

Executive Committee
Meeting Minutes: March Quarterly Board
March 13, 2017 at 5:30 pm
Fire & Ale, Sherman, IL

Present:

Steve Stierwalt, President
Tom Beyers, Vice President
Van Bitner, Secretary
Dan Duval, Treasurer
Jerry Snodgrass, Area 1 VP
Steve Fulling, Area 4 VP

Absent:

David McCormick, Area 2 VP
Kenny Hawthorne, Area 3 VP
Myron Kirby, Past President
Matt Hanauer, AISWCD IUM/Watershed Specialist
Mike Hoffmann, Lobbyist

Others Present:

Kelly Thompson, AISWCD Executive Director
Kaila Long, AISWCD Administrative Coordinator
Sheryl Phillips, AISWCD Grant Administrator
Spring Duffey, ISWCDEA
Terina Coffey, ISWCDEA

President Steve Stierwalt called the meeting to order at 6:17 pm. Secretary Van Bitner took roll.

Approve Agenda: This portion was skipped.

Approve December 2016 Minutes: 1st Tom Beyers 2nd Steve Fulling Motion Carried

Old Business

SWCD Dues – Kaila Long reported that she has created the dues invoices based on three percent of the operations money that Districts will receive. This will include the operations money that was voted on in each land use council and the operations money that was given at a flat rate to each district. She reported that she will send out invoices once she has confirmation that the Land Use Councils have dispersed the money. Tom Beyers reminded the Board that to remain in good standing, dues invoices must be paid in 45 days. Jerry Snodgrass asked Kaila Long to send out dues invoices as soon as possible.

Grant Updates

604B – Kelly Thompson reported that Matt Hanauer got married the past weekend and that is why he was not able to attend the meeting. She also mentioned that Steve Stierwalt and she have had a meeting with Matt in December to explain that his position is being cut in July and that Rick McCandless will be taking over the IUM duties. This was voted on by the IUM Steering Committee. Matt has had many opportunities to look for another grant, but since he has not found one yet, it does not look like he will be staying. Steve Stierwalt also mentioned that after this year, the IUM grant will become a competitive grant as opposed to a guaranteed one.

NRCS – Sheryl Phillips reported that the NRCS contribution agreement is comprised of two parts-CRP and Administrative Assistance. As part of the agreement, all of the Districts are covered under that Administrative Assistance portion, but the CRP portion is voluntary. Districts that are not able to do their own Administrative Assistance work may offer that work to a neighboring District. This is an important program to Districts and NRCS is less than satisfied with the results they are getting and they are currently deciding whether to discontinue the program. She pointed out that because of the current reporting, to NRCS it appears that they are paying hundreds of dollars an hour instead of the \$23-\$25 dollars and hour. She highlighted the wonderful letter ISWCDEA sent out to Districts about the importance of reporting NRCS Contribution Agreement hours and practical suggestions for reporting said hours. She also stated that despite that wonderful letter, the reporting numbers are still considerable lower

than they should be. She stated that NRCS has sent a questionnaire to their DCs about the program and that they are meeting on the 14th. She suggests that once the forums settle down, we should send out an identical questionnaire to the Districts to find out where this disconnect is. She also mentioned that in the Financial Committee they had an action item to propose a NRCS Agreement Taskforce that will include representation from District staff, AISWCD, and NRCS. Steve Stierwalt asked Spring Duffey to come up with employees to nominate for this committee and Terina Coffey suggested that Rhonda Koehne would be an ideal addition because of the letter she sent out earlier. Spring replied that she would be thinking nominations and the problem is probably just under-reporting. She shared that in her own District they do not always do a good job of giving their hours to the person who does the reporting. She said that there may also be confusion about what can be counted because in some districts the DCs tell them they can report phone calls regarding NRCS programs and in other Districts the DCs say that they cannot report those phone calls. Sheryl replied that a taskforce would help weed out discrepancies about what can be counted. Terina suggested that we should also discuss making the reporting forms more user-friendly. Kelly replied that she believes this is something we can work with NRCS to adjust. Sheryl expressed urgency about creating a taskforce so that we can save the program before it gets cancelled. She shared that currently, approximately \$1.9million has gone to the Districts as a result of this agreement. Steve Stierwalt chimed in that this is approximately the same amount of money Districts get from the state, so this is a big deal.

NACD North Central Region Update – Tom Beyers reported that he attended the NACD North Central Region meeting in January with Steve Stierwalt. At the meeting they discussed the candidates for the NACD National election and reviewed resolutions. He shared that most of the resolutions came from Iowa, but a few were from Minnesota. Some of the resolutions were frivolous and redundant so they denied them, but several of them they supported. He shared that the Minnesota delegates got upset when their resolution was down voted and jokingly asked for explanations of why people voted “no”. He also stated that representatives from FWS and NRCS were in attendance. He reported that the group will not be going back to St. Louis again because they were charged a surprise forty-six percent gratuity. Steve Stierwalt agreed and shared that Tom was very helpful at the meeting and introduced him to all of the other delegates.

State Funding – Steve Stierwalt gave a report of the FY '18 proposed budget which includes \$2.2 million in operations and \$2.8 million in cost-share. He shared that it would be a good idea to discuss appropriating more of the funds toward operations when speaking to Legislators for Legislative Day.

