

Eastern Rhode Island Conservation District
2490 Main Road – Tiverton, RI 02878 – Phone (401) 816-5667

ERICD Board Meeting
November 12, 2013
7:00 PM

Chairman Emerson Wildes called the meeting to order at 7:11 pm.

Present were: ERICD: Directors: Emerson Wildes, Dick Hart, Suzanne Hourihan; District Manager: Jessica Blackledge; District Conservationist, NRCS: Melissa Hayden; and Board Candidates: Richard St. Aubin and Will Walker

The Chair moved that the Board vote to enter into Executive Session to discuss employee pay rates for new projects. Suzanne seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

The Board moved into Executive Session and a discussion was held on pay rates for new projects. Suzanne moved that District Employees' pay rates for the Agricultural Technician and Outreach agreements with NRCS will be \$23 per hour. Dick seconded the motion. The motion carried with Suzanne voting in favor, Dick voting against and the Chair voting in favor to break the tie.

Dick made a motion to close Executive Session and return to Open Session. Suzanne seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

- I. **Minutes:** Minutes from the September 12, 2013 ERICD Board meeting were presented and a statement was made that the October meeting had no quorum and a public meeting was not held. A general discussion was held in place of the October meeting where reports were given. No discussions, action or votes were taken. The RI State Committee will be approached for direction on policy regarding minutes and meetings lacking quorum.
- II. **Financial Report:** A written Financial Report was presented. Suzanne made a motion to accept the Financial Report as presented. Dick seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Other financial items addressed included the Sovereign Bank account and the fees the District is currently paying. A discussion was held on how to handle this issue. Dick made a motion to close the ERICD Sovereign account and to consolidate any funds therein into the ERICD Bank Newport checking account. Suzanne seconded and the motion carried unanimously.
- III. **NRCS Report:** Melissa Hayden presented a brief report on the Continuing Resolution and how it affects NRCS programs. Dates for NRCS contract pre-screening, eligibility, ranking and obligation deadlines were announced. Melissa also reported on the number of contracts amount of obligation and details on specific NRCS project updates within the District bounds.
- IV. **RI SCC Report:** The written report submitted was the same as was submitted for the October ERICD Meeting due to lack of SCC activity. In addition, the Minutes from the RI SCC/ Board Retreat have been provided via email to all Board Members and were discussed in more detail later in this meeting. All items that need to be addressed are currently on the ERICD meeting agenda as either Old Business or New Business and were addressed during this meeting.
- V. **Reports:**
 - A. **District Manager:** A written Report was provided. Highlights of the DM Report and Board activity on same are as follows:
 1. **Project Updates:**

- a. **Geese:** Educational workshops were held in September with varied turnout but many important partnerships were supported and new connections were made. Work completed in September included publicity activities related to the first round of Resident Geese Educational workshops, revision of handouts and presentation, facilitation of workshops and information and support to landowners and other partners. The DM also attended the Hope Associates Board Meeting on September 25th in Scituate, RI at 6:30PM to provide them with Geese Education and site specific recommendations on how they can address their goose problem.

Work completed in October included providing assistance, information and support to landowners and other partners, research, reporting and billing tasks. The DM continues to develop new and existing partnerships, provides assistance and recommendations to landowners as needed and begins outreach and volunteer development for next field season.

The DM will be attending and presenting on the ERICD Geese project at the Save the Lakes annual meeting on December 10, 2013.

- b. **NRCS Outreach:** The Outreach agreement has been signed and is underway with the first round for Eastern District planned for Conservation Open House at Mount Hope Farm in the Barn on Wednesday, January 22, 2014 at 5-7pm. The DM continues to attend project planning meetings, trainings and other outreach meetings and continues to provide technical assistance to NRCS, farmers and other landowners as needed. mid- January. Additionally, the DM is awaiting direction from the Board regarding rates.
- c. **NRCS Ag Tech:** Ag Tech Agreement with NRCS has been signed. A copy of this agreement is available for the Board to review if interested. Work has not yet started on this agreement as the DM was awaiting direction from the Board regarding rates. Work will begin shortly on this agreement and the DM will meet with the NRCS DC to determine work plan and schedule within the next week.
- d. **FFOS:** DM assisted two local landowners with their FFOS program applications this month. No Farm Conservation Plans were requested this month. DM will continue assisting landowners with applications and writing FFOS Farm Plans as necessary.
- e. **Other Announcements:** ERICD received the State Contribution in the amount of \$12,024 on October 16, 2013. The check was deposited in the Bank Newport checking account on October 17, 2013. The DM represented ERICD at the RI SCC/ Conservation District Retreat on October 19, 2013. DM reminded Board that she will be attending the American Farmland Advisors Conference in Albany, NY on November 18 & 19, 2013. The ERICD office will be closed on Tuesday, November 19, 2013 as a result.
- f. **Office Updates:** Previous Petty Cash Account balance in account: \$3.45; a deposit of \$100.00 was made on October 9, 2013. Remaining balance in account is \$103.45.

B. Chair: Reported that he attended the Board Retreat on October 19, 2013 and found it productive.

C. Directors:

1. **Dick** reported he has been picking apples and putting up a greenhouse.
2. **Suzanne** stated she attended the Board Retreat and enjoyed it very much.

