

**Board Meeting Minutes
September 16, 2025**

The Hamilton County Conservation District Board of Supervisors met on September 16, 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 4:04 pm.

Laura Boyd requested a roll call.

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

The following individuals were in attendance: Sara Fehring, Executive Director; Melinda Hartley, Business Service Officer; Nicole Gunderman, Agriculture Specialist; Gwen Roth, Education and Outreach Manager; John Williams, NRCS District Conservationist; and Alison Manning, Area IV ODA 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, (absent); and Jane Wittke, (absent).

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 16, 17						07/17/2025 to 8/13/2025									
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	455.36	12.40	0.00	0.00	467.76	700.16	9.49	0.00	0.00	709.65	5.38	7.50	0.00	0.00	12.88
Chey Alberto	597.55	15.40	19.50	0.00	593.46	792.88	9.20	2.50	0.00	799.58	13.00	0.00	3.50	0.00	9.50
Christopher Hall	62.12	15.40	22.00	0.00	55.53	103.53	9.20	12.00	0.00	100.73	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Gwen Roth	310.67	15.40	0.00	0.00	326.08	1058.82	9.56	2.50	0.00	1065.88	3.38	9.38	0.50	0.00	12.25
Haley Weisbrodt	52.15	6.20	1.00	0.00	57.36	161.17	9.20	4.00	0.00	166.37	0.63	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.63
James Gleason	292.78	9.20	1.00	0.00	300.98	129.55	9.20	1.00	0.00	137.75	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Keith Richardson	18.77	15.40	8.50	0.00	25.68	760.25	9.23	0.00	0.00	769.48	0.00	0.75	0.00	0.00	0.75
Melinda Hartley	98.68	6.20	2.50	0.00	102.38	110.45	9.32	13.50	0.00	106.27	40.00	3.00	0.00	0.00	43.00
Nicole Gundermar	113.80	12.40	0.00	0.00	126.20	57.81	9.30	4.00	0.00	63.11	51.50	2.63	42.00	0.00	12.13
Sara Fehring	435.94	12.40	0.00	0.00	448.34	409.76	9.32	13.00	0.00	406.07	15.00	3.00	12.00	0.00	6.00
Sarah Meadows	74.38	6.20	0.00	0.00	80.59	102.25	9.26	24.00	0.00	87.51	2.75	1.50	1.50	0.00	2.75
Teresa Burnett	26.49	6.20	0.00	0.00	32.70	101.24	9.20	0.00	0.00	110.44	12.25	0.00	0.00	0.00	12.25

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

Agency Reports

Report from the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA)

Alison Manning reported the following:

- State Match
 - Most districts have received their 2026 first-quarter match.
 - Though the matching percentage was down a little in some districts, the overall state match rate for this fiscal year is 80%.
- Cyber Security Requirements
 - Ohio HB 96 mandates that political subdivisions establish and implement a cybersecurity program following industry's best practices. The program must ensure data availability, confidentiality, and integrity, including annual employee training, risk assessments, threat detection, and a cyber incident response plan.
- Farm Science Review 2025
 - Will be held on September 16-18, 2025, in London, Ohio
 - The Ohio Conservation Farm Family Awards Ceremony will take place at Lawrence G. Vance Soil and Water Conservation Park, the corner of Beef Street and Friday Avenue.
 - The area IV Farm Family Awards winner is Ernie Hatfield, from Clermont County.
- Board Member HR Training
 - As a continuation of the OFSWCD HR Initiative, and in partnership with Work Spring, there are two remaining training courses planned for this year.
 - Each training session will cover different topics.
 - September 25, 2025 – Performance Management, Building Civility and Respect in the Workplace, & Creating an Inclusive Workplace
 - October 2, 2025– Constructive Feedback and Difficult Conversations
- Save the Dates
 - Annual Partnership Meeting – Feb. 9-11, 2026, at the Hilton Columbus Downtown
 - Summer Supervisor School 2026 – July 26-28, 2026, at Cherry Valley Lodge in Newark.

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Staff

John Williams reported the following:

- NRCS is gaining many new customers for EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentives Program). Currently, NRCS staff have more customers in Hamilton County than in Butler County.
- At least three new customers mentioned the assistance Nicole Gunderman has provided, and they have been happy with her services.
- There is no update on the federal budget yet, but NRCS is approaching the end of its 2025 fiscal year (which concludes on September 30th).

