



Board Meeting Minutes

March 19, 2024

The Hamilton County Conservation District Board of Supervisors met on March 19, 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 3:36 pm.

Jane Wittke requested a roll call.

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

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; Urban Conservationist, Chey Alberto; Associate Board Member, Kara Schirmer; Associate Board Member, Michael Miller; NRCS Conservationist, John Williams; and ODA Area IV Program Specialist, Liz Cline.

Jane Wittke gave an overview of when a roll call vote is required. Several Soil and Water Conservation Districts have moved to doing a roll call for all votes. Jane has requested to only use the roll call option under the required circumstances (approval of the consent agenda, when a board member is attending the meeting virtually, when a board member abstains, to enter executive session, when votes are split,

Sara Fehring stated that a request for approval for the PO and Payment of \$4,000 to Learning Lab Consulting had been added to the agenda.

Agenda Changes/Approval: Lisa Soper moved that the board approve the modified, amended agenda. Steven R. Korte 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, (absent).

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.

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

Pay Periods 3, 4						01/18/2024 - 02/14/2024					
Name	Begin	Earned	Used	Paid Out	End	Name	Begin	Earned	Used	Paid Out	End
<i>Aaron Habig</i>						<i>Jim Gleason</i>					
Vacation	307.24	9.20	3.00	0.00	313.44	Vacation	314.83	9.20	0.50	0.00	323.53
Sick Time	565.92	9.20	0.00	0.00	575.12	Sick Time	187.62	9.20	2.00	0.00	194.82
Comp Time	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	Comp Time	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<i>Chey Alberto</i>						<i>Melinda Hartley</i>					
Vacation	578.37	15.40	3.50	0.00	590.28	Vacation	101.63	6.20	0.00	0.00	107.84
Sick Time	734.72	9.37	3.50	0.00	740.59	Sick Time	122.27	9.60	8.50	0.00	123.37
Comp Time	9.38	4.50	1.50	0.00	12.38	Comp Time	8.25	10.50	0.00	0.00	18.75
<i>Christopher Hall</i>						<i>Rachel Cranmer</i>					
Vacation	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	Vacation	7.13	6.20	0.00	0.00	13.34
Sick Time	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	Sick Time	7.67	9.20	8.50	0.00	8.37
Comp Time	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	Comp Time	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<i>Emily Hoskins</i>						<i>Sara Fehring</i>					
Vacation	9.40	3.45	0.00	0.00	12.86	Vacation	291.14	9.20	0.00	0.00	300.34
Sick Time	42.33	5.12	17.00	0.00	30.45	Sick Time	310.35	10.09	4.50	0.00	315.94
Comp Time	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	Comp Time	12.00	23.25	4.00	0.00	31.25
<i>Gwen Roth</i>						<i>Sarah Meadows</i>					
Vacation	258.49	15.40	0.00	0.00	273.90	Vacation	68.12	6.20	0.00	0.00	74.32
Sick Time	879.91	10.47	0.00	0.00	890.38	Sick Time	121.40	9.37	11.50	0.00	119.28
Comp Time	6.75	33.00	0.00	0.00	39.75	Comp Time	0.00	4.50	0.00	0.00	4.50
<i>Haley Golsch</i>						<i>Teresa Slonaker</i>					
Vacation	63.39	6.20	0.00	0.00	69.60	Vacation	15.50	6.20	0.00	0.00	21.71
Sick Time	139.10	9.20	2.00	0.00	146.30	Sick Time	12.97	9.47	0.00	0.00	22.44
Comp Time	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	Comp Time	0.00	7.13	0.00	0.00	7.13

Review and approve the Consent Agenda, including the February 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, yes; and Kenneth Petren, (absent).

Kenneth Petren arrived at 3:39 pm.