II. Old Business

- A. **NRCS Staff Presentations:** Melissa (NRCS DC) provided a Board training, information and Q&A session on the Hedgerows NRCS Conservation Practice in response to the Boards previous request for NRCS to provide more information on NRCS programs, practices, etc. This was found to be a valuable use of time by the Board.

- B. ERICD Seat on the SCC (4 mins)** – The SCC Board has four seats appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate. There must be at least one member representing each District but it does not need to be a Board Member. Emerson volunteered to continue serving in this role. A resume for Emerson will be developed and sent to Ramona (RI SCC) immediately so she can submit the recommendation for appointment and confirmation through Director Coit's office.
- C. RI SCC & Conservation Districts Board Retreat:** a SCC/CD Board Retreat was held at the South Kingstown Land Trust Barn on October 19, 2013 9am-3pm. The theme of the Retreat was: **“How Strong Are We Separately? How Can We Be Stronger as a Whole?”** The Districts met separately in the morning and ERICD Board Members and Board Candidates discussed the district strengths and needs and completed a survey which served as an informal Board Self-Evaluation. All three Boards and the SCC met together in the afternoon to discuss District goals, needs, obstacles, etc. Meeting Minutes for the afternoon session were provided via email on November 8, 2013. Board members were reminded to complete and return their Evaluation forms as soon as possible

D. Board Recruitment

- 1. Current Follow-up Activity Completed by Board Members:** At the September ERICD meeting each Board Member agreed to contact 3 Board Candidates and follow up with them about their level of interest becoming an ERICD Board Member. As of last month no progress was reported. Board Members again reported no activity in this regard. Board Members requested a copy of the skills list and gaps the Board is looking to add/ fill in looking for new members.
- 2. Policy Development on Accepting New Associate Members and Board Members:** the Board reported that on September 26th they discussed requiring the following recommendations of people interested in becoming Associate Directors and/or Directors of the ERICD:
 - Provide 3 References including name and phone numbers.
 - Attend 3 meetings
 - Provide a Background Check

The District Board will also provide the District Director's Handbook and Board Training to new members.

A motion was made by Suzanne accept the recommended requirements for anyone considering ERICD Board Service. The motion was seconded by Dick and passed unanimously.

E. Funding Opportunities

- 1. Fee for Service Proposals:** Thus far the District has had 3 contacts from landowners inquiring about Fee for Services the District can provide. So far, the District Manager has found it in the best interest of the landowner and current District resources to recommend they apply for the FFOS program. This does not amount to any income for the District at this time, but neither does it rely on precious District funding to develop 3 separate proposals.
- 2. NRCS Agreements:** Reported above under Project Updates.
- 3. Organic Farm Certification:** No activity to report. The DM needs to make contact with partners at DEM, NOFA, URI etc, to make sure others are not considering undertaking this role.
- 4. Other**

- F. Operational Strategy Development to Reduce/Eliminate Expected 2014 Budget Shortfalls & Report to the SCC:** ERICD needs to provide an update to the SCC as soon as possible. The Board has taken no action in pursuing funding options in addition to the new NRCS Agreements this month. DM recommended touching base with the RI SCC regarding this item.

G. Lease: No activity to report.

H. 8 Rod Management Plan: No activity to report.

I. Other

2. New Business

A. Tiverton Harbor Commission Request

The Tiverton Harbor Commission has formerly requested the assistance of the ERICD and our partnership with NRCS to address water quality concerns in Seapowet Marsh related to bacterial issues. The Letter of Request and supporting documents were provided to the Board via email prior to this meeting.

Emerson volunteered to approach the landowner and see if there is any assistance we can provide to mitigate any potential issues that may be contributing to the bacterial issue.

B. Town Funding Requests

- 1. Tiverton Contribution for 2013** – Director Hart brought to the DM’s attention the fact that the Town of Tiverton had approved ERICD’s 2013 Funding Request of \$500 and suggested that the DM meet with the Town to determine the process by which we could obtain those funds. The DM went to the Town Offices on November 8, 2013 and learned that a simple letter of request to release the funds must be written and provided to the Town Administrators office. A letter of request was provided to the Tiverton Town Administrator on Tuesday, November 12, 2013.
- 2. 2014 Request Letter Development** – While at the Tiverton Town Office the Town Administrator informed the DM that all budget requests are requested to be filed as of November 4, 2013. However, since they did not have an address for ERICD, ERICD did not receive the letter providing notification of this deadline. Mr. Goncalo stated that ERICD can still submit a request but he needs it ASAP. DM will develop this request and submit as soon as possible.

Last year the RI State Committee managed ERICD’s Town Funding Request Campaign. The DM has not yet heard from either partners at RI SCC or the ERICD Board on how ERICD shall proceed this year regarding Town Funding Requests. The DM recommended that all future Town Funding Request letters should originate from the ERICD office.

A motion was made by Suzanne and seconded by Dick that all town funding request letters originate from the ERICD office in the future. The motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 9:56pm

Next Meeting: December 10, 2013 at 7:00pm