IL NLRs Taskforce Update –Tom Beyers reported in the past two years since this strategy has been adopted AISWCD, SWCDs and IDOA have tried to get the information to the public. However, when SWCDs were not getting funding, we felt that we had to focus on finding funding as a priority as opposed to NLRs. Now that SWCDs have gotten some money, we need to start focusing more on NLRs. He shared that he appreciates all of the NLRs meetings districts have held over the past years, but now we need to work on collecting data for peer review. He shared that in order to achieve our goals with NLRs, we will need to work on additional Best management Practices and it will not be cheap. He shared that while cover crops are great, they cannot fully get the job done. He shared that IL LICA is involved with a wetland site that should be viable enough to start collecting data soon. He also mentioned that NRCS has bioreactor designs, and that while these are time-consuming to build and only cover a small acreage for the cost, he believes they are something we need to look into. He suggested looking into putting bioreactors at the end of drainage ditches to get additional acreage per cost. Steve Fulling shared that in order to sell this NLRs idea to urban partners and Legislators; he suggests using the term “Water Quality” instead of NLRs. He also shared that Wabash recently tested for P, K, N and they found out that the chemicals the generation before added to the land are still breaking down. He shared that some day in the future neighbor may have to confront neighbor about the practices they are doing on their land in order to protect our water. Tom Beyers also pointed out that peer-reviewed research is critical. He shared that many of our partner organizations are doing great work for conservation but it is not taken seriously without the peer reviewed data. He shared that SWCDs have no finances for doing the research, but that perhaps we could collect the data and send it to one of our partners that excels in this area.

New Business

NACD Annual Meeting

Tom Beyers reported that the NACD elections went in our favor. He shared that they talked about programs and issues, and voted on resolutions without a lot of bickering. He shared that the speakers at the meeting were very interesting, especially the speaker for the general session. Steve Stierwalt agreed. Tom also shared that they also had a panel on water rights which was different than the issues we are facing in the Midwest about water quality. He shared that new National Farm Bureau President Zippy Duval and Leonard Hardy from NRCS were also at the meeting. The new farm bill is already starting to be formulated and it includes some of the conservation issues we are interested in. He reported that NACD is requesting attendance for the fly-in event in Washington, D.C. but that we do not currently have the funds for this. He shared that instead, both Steve Stierwalt and he will speak with Representative Rodney Davis about this since Rep. Davis is on the committee and is a past Friend of Conservation.

Legislator of the Year and Friend of Conservation – Tom Beyers shared that the Legislative Committee voted to nominate Norine Hammond for Legislator of the Year, and Dick Breckenridge for Friend of Conservation. He also shared that the committee was also concerned about what kind of service they are getting from Mike Hoffman. Mr. Hoffman rarely attends our functions and the committee is getting a bit concerned since we are not his only client. Steve Stierwalt shared that currently there is nothing going on that overly concerns us in the Legislature, so it is a bit hard to judge what kind of service we are getting. Jerry Snodgrass mentioned that Mike Hoffman was only hired ten to twelve years ago because he had the cheapest bid. He recommended looking into the Dave Winters, a former Representative and Winnebago District Director. Tom shared that despite the concerns, one good thing about Mr. Hoffman is that everyone knows him and he has been able to get us in to see everyone besides Madigan. Jerry Snodgrass chimed in that only the leadership knows Mike Hoffman, because they are the only people he talks to. Kelly Thompson shared that she is willing to look into other recommendations. Van Bitner and Steve Stierwalt both questioned what the group would like to do. Spring Duffey suggested asking other Non-profits what kind of service they get from their lobbyist to see if this is typical or speaking with his other clients. Tom Beyers mentioned that many organizations have an exclusive lobbyist, and that we should look into Mr. Hoffman's other clients to make sure there is no conflict of interest. Jerry Snodgrass mentioned that while that would be ideal, it is not something we can afford. Terina Coffey shared that for \$24,000/year we should be getting more than 6 meetings at the capitol and she suggested asking legislators what we should look for in a lobbyist. She also suggested asking Mike Hoffman to make more of an effort to come to our meetings. Jerry Snodgrass also expressed his dissatisfaction at the amount of work Mr. Hoffman put into helping us get funding in the past few years. Steve Stierwalt shared that we will ask Mike Hoffman to make more of an effort to attend our meetings. Van Bitner and Tom Beyers chimed in that they would also like us to get a bid from Dave Winters to create more competition.

Training for Employees and Directors

Steve Stierwalt reported that there is need for trained employees and District Directors. He shared that IDOA has set aside funds to help us train our employees and he would like to use this at summer conference. He also proposed the idea of using these funds to help encourage delegates to attend. Van supported this idea, and Spring Duffey recommended saving a portion of the funds to help with Winter Training. She shared that winter training usually costs around \$3,000 and IDOA Typically pays for one of the two days. She would like some of the money to be set aside for this just in case IDOA is unable to help with Winter Training since we have been given a lump sum. She also suggested using some of this money for regional trainings. Jerry Snodgrass chimed in that NACD may have some Director Training that we can use this for. Terina shared that we may want to look into burn plan training since Kent Masey is one of the few people certified to sign them and he is retiring at the end of the month with no current replacement. She pointed out that he currently covers a third of the state and that may be a big impact.

Additional Items-There were no additional items at this time.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:04 pm
1st Dan Duval 2nd Steve Fulling

Motion Carried

Minutes By: Kaila Long, AISWCD Administrative Coordinator