Agency Reports

Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA)

Liz Cline reported the following:

- Updates
 - Quarterly agency news updates will start coming to your county email address.
- Form 11
 - The Form 11 will be completed on the day of the May 2024 Board Meeting.
- Technician Development Program (TDP)
 - TDP classes are filling up quickly. If you find a class you are interested in has already filled go ahead and register to be placed on the waiting list, another session may be opened.
 - Staff should look ahead at the course schedule and register for any classes they want to take through the end of the year.
- HR Area Training
 - HR Area Training for Area IV will be held on March 28, 2024, at the Montgomery County Job Center, 4303 W. Third Street, Dayton 45417, from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.; lunch will be provided.
 - At least one board member and the executive director should attend; however, all board members are invited.

Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS)

John Williams reported the following:

- Turpin Farms
 - John Williams and Aaron Habig visited Turpin Farms to review their irrigation system. They are working with the Farm to see if there is something that EQUIP could help with.

- This would be a trailblazer opportunity to create a Water Management Plan.
- There is a tool that will tell the sprayer where NOT to spray. The technology is about two years away, so by creating the plan, when the tool is ready, the farm will be ready.
- Tikkun Farms
 - Tikkun Farms has been approved for a grant through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).
 - Tikkun Farms is one of the first to receive this grant opportunity.

Activity Reports

Education

Gwen Roth reported the following:

- AmeriCorps
 - Butler County has just offered the GIS and Data Technician AmeriCorps position to Rylee Sanker. She is currently working on paperwork and background checks and will have a start date of April 1, 2024.
 - The continuation grant for the next year is due April 2, 2024. Sara Fehring, Melinda Hartley, and Gwen Roth have been working on the updated budget.
- Public Involvement
 - The Live Staking event went well. 850 live stakes were harvested and planted over a 2-day period.
 - The Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) and Study Plan for Mill Creek and Lower Great Miami River have been submitted and are waiting for the approval letter. The Little Miami River QAPP and Study Plan will be completed by June 2024.
 - The Native Plant Kit and Seed Sale has launched and will continue through the end of March 2024.
- Caring For Our Watersheds
 - We received 129 entries (3rd highest year) and have chosen the top 10.
 - Thanks to Lisa Soper for volunteering to help judge the finals on Saturday, April 27, 2024.

Agriculture Report

Aaron Habig reported the following:

Agriculture Strategic Plan

Mission: Bring the District to the forefront of Agriculture in Hamilton County

- Goal: Identify current agricultural producers in the county to provide support through technical assistance, education, and cost-share opportunities.
 - Objective 1: Gather data and develop an updated agricultural inventory of Hamilton County. June 2024.
 - Objective 2: Gather agricultural and conservation easement records in Hamilton County. August 2024.
 - Objective 3: Gather data and develop a map of all ponds and lakes in Hamilton County. August 2024.
- Goal: Identify current partnerships and programs for Urban Agriculture in Hamilton County.
 - Objective 1: Meet with community partners such as OSU Extension, Green Umbrella, and Civic Garden Center to identify current contacts and programs. March 2024.
 - Objective 2: Meet with Robin Henderson, Office of Environment and Sustainability Urban Agriculture, Food Waste, & Food Policy, to discuss current programming and opportunities. April 2024.
- Goal: Provide educational programs and technical resources to small-scale producers to diversify production in Hamilton County.
 - Objective 1: Host four workshops as part of the Urban Ag education series with Michaela Werling NRCS. November 2024.
 - Objective 2: Gather updated agricultural regulations and zoning requirements for livestock, chickens, and apiaries. July 2024.
 - Objective 3: Update district materials for the website and for distribution to partners. July 2024.
- Goal: Implement the ODA H2Ohio statewide rollout.
 - Objective 1: Identify producers and make outreach for H2Ohio phase 1. April 2024.
 - Objective 2: Sign up producers for H2Ohio phase 1. May 2024.
 - Objective 3: Sign up producers for H2Ohio phase 2. September 2024.
 - Objective 4: Work with property owners to identify areas for wetland restoration and the Great Miami River Conservation Reserve Enhanced Program in March 2025.
 - Objective 5: Continue to promote the ODNR H2Ohio program. March 2025.

