



**ST. JOSEPH COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT BOARD MINUTES
FOR THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY 2011**

Henry Miller, Treasurer, called the meeting to order at 4:35 PM on February 8, 2011.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Tom Springer, Carol Higgins, Henry Miller, Eddie Mackay, and Stephen Mock

OTHERS PRESENT: Amy DeShon, John Graham, Kathy Mieras (Norman & Paulsen), and Terri Smith (MDA)

ADDITIONS/DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA: Dept of Treasury CAP letter, MACD Dishonesty/Safety Measures Confirmation Form, Absentee ballot/Election, and River Cleanup tee-shirts. Carol Higgins motioned and Stephen Mock seconded to add these items to our agenda. Motion carried unanimously.

GUESTS/PUBLIC FORUM: Terri Smith from MDA was in attendance at our meeting. She reminded the board that the Resource Needs Assessment is due to the State this year. Amy DeShon said that she had already sent the Assessment to Terri last summer. Terri said she would look into this. Terri said that Regional meetings are being scheduled for July 27 and that she hoped that the Board would attend the meeting: location TBD. Terri said that she had spoken to Carol regarding the MillFARM property and growing mushrooms there. Terri said there was grant money available for specialty crop growers that the Conservation District probably couldn't apply for but that perhaps there were marketing dollars available that we might be able to tap. Terri distributed to Carol an announcement about this grant program. Terri said that the most recent Gongwer Report had an article in it about the new Ag Director, Keith Creagh. In the article Creagh mentions the possibility of developing better partnerships with Conservation Districts. Terri said that this might be a positive sign for the Conservation Districts. Terri mentioned that she will be retiring May 2nd and that her replacement has not been determined yet. To get more clarification, the Conservation District could call either Steve Shine or Jan Wilford.

ABSENTEE BALLOTS/ELECTION: It has come to light that irregularities have occurred in regards to our election. Absentee ballots should only be sent to people who have personally requested them. Amy DeShon admits that she mailed ballots to people who had not requested them. Carol Higgins motioned and Stephen Mock seconded to scrap the current election, set a new date and time for an election 60 days after nomination forms are returned by candidates, and observe all required election procedures. Amy is to have all communications reviewed by the Board prior to submitting them to the public: these include the legal notice, letters to previous recipients of ballots and Annual Reports and requisite press releases. Motion passed unanimously.

AUDIT REPORT PRESENTED BY KATHY MIERAS: Kathy Mieras presented the 2009-2010 Audit Report to the Board. She said that this audit was unqualified, meaning that she believes that the information presented in the financial statements are true and accurate. There is, however, a deficit fund balance of \$3,500 in this report – better than last year but Conservation Districts are not to have deficit balances. Discussion ensued. Carol Higgins motioned and Henry

Miller seconded to have Tom Springer sign the Management Representation letter. Motion carried unanimously. Carol Higgins motioned and Stephen Mock seconded to have Tom Springer sign the Department of Treasury's Corrective Action Plan (CAP) letter. Motion carried unanimously.

MACD INSURANCE CONFIRMATION FORM: In an attempt to reduce the incidents of employee dishonesty at the Conservation Districts, the MACD's insurance carrier has requested that all Conservation Districts sign an Employee Dishonesty/Safety Measures form and return it to MACD. Discussion ensued. Carol Higgins motioned and Stephen Mock seconded to have Tom Springer sign the confirmation form. In order to address the bulleted issue of bank reconciliations/credit card statements on the form, it was agreed that one of three possibilities be pursued: 1.) John Graham do the reconciliations, 2.) hire Norman & Paulsen to do the reconciliations, or 3.) have Stephen Mock remove himself from the signature cards and the bank and let his wife reconcile. Amy is to pursue the proper option. Motion carried unanimously.

MINUTES: Carol Higgins motioned and Stephen Mock seconded to approve the minutes of the January Board meeting as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

APPROVED: Thomas M. Springer DATE: 4/14/11

TREASURER'S REPORT: Steven Mock motioned and Eddie Mackay seconded to pay 1/3 of the Nottawa Township taxes due on the MillFARM. Motion carried unanimously. Carol Higgins motioned and Stephen Mock seconded to pay \$1,000 of the First Bankcard balance due. Motion carried unanimously. Carol Higgins and Stephen Mock seconded to approve the Treasurer's Report as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

ANNUAL DINNER: Henry Miller motioned and Eddie Mackay seconded to charge no admittance fee to the Annual Dinner. A "suggested donation" jar will be available at the front door. Motion carried unanimously.

At 6:25 PM, Amy DeShon and Stephen Mock left the meeting. John Graham recorded the minutes of this meeting from this point forward.

Respectfully Submitted,
Amy DeShon
2/9/11

REPORTS: John Graham reported that a Help Wanted ad was placed for the Irrigation Technician job in the Three Rivers Commercial and has run since January 26th. Henry and Tom discussed contacting MSUE, Glen Oaks CC, and Kalamazoo Valley CC as other options for posting the Irrigation Tech job. John agreed to explore those options. With regards to the river cleanup project, John reported that he sent an advertisement to several townships, villages, and clubs to be used for their newsletters to promote the cleanup. He also informed the board that he will be attending a regional Soil Erosion meeting with other SESC agents regarding their programs on February 11th. Lastly, John informed the board that a map of the county drains has been finalized and can be purchased at the courthouse for \$20. John agreed to purchase it with the District's credit card.

RIVER CLEANUP: Discussion ensued on the expectations of cleaning 37.5 miles of river this year. Eddie recommended that we have groups like the Eagles volunteer their time to certain sections of the river. Groups could be asked to “adopt a stretch of the river” near their residence/area and volunteer their time with us to clean a share of the 37.5 miles. Tom and Carol also recommended linking up with the summer water festivals of the cities and villages in our county for a PR opportunity.

Carol brought up her idea for creating a tee-shirt for the river cleanup project to be sold at our annual meeting, tree sale, and in the office. The approximate cost to create one white t-shirt with printing on both sides would be \$4.25. Henry Miller motioned and Eddie Mackay seconded for Carol to use less than \$50 to create prototype shirts to view at the next board meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

MILLFARM: Carol recommended that we look into refinancing the mortgage for the MillFARM. Eddie Mackay motioned and Henry Miller seconded for Amy to make a counter offer to renegotiate the mortgage on the Mill Farm to 6% or better at a 5-year fixed rate. Motion carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 6:45pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
John Graham
2/9/11