59	6.20	11.75	0.00	31.05	175.04	9.20	8.00	0.00	176.24	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
James Gleason	362.28	9.20	50.50	0.00	320.98	147.05	9.20	0.50	0.00	155.75	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Melinda Hartley	98.62	6.20	12.00	0.00	92.83	93.11	9.20	8.00	0.00	94.31	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Nicole Gunderman	41.40	10.80	19.00	0.00	33.20	28.76	9.20	3.00	0.00	34.96	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Rachel Cranmer	13.42	6.20	1.00	0.00	18.63	25.77	9.20	4.00	0.00	30.97	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Sara Fehring	391.94	12.40	31.00	0.00	373.34	376.71	9.20	10.50	0.00	375.41	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Sarah Meadows	118.57	6.20	0.00	0.00	124.78	96.75	9.20	0.00	0.00	105.95	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Teresa Burnett	18.93	6.20	0.00	0.00	25.14	63.89	9.27	0.00	0.00	73.16	0.00	1.88	0.00	0.00	1.88

Review and approve the Consent Agenda, including the January 2025 Board Minutes and Request for Leave Report. Jane Wittke moved that the board approve the Consent Agenda. Steven R. Korte seconded the motion. roll call vote approved the motion: Laura Boyd, yes; Steven R. Korte, yes; Lisa Soper, yes; Kenneth Petren, yes; and Jane Wittke, yes.

Report from the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA)

Alison Manning reported the following:

- o Bidding Threshold Increase
 - Beginning January 1, 2025, the competitive bidding threshold for SWCDs has increased from \$75,000 to \$77,250. Each calendar year thereafter, the amount for the previous year increases by three percent as determined and published by the director of commerce.
- o Form 11
 - ODA program specialists are working to complete Form 11 earlier than in previous years.
- o Technician Development Program (TDP)
 - We've experienced a much more significant than expected interest in our Beginner Level TDP classes this year, and we reached our initial capacity within the first two weeks of opening registration. We are currently arranging alternate class locations that will allow us to accept more registrations. All class dates will remain the same. Once we have the details finalized, we'll announce them through the Federation and open more slots for registration.
- o 2025 Ohio Conservation Farm Family Awards
 - May 2, 2025, is the Farm Family Award Nomination deadline.
 - ODA would like at least one nomination from each district.

- Year In Review
 - ODA is working on a report template for each district throughout the state that will give a snapshot of the work done throughout the year.

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Staff

Nothing to Report

Activity Reports

Marketing:

Rachel Cranmer reported the following:

- Regional Storm Water Collaborative
 - Field Day
 - Clermont County Fair Grounds has committed to hosting the Field Day. They are in the final stages of approval.
 - Rain Barrel Art Project
 - Artists are painting their barrels with about a month left to finish.
 - AmeriCorps members are working on completing their barrel.
 - Rachel Cranmer has contacted Fox 19 News to have the Rain Barrel Art Project featured in their Now In the Nati segment during the first week of April.
 - The Urban Native Collective will paint a barrel and display it at the Summer Musik Art Museum.
 - Doug McKenzie-Mohr (DMM) Consulting Process
 - There are four free consultations available following the DMM workshop. One is allocated to Environmental Services, three to the Regional Storm Water Collaborative.
 - To use the consultations, much prework must be done.
 1. Must survey 10-15 professionals to gather behavior data
 2. Take the top 3 behaviors, create a list of questions
 3. Survey the public with the questions.
 - Once all the steps have been completed, the consultations will be scheduled.
- Soil Your Undies
 - The plan for 2025 is to focus on how to make the program more successful and complete.
 - There will also be a focus on data collection.
- Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Belonging Policy
 - Status
 - The draft policy has been completed and is ready for review.
 - The committee has requested confirmation from the board to allow it to be published on the District website.
 - Initiative Pledges
 - There are several initiative ideas to incorporate into the policy.

- One is to have an In-Kind Donation during the tree sale, which would allow the donated funds to be used to give trees (and possibly plants) to underprivileged areas.

Earthwork:

Chey Alberto reported the following:

- Earthwork Numbers
 - Erosion & Sediment Control Reviews = 1633
 - Geotechnical Reviews = 1545
 - Number of Inspections = 4320
- 2024 Earthwork Fees Collected
 - There was a total of \$258,864.64 of Earthwork fees collected in 2024.
 - The fee increase due to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) is in effect starting in 2025.
- Forestview Gardens Lots 5 & 6
 - The issues with Forestview Gardens Lots 5 & 6 have been resolved.
 - Unapproved fill was removed and certified by professional engineers.
- 6481 E Miami River Road
 - The District has received \$2,750.00 in fines from the case.
 - The total of \$5,500.00 was split with Hamilton County Planning + Development Flood.
- 254 Pedretti
 - Chey Alberto is currently working with Hamilton County Prosecutor Nee Fong Chin.
 - The District sent conditions and agreements for owner and lawyer signatures.
- Annual Report Numbers
 - Annual Report Numbers for Beehive, District Annual Report, and Storm Water District Annual Report have been compiled and submitted.
 - Storm Water District is switching to quarterly reports and presenting them to the Storm Water District Oversight Board.
- Overland Flooding Study
 - The District Earthwork Staff, Sara Fehring, and Chris Hall met with Raftelis to discuss overland flooding issues in the county.
 - Raftelis is the consultant hired by Hamilton County.
- Water Quality Workshop
 - The 2025 Water Quality Workshop will be held on May 21, 2025.
 - The location will be Butler SWCD and NRCS, 1802 Princeton Rd, Hamilton, OH 45011.
- Earthwork Fees Resolution
 - Sara Fehring and Aaron Habig are working with Hamilton County Planning + Development and the Hamilton County Prosecutor's Office to draft a resolution for the Board of County Commissioners.
 - The resolution will be regarding Earthwork Fees on conservation projects with government funding, as well as projects being done by conservation partners.
- Accela
 - The Accela Migration went live today (February 18, 2025).

Administration:

Sara Fehring reported the following:

- Activity Reports
 - Staff have been issued a new format for their activity reports. They are requested to keep their reports to a maximum of two pages.
- AmeriCorps Update
 - On 2/11/25, Gwen received a notice that AmeriCorps programs were audited to comply with new executive orders. In Ohio, all but 6 AmeriCorps programs were flagged for potential noncompliance.
 - On 2/14/25, Gwen received information that policies, websites, recruitment materials, etc., needed to be scrubbed of the following language
 - Diversity
 - Equity
 - DEI
 - Racial Equity
 - Racial Justice
 - Climate Changes
 - Environmental Justice
 - Green Initiative
 - Antiracism
 - Gender Identity
 - Gwen Roth spent Monday removing all language from public-facing materials. She has not yet completed all the internal documents.
 - This has a deadline of February 20, 2025. New forms and recruitment materials will be used to enroll members.
- Electrolifishing Equipment
 - Kenneth Petren has reached out with interest in renting the electrofishing equipment.
 - Upon Sarah Meadows' return, we will begin discussions.
- Staff Training
 - All staff and AmeriCorps members will participate in a Fire Extinguisher Training course on February 24, 2025.
 - All staff and AmeriCorps members will participate in the DiSC (DiSC is an acronym for Dominance, Influence, Steadiness, and Conscientiousness) Assessment on February 27, 2025.
- Long Range Plan (LRP)
 - LRP preparation is in progress.
 - Staff have been working on developing survey questions and contact lists.

Board Reports

Urban Networking Committee:

Nothing to Report

Budget Committee:

Lisa Soper reported the following:

- o Meetings with Lisa Soper and Kenneth Petren have been set to review 2024 Financials, 2025 Financials & Budget, and 2026 Budget.

Annual Meeting Committee

- o Nothing to Report

Long-Range Plan Committee

Laura Boyd reported the following:

- o There is a team meeting set for Monday, February 24, 2025, at 1:00 pm to bring the LRP Committee up to date on progress.

Other Reports:

Kenneth Petren asked for clarifications for the Nominating Committee. Previously, the District understood that the Nominating Committee would have two Board members, and the remaining members or members would come from outside the District. After clarification from Alison Manning, Ohio Department of Agriculture Area IV Program Specialist, the Nominating Committee needs only one Board member (to serve as chair) with the remaining members from outside the District.

Treasurer's Reports

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

Treasurer's Report	Cash Balance
PNC Checking Account	\$ 44,436.22
Money Market Account	\$ 20,348.80
Star Ohio Account	\$ -
920017 Soil & Water	\$ 372,682.68
920027 Storm Water	\$ 203,112.77
920042 - Save Local Waters	\$ 78,032.83
920058 - Caring For Our Watersheds	\$ 26,256.95
9222032 - Electrolinesfisher Grant	\$ 4.58
9222413 - AmeriCorps Grant	\$ 62,259.25
922415 - Section 319 Grant	\$ -
922417 - OWDA Grant	\$ -
922205 - Cooper Creek 2 Grant	\$ (8,705.00)
922401 - Relocation Project	\$ 163,580.74
Financial Obligation = Vacation/Sick/Comp	\$ 123,946.08
As of 1/31/2025	