- Goal: Grow relationships with local and federal partners, Hamilton County, NRCS, and FSA, to provide the best outreach, technical support, and cost-share opportunities to traditional and non-traditional producers in Hamilton County.
 - Objective 1: Work with John Williams to promote NRCS programs with both urban and traditional producers. March 2025.
 - Objective 2: Work with Michaela Werling to promote the Cincinnati High Tunnel Initiative. March 2025.
 - Objective 3: Work with John Warrick to promote FSA programs and monitor the county's land under production statistics. March 2025.
 - Objective 4: Investigate if the district can assist the Hamilton County Auditor with CAUV. June 2024.
- Goal: Provide resources to the livestock community in Hamilton County to help them manage their pastures, hay fields, and manure management.
 - Objective 1: Work with the Hamilton County Ohio Horseman's Council to determine the needs of the equine community. July 2024.
 - Objective 2: Compile resources for manure management, sites that will accept manure, composting on-site, storage/stockpile requirements, etc. June 2024.
 - Objective 3: Present at two meetings in conjunction with the Ohio Horseman's Council. November 2024.
 - Objective 4: Work with Hamilton County R3Source to help facilitate larger-scale composting in the county to provide an outlet for equine manure. March 2025.
 - Objective 5: Provide outreach to two riding clubs and organizations in Hamilton County. June 2024.

Administrative Report

Sara Fehring reported the following:

- 1st Amendment Audits
 - Three SWCD offices in Area IV have been visited: Miami, Preble, and Greene.
 - Greene and Preble SWCD had a 5–10-minute visit from Kult News in early November.
 - Miami SWCD had a visit in early September. The Miami SWCD visit resulted in a social media post that received attention and increased phone calls to the office. Since then, everything has calmed down.

- Once 1st Amendment Auditors realize they are not going to receive a reaction, they are quick to leave. Advice to districts is to be welcoming and offer to assist.
- Office Signs
 - “Employees only beyond this point” signs have been placed through the office.
 - “No Weapons” sign has been placed at the front door.
 - “No Abusive Behavior” will be posted soon. Jane Wittke will send Sara Fehring language for the sign.
- Cooper Creek Demonstration Watershed Detention Basin Retrofit Program (Retrofit #2)
 - FWMA – Fish and Wildlife Management Assistance
 - Amendment/Modification request was issued on 3/13/2024.
 - The grant will close on 9/30/2024.
 - Christopher Hall is now able to move forward with his work.
- Area IV HR Training
 - Sara Fehring, Jane Wittke, and Lisa Soper will be attending the Area IV HR training on March 28, 2024.
- Melinda Hartley conducted a Records Retention Training with the staff.
- Melinda Hartley completed the Cash Basis and submitted it on February 27, 2024.
- Sara Fehring Vacation
 - Sara Fehring will be on vacation from April 4, 2024, to April 15, 2024. Sara will be reachable by phone and email.
 - Gwen Roth and Chey Alberto will be the points of contact during that time.

Board Reports

Urban Networking Committee

Laura Boyd reported the following:

- Molly Conley had to postpone the March meeting, so there are no updates.
- Jennifer Fish and Molly Conley are committed to working on assigning goals and objectives.
- The results of the MS4 survey (like last year's survey results) are available, and Laura Boyd will send those results to the board.

Legislative Committee

Laura Boyd reported the following:

- No updates

Sara Fehring reported the following:

- Sara Fehring, Gwen Roth, Chey Alberto, and Rachel Cranmer met with Representatives Issacson and Denson.
- Both meetings went well, and the Representatives were interested in the education offerings from the district.
- The Officials tour will be held on September 30, 2024.
 - The tour will be a half-day event starting at 8:15 am with a warm breakfast and concluding at 12:15 pm.
 - All Hamilton County Representatives have received a save-the-date.