Kenneth Petren arrived at 4:12 pm.

Activity Reports

Agriculture

Nicole Gunderman reported the following:

- Agriculture Education/Programs
 - The Flower Farm Tour
 - A total of 30 attendees filled the tour to capacity.
 - There was very positive feedback about how well the event went.
 - Fall Library Series
 - There are five programs scheduled at various branch locations in September as part of the fall series.
 - There will be two topics: Cover Crops for Small Gardens and Backyard Beekeeping.
 - EQIP Presentation with Q&A
 - NRCS will give a presentation on November 20, 2025, at the HCCD Training Center.
- Agricultural Pollution Abatement Program (APAP)
 - Nicole fielded a more significant APAP complaint in August 2025 at Muddy Water Equestrian, located at 10129 W Mill Road, Cincinnati, OH 45231.

- With support from staff (Aaron Habig and Sara Fehring), an investigation was conducted, and a Notice of Deficiency letter was sent on 8/20/2025, providing a 60-day timeline to achieve compliance as directed by ODA.
- Regional Food Production Collaborative
 - Nicole has been engaging new partners in the planning process.
 - The feedback from the agriculture breakout session at the LRP planning session confirmed that this initiative is necessary.
- H2Ohio
 - Nicole has been gathering and entering nutrient application data into MyFarms for the 2025 growing season as part of the program's verification phase.
 - She has been continuing in-person and online professional development.
- Communications
 - Ag Newsletter
 - Issue #5 was distributed on September 16, 2025.
 - Since January 2025, the mailing list grew from 35 to 375 recipients.
 - All HCCD-managed program attendees are receiving evaluation surveys, and their feedback is being used for future planning.
 - Nicole is continuing to develop stakeholder-specific website resource pages and BMPs (best management practices). Initial sections will be completed by the end of November, and then the build-out will continue with additional data and resources in 2026.
- HCCD Support
 - Nicole has been collaborating with the HCCD leadership team on the LRP Draft.
 - Nicole continues to promote the District's Annual Meeting and 2025 Election.

Administration

Sara Fehring reported the following:

- The OKI RCC Annual Conservation Tour
 - The 2025 OKI-RCC Annual Conservation Tour is scheduled for October 24, 2025, in Kenton County.
 - Let Melinda Hartley know by September 19, 2025, if you would like to attend. Lunch is on your own this year.

- 2023-2024 Audit
 - The 2023-2024 Audit has been completed and posted; the certificate has been received.
 - The District received a 2-Star rating out of 3.
 - The District values Melinda's hard work on the audit.
- 2025 Native Tree and Shrub Sale
 - The 2025 Native Tree and Shrub Sale has concluded.
 - There was a total of 805 trees and shrubs sold.
 - All but two orders were picked up, and those orders were donated to Great Parks of Hamilton County.
 - Keith Robinson is collaborating with Great Parks to organize the 2026 Native Tree and Shrub Sale.
- 2026 Policy and Procedures Manual
 - The revised 2026 Policy and Procedures Manual is now available for your review.
 - Staff are still working on a few policy updates, but overall, most have been reviewed and updated.
 - The board members have received a hard copy and also have access to a Word document through SharePoint.
 - Please submit comments and edits using track changes in the Word document by November 21, 2025.
 - Teal Highlight – Significant Change
 - Green Highlight – Placeholder
 - Fuchsia Highlight – Current policy that still needs updating

Long-Range Plan Committee

Sara Fehring Reported the following:

- We received 130 survey responses.
- Internally, staff are working on drafting the goals and objectives.
- The draft goals and objectives will be sent to board members for review on September 26, 2025.
- Comments from board members are due back by October 10, 2025.

Nominating Committee

Sara Fehring reported the following:

- Currently, the district has received 53 requests for absentee ballots and a few election-related questions.
- Postcards for the candidates will arrive on September 23, 2025. Melinda Hartley will notify them.

Kenneth Petren requested that Melinda Hartley contact each candidate and provide next-step action information.

Other Reports

No report given.