Bills for Payment

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

Voucher Totals	
PNC Checking Account (7 Vouchers)	\$ 37,394.51
Money Market Account (0 Vouchers)	\$ -
Star Ohio Account (0 Vouchers)	\$ -
920017 Soil & Water (12 Vouchers)	\$ 15,100.90
920027 Storm Water (4 Vouchers)	\$ 2,668.48
920042 - Save Local Waters (4 Vouchers)	\$ 3,376.09
920058 - Caring For Our Watersheds (0 Vouchers)	\$ -
9222032 - Electrolindefisher Grant (0 Vouchers)	\$ -
9222413 - AmeriCorps Grant (0 Vouchers)	\$ -
922415 - Section 319 Grant (0 Vouchers)	\$ -
922417 - OWDA Grant (0 Vouchers)	\$ -
922205 - Cooper Creek 2 Grant (2 Vouchers)	\$ 1,000.00
922401 - Relocation Project (0 Vouchers)	\$ -

Kenneth Petren moved that the board approve the January 2025 Treasurer's Reports for the District's PNC, the Special Accounts, and the January 2025 Bills for Payment. Jane Wittke seconded the motion. The motion was approved: Jane Wittke, aye; Laura Boyd, aye; Lisa Soper, aye; Steven R. Korte, aye; and Kenneth Petren, aye.

1. *Cash Basis*
2. *Depository Agreement*
3. *2025 Amended Budget Letters for 920017 and 920027*

Laura Boyd moved that the board approve the 2025 Amended Budget Letters for OBJ Level 3 - 820 Electric Utilities to increase from \$7,000 to \$9,000 in the 920017 and 920027 accounts. Lisa Soper seconded the motion. The motion was approved: Jane Wittke, aye; Laura Boyd, aye; Lisa Soper, aye; Steven R. Korte, aye; and Kenneth Petren, aye.

New Business

1. *Approve the successful completion of Nicole Gunderman's introductory period.*

Jane Wittke moved to approve the successful completion of Nicole Gunderman's introductory period. Steven R. Korte seconded the motion. The motion was approved: Laura Boyd, aye; Steven R. Korte, aye; Lisa Soper, aye; Kenneth Petren, aye; and Jane Wittke, aye.

2. *Approved the registration fee of \$25 per registrant for the Water Quality Workshop.*

Lisa Soper moved that the board approve the registration fee of \$25 per registrant for the Water Quality Workshop. Steven R. Korte seconded the motion. The motion was approved: Laura Boyd, aye; Steven R. Korte, aye; Lisa Soper, aye; Kenneth Petren, aye; and Jane Wittke, aye.

3. *Approve the Introductory Period Policy.*

Lisa Soper moved that the board approve the Introductory Period Policy with the amendment of one-year probationary period for the Executive Director. Steven R. Korte seconded the motion. The motion was approved: Laura Boyd, aye; Steven R. Korte, aye; Lisa Soper, aye; Kenneth Petren, aye; and Jane Wittke, aye.

4. *Review the Outside Employment Form for Rachel Cranmer.*

Sara Fehring presented Rachel Cranmer's completed Outside Employment Form for the Board to review.

5. *Approve the PO and Payment of up to \$9,000 to Duke Energy for Utilities OCA 920017/920027*

Lisa Soper moved that the board approve the PO and Payment of up to \$9,000 to Duke Energy for Utilities OCA 920017/920027. Jane Wittke seconded the motion. The motion was approved: Laura Boyd, aye; Steven R. Korte, aye; Lisa Soper, aye; Kenneth Petren, aye; and Jane Wittke, aye.

6. *Approve the closing of the Electrolinesharing Grant Account and transfer of the remaining funds of \$2,489.28 to the PNC Account – OCA 922203*

Jane Wittke moved that the board approve the closing of the Electrolinesharing Grant Account and transfer of the remaining \$2,489.28 to the PNC Account—OCA 922203. Laura Boyd seconded the motion. The motion was approved: Laura Boyd, aye; Steven R. Korte, aye; Lisa Soper, aye; Kenneth Petren, aye; and Jane Wittke, aye.

Executive Session- O.R.C. 121.22 (G) (1) - Personnel

Laura Boyd made the motion to enter EXECUTIVE SESSION under the authority of O.R.C. 121.22 (G) (1) – Personnel. Lisa Soper seconded the motion. A roll call vote approved the motion: Laura Boyd, yes; Steven R. Korte, yes; Lisa Soper, yes; Kenneth Petren, yes; and Jane Wittke, yes.

Alison Manning was invited to attend the meeting.

The executive session started at 5:18 pm.

Sara Fehring entered the executive session at 5:50 pm.

The board members returned to the regular session at 6:28 pm.

Adjournment: Jane Wittke moved that the board members adjourn the board meeting at 6:29 pm. Kenneth Petren seconded the motion. A roll call vote approved the motion: Laura Boyd, yes; Steven R. Korte, yes; Lisa Soper, yes; Kenneth Petren, yes; and Jane Wittke, yes.

Respectfully submitted,



Laura Boyd, Chairperson



Kenneth Petren, Secretary



Melinda Hartley, Business Service Officer