Annual Meeting Committee

Steven R. Korte reported the following:

- The Annual Meeting will be held on Monday, October 28, 2024, from 4:00 pm to 6:30 pm.
- There will be a Grand opening/Open house for the new office location with a fall harvest theme.
- The date will coincide with the election.
- There will be a request for an annual meeting budget at the April board meeting.

Relocation Committee

Steven R. Korte reported the following:

- We are in the final stages of lease negotiations with the Hamilton County Prosecutor and Plymouth Orange Point LLC.
- One of the tenants has requested a one-month holdover. It looks like that will be ok timing-wise, but a clause has been put into negotiation to protect us with our current lease at Kemper Pond.

Nomination Committee

Kenneth Petren reported the following:

- Kenneth Petren has been reviewing the process and timing of the 2024 Board or Supervisors Election and will be addressing a lot of the items in April 2024.

- Kenneth Petren's first step will be to talk with Jane Wittke to see what her interests are in running again.
- Steven R. Korte has already started reaching out to people for interested candidates. He plans to reach out to Scott P. Huber for an outside person to assist.
- Kenneth Petren would like to use the updated District Brochure as a resource for recruitment.

Other Reports

Kara Schirmer reported the following:

- Kara Schirmer will be leaving the Great Parks. She starts with Cincinnati Parks as a grant writer on April 1, 2024.

Laura Boyd reported the following:

- Laura Boyd has completed the staff performance reviews and will be sending them to Sara Fehring to distribute to the staff.

Treasurer's Reports and Bills for Payment:

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

Treasurer's Report	Balanced Reports as of 02/29/2024	Cash Balance
HCSWCD District PNC Checking Account		\$ 80,422.29
HCSWCD District PNC Money Market		\$ 71,228.04
Soil and Water 920017		\$ 642,715.54
Storm Water 920027		\$ 211,196.39
Save Local Waters 920042		\$ 83,850.11
Caring For Our Watersheds 920058		\$ 26,438.89
OEEF Electrolinerfisher 922203		\$ 4.58
ORBCorps - AmeriCorps 922413		\$ 27,415.01
CWA Section 319 Grant 922415		\$ -
Cooper Creek Detention Basin Retrofit (2) 922205		\$ -
Financial Obligation = Vacation/Sick/Comp		\$ 70,954.38

as of 02/29/2024

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	\$675.00
Soil and Water 920017	
Total of 25 vouchers processed	\$5,465.28
Storm Water 920027	
Total of 18 vouchers processed	\$7,589.22
Save Local Waters 920042	
Total of 1 vouchers processed	\$150.00
Caring For Our Watersheds 920058	
Total of 0 vouchers processed	\$0.00
OEEF Electrolinefisher 922203	
Total of 0 vouchers processed	\$0.00
ORBCorps - AmeriCorps 922413	
Total of 3 vouchers processed	\$252.96
CWA Section 319 Grant 922415	
Total of 0 vouchers processed	\$0.00
Cooper Creek Detention Basin Retrofit (2) 922205	
Total of 1 vouchers processed	\$51,369.82

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

New Business

1. Approve to increase the living stipend for ORBCorps members from \$927.27 to \$956.95 per pay period starting March 28, 2024 – OCA 922413

Steven R. Korte moved that the board approve to increase the living stipend for ORBCorps members from \$927.27 to \$956.95 per pay period starting March 28, 2024 – OCA 922413. Lisa

Soper seconded the motion. The motion was approved by Jane Wittke, aye; Laura Boyd, aye; Lisa Soper, aye; Steven R. Korte, aye; and Kenneth Petren, aye.

- 2. Approve Stormwater Float fees: Regular \$50, Early Bird \$40, Student \$10 with a letter of support.*

Lisa Soper moved that the board approve the Stormwater Float fees: Regular \$50, Early Bird \$40, and Student \$10 with a letter of support. Steven R. Korte seconded the motion. The motion was approved by Jane Wittke, aye; Laura Boyd, aye; Lisa Soper, aye; Steven R. Korte, aye; and Kenneth Petren, aye.