Treasurer's Reports

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

AUGUST 2025 TREASURER'S REPORTS	
Treasurer's Report	Cash Balance
PNC Checking Account	\$ 40,180.52
Money Market Account	\$ 10,638.57
Star Ohio Account	\$ 30,382.54
920017 Soil & Water	\$ 400,679.86
920027 Storm Water	\$ 118,290.35
920042 - Save Local Waters	\$ 74,886.41
920058 - Caring For Our Watersheds	\$ 22,084.98
922413 - AmeriCorps Grant	\$ 17,145.01
922415 - Section 319 Grant	\$ -
922417 - OWDA Grant	\$ -
922205 - Cooper Creek 2 Grant	\$ -
922401 - Relocation Project	\$ 169,572.00
As of 08/31/2025	

AUGUST 2025 Financial Obligation	
Financial Obligation = Vacation/Sick/Comp	\$ 138,884.77

Bills for Payment

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

AUGUST 2025 Bills for Payments	
Bills For Payments	
PNC Checking Account (6 Vouchers)	\$ 4,905.91
Money Market Account (0 Vouchers)	\$ -
Star Ohio Account (0 Vouchers)	\$ -
920017 Soil & Water (9 Vouchers)	\$ 3,617.98
920027 Storm Water (19 Vouchers)	\$ 14,832.10
920042 - Save Local Waters (2 Vouchers)	\$ 10,249.94
920058 - Caring For Our Watersheds (1 Vouchers)	\$ 47.11
922413 - AmeriCorps Grant (1 Vouchers)	\$ 34,336.32
922415 - Section 319 Grant (0 Vouchers)	\$ -
922417 - OWDA Grant (0 Vouchers)	\$ -
922205 - Cooper Creek 2 Grant (1 Vouchers)	\$ 44,983.75
922401 - Relocation Project (0 Vouchers)	\$ -

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

New Business

1. *Approve the Executive Director to sign the Stormwater Services Agreement for the program year 2026, contingent on Prosecutor approval.*

Lisa Soper moved that the board approve the Executive Director to sign the Stormwater Services Agreement for the program year 2026, contingent on Prosecutor approval. Kenneth Petren seconded the motion. The motion was approved: Laura Boyd, aye; Steven R. Korte, aye; Lisa Soper, aye; Kenneth Petren, aye; and Jane Wittke, (absent).

2. *Approve the PO and payment of up to \$4,500 for 2026 Federation (OFSWCD) dues -920017*

Kenneth Petren moved that the board approve the PO and payment of up to \$4,500 for 2026 Federation (OFSWCD) dues -920017. Lisa Soper seconded the motion. The motion was approved: Laura Boyd, aye; Steven R. Korte, aye; Lisa Soper, aye; Kenneth Petren, aye; and Jane Wittke, (absent).

3. *Approval to post, conduct interviews, and hire three interns for 2026, contingent on the approved budget.*

Laura Boyd moved that the board approve the posting, conducting interviews, and hiring of up to three interns for 2026, contingent on the approved budget. Lisa Soper seconded the motion. The motion was approved: Laura Boyd, aye; Steven R. Korte, aye; Lisa Soper, aye; Kenneth Petren, aye; and Jane Wittke, (absent).

4. *Approval to remove surplus inventory item #2706 (HP ProBook Notebook) from inventory and sell to Clermont Soil and Water Conservation District for \$350.*

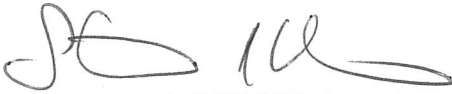
Steven R. Korte moved that the board approve the removal of surplus inventory item #2706 (HP ProBook Notebook) from inventory and its sale to the Clermont Soil and Water Conservation District for \$350. Kenneth Petren seconded the motion. The motion was approved: Laura Boyd, aye; Steven R. Korte, aye; Lisa Soper, aye; Kenneth Petren, aye; and Jane Wittke, (absent).

5. Approve the Letter of Support for the City of Loveland's Clean Ohio Grant, Little Miami National Scenic River Preservation Property Acquisition.

Lisa Soper moved that the board approve the Letter of Support for the City of Loveland's Clean Ohio Grant, Little Miami National Scenic River Preservation Property Acquisition. Kenneth Petren seconded the motion. The motion was approved: Laura Boyd, aye; Steven R. Korte, aye; Lisa Soper, aye; Kenneth Petren, aye; and Jane Wittke, (absent).

Adjournment: Kenneth Petren moved that the board members adjourn the board meeting at 4:50 pm. 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, (absent).

Respectfully submitted,



Laura Boyd, Chairperson

Steven R. Korte
Vice Chair



Kenneth Petren, Secretary



Melinda Hartley, Business Service Officer