

Hillsborough Soil and Water Conservation District Meeting of the Board of Supervisors

October 4, 2024 @ 10:00 AM

Location: HSWCD Office/4503 Coronet Rd/Plant City/FL/33566

Supervisors and staff in attendance: Ryan Gill (Chair, Seat 2); Robert “Myke” Morris (Treasurer, Seat 4); Supervisor McCullough (Seat 1); Seat 5 Vacant; Seat 3 Vacant; Dr. Joe Walsh (Executive Director).

Absent: none

Items 1-3

Call to Order / Pledge of Allegiance/Introductions: Chair Gill called the meeting to order at 10:00 A.M.; led the Pledge of Allegiance; welcomed attendees and asked for introductions.

Partner Agency and Vendor representatives in attendance: Amber Smith (SWFWMD Intergovernmental Affairs); Diane Jones (Public Relations of Tampa), On MS Teams: Ellen Cruz (Regional Director of FL Dept of Ag and Consumer Services); Thomas Stevens SWFWMD FARMS Program Group; Jeff Whealton, SWFWMD Ag Team

Public in attendance: Elizabeth Tompkins, Aly Sullivan, Gretchen Hoke

Item 4: Public Comment: None at this time.

Item 5: Public Correspondence: none at this time.

Item 6: Review and Approval of Agenda/Non- Agenda Items: Agenda was approved

Item 6a: Butts/Ercoli/State of Florida Settlement Agreements: *This item was pulled from the Ex. Director’s report to the Non-Agenda items section for consideration.* ED Walsh reviewed the situation with the settlement agreements. Supervisor Morris moved that after review and approval from Special Counsel Tom Gonzalez, the Chair or Executive Director has the authority to sign the two settlement agreements proposed by FDACS-OAWP. Supervisor McCullough seconded. Motion carried, 3-0.

Item 7: Minutes of Board Meeting September 12, 2024: minutes were reviewed. Supervisor Morris moved to accept the minutes as presented. Supervisor McCullough seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

Item 8: Treasurer’s Report: no report at this time. No additional activity from the accounts, with specific attention to outstanding checks from the Hillsborough 100 account.

Item 9 & 10: District Seat 3 & 5: Supervisor Morris requested for items 9 & 10 on the agenda be combined. Chair Gill inquired if there were any more candidates to present at this time. ED Walsh reported that the only two candidates that meet the requirements are Aly Sullivan and Gretchen Hoke. Supervisor McCullough moved to appoint Candidate Hoke for District Seat 3 and Candidate Sullivan for District Seat 5. Supervisor Morris seconded. Motion carried, 3-0. Chair Gill invited Supervisor Hoke and Sullivan to participate in the remainder of the meeting.

Item 11: Public Relations of Tampa Presentations, Diane Jones (presentation began at 10:23 AM) *Note - Supervisor McCullough left the meeting to attend to an urgent matter at 10:35 AM.:* A proposal for public relations plan and continuing services was presented to the Board by Diane Jones, (DJ Public Relations, LLC). She identified three issues that the District needed to address: 1. Lack of a system to collect feedback from stakeholders 2: Delivering technical services to stakeholders and 3. Solving the lack of public trust/knowledge of the District. As part of the plan, she proposed to 1) meet with each Supervisor; 2) develop a communication plan with measurable goals based on priorities of the board. In addition, the proposal included continuing services to develop niche projects or a program over a longer period. Chair Gill expressed that the proposal needed to be reviewed by Special Council and have a clear scope of deliverables. Supervisor Morris expressed reservations on the PR Proposal as whole. Chair Gill made a

motion to accept the proposed communications plan only, limited to \$2,500. Supervisor Sullivan seconded. Motion passed, 3-1. Supervisor Gill, Supervisor Hoke, Supervisor Sullivan vote yea. Supervisor Morris vote nay. Supervisor McCullough was absent.

Item 12: Partner Agency Reports:

- a. **NRCS Report** – previously handed to board. District Conservationist Diaz-Alvarez was absent for the board meeting due to illness.
- b. **SWFWMD FARMS program group:** Jeff Whealton gave the Board an overview of the FARMS program with emphasis on the Mini-Farms component. He reported on the Cost-Share program to aid ag producers in reducing ground water.
- c. **Hillsborough Agribusiness Development:** no report at this time.
- d. **Ellen Cruz (Regional Director of FL Dept of Ag and Consumer Services):** Ellen Cruz reported that FDACS was focused on Hurricane Helene response, getting Ag related supplies such as generators to affected Ag producers. She encouraged participation in the current Agriculture and Aquaculture Producers Natural Disaster Recovery Loan Program for structural damage. Producers need to contact their local FDACS offices (Closest is at phone 863.578.1900, 170 Century Blvd, Bartow, FL 33830). Separately, Mrs. Cruz noted that the application cycle for the Rural and Family Lands Protection Program is opening in early December. This application cycle will be open for about 1 month. The application cycle will open up again next year in 2025.

Item 13: Director's Report:

13a. Progress on Audit FY2024: Hillsborough County reported the agreement for CPA services will be executed within the next couple of weeks. The CPA firm is to charge \$6,300.00 per year of the 3-year contract.

13b. Use Agreement for Coronet Rd Office: Current holdup on signing the use agreement is the inclusion of some insurance requirements that need to be removed; otherwise, the agreement should be ready for signature by the Chairman once those details are addressed, after review by Special Counsel and Ex. Dir. Supervisor Morris moved to authorize the Chair to sign the County's lease agreement for use of the County's decommissioned fire station, located at 4503 Coronet Rd, Plant City, FL. Supervisor Hoke seconded. Motion carried 4-0. Supervisor McCullough was absent.

13c. Butts/Ercoli/State of Florida Settlement Agreement – *item was moved up to the non-agenda items for approval; See Item 6a.*

13d. Community Liaison Position: ED Walsh briefed the Board on the schedule for posting the Env. Specialist/Community Liaison job on the county website and his intention to post it on several environmental and agricultural job bulletin boards. ED Walsh invited board members to consider being a part of the interview process. Chair Gill volunteered to be a part of this process if available.

13e. FL Dept of Commerce Fees Due Dec 1, 2024 & other Memberships: list will be provided for the next meeting for the board to vet each membership.

13f. Ag Expo Nov 7: ED Walsh reviewed presentation plans for the Ag Expo. Keeping the message simple. The board information will be available with QR Codes on a newly produced bookmark. Additional information will be the traditional pubs from NRCS to help our Ag producers.

13g. Supervisor Group and Individual Photos of Supervisors: board and newly appointed supervisors' photos will be taken at the next board meeting.

Item 15: Upcoming Events and Other Notices: Ag Expo Nov 7, 2024

Item 16: Next Board Meeting:

Next Board Meeting: Nov 8, 2024 @ 10 AM

Location: HSWCD Office 4503 Coronet Rd, Plant City, FL.

Item 17: Adjournment: Chair Gill adjourned the meeting 11:16 AM.