- 3. Approve the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Hamilton County Conservation District and Izaak Walton League for Saturday Stream Snapshot.*

Steven R. Korte moved that the board approve the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Hamilton County Conservation District and Izaak Walton League for Saturday Stream Snapshot. Lisa Soper seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a roll call vote: Jane Wittke, yes; Laura Boyd, abstain; Lisa Soper, yes; Steven R. Korte, yes; and Kenneth Petren, yes.

- 4. Approve Executive Director to spend up to \$3,500 on the Elected Officials Tour – PNC*

Laura Boyd moved that the board approve the Executive Director to spend up to \$3,500 on the Elected Officials Tour – PNC. Lisa Soper seconded the motion. The motion was approved by Jane Wittke, aye; Laura Boyd, aye; Lisa Soper, aye; Steven R. Korte, aye; and Kenneth Petren, aye.

- 5. Review the Conflict-of-Interest form for Aaron Habig and the Conflict-of-Interest form and Outside Employment form for Chris Hall.*
- 6. Approve Chris Hall's credit card usage and limits for First Financial Bank (\$2,000) and Voyager (\$500).*

Kenneth Petren moved that the board approve Chris Hall's credit card usage and limits for First Financial Bank (\$2,000) and Voyager (\$500). Lisa Soper seconded the motion. The motion was approved by Jane Wittke, aye; Laura Boyd, aye; Lisa Soper, aye; Steven R. Korte, aye; and Kenneth Petren, aye.

7. *Approve the PO and Payment of \$8,724.06 to Plymouth Orange Point LLC for the Security Deposit at 2702 and 2710 E Kemper Road – OCA 920017.*

Laura Boyd moved that the board approve the PO and Payment of \$8,724.06 to Plymouth Orange Point LLC for the Security Deposit at 2702 and 2710 E Kemper Road – OCA 920017. Steven R. Korte seconded the motion. The motion was approved by Jane Wittke, aye; Laura Boyd, aye; Lisa Soper, aye; Steven R. Korte, aye; and Kenneth Petren, aye.

8. *Approve the PO and Payment of \$8,724.06 to Plymouth Orange Point LLC for the First Month's Rent at 2702 and 2710 E Kemper Road – OCA 920017.*

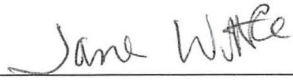
Lisa Soper moved that the board approve the PO and Payment of \$8,724.06 to Plymouth Orange Point LLC for the First Month's Rent at 2702 and 2710 E Kemper Road – OCA 920017. Jane Wittke seconded the motion. The motion was approved by Jane Wittke, aye; Laura Boyd, aye; Lisa Soper, aye; Steven R. Korte, aye; and Kenneth Petren, aye.

9. *Approve the PO and Payment of \$4,000 to Learning Lab Consulting for two-day AmeriCorps Training – OCA 922413.*

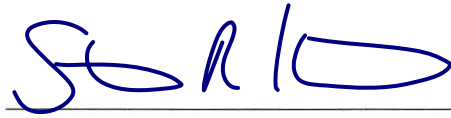
Jane Wittke moved that the board approve the PO and Payment of \$4,000 to Learning Lab Consulting for two-day training with AmeriCorps members and other interested staff as feasible – OCA 922413. Kenneth Petren seconded the motion. The motion was approved by Jane Wittke, aye; Laura Boyd, aye; Lisa Soper, aye; Steven R. Korte, aye; and Kenneth Petren, aye.

Adjournment: Steven R. Korte moved that the board members adjourn the board meeting at 5:07 pm. Lisa Soper 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.

Respectfully submitted,



Jane Wittke, Chairperson



Steven R. Korte, Secretary



Melinda Hartley, Business Service Officer