

Hillsborough Soil and Water Conservation District

Meeting Minutes

March 29, 2023

Supervisors in Attendance

Mark Proctor, Chair, Supervisor
Ryan Gill– Vice Chair, Supervisor
Chris McCullough – Supervisor
Myke Morris- Treasurer, Supervisor
Adam Young - Supervisor

Others in Attendance

Betty Jo Tompkins-HSWCD Executive Director
Linda Chion-HSWCD/PT Computer graphics
Kathy Eckdahl-HSWCD Adm Asst III to Director
Melissa Jackson-HSWCD/PT Community Outreach
Greg Hearing-interim Counsel for HSWCD Board
Simon Bollin-Hills. Ag. Economic Development
Charlene Meeks -Executive Director AFCD (zoom)
Jeff Wheaton-SWFWMD Farms Program (zoom)
Matt Warren-FDACS Environmental Manager(zoom)
Chaz LaRiche-SWFWMD (zoom)

Call to Order

PROCTOR, chair, called meeting to order at 3:01 pm.

MINUTES

YOUNG moved for approval of March 3, 2023 board meeting minutes. MORRIS seconded. Motion passed.

TREASURER'S REPORT

MORRIS, treasurer, reviewed the financials.

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|----------------------------|-------------|---------------------------------|
| ● General bank account | \$985.11 | Balance as of February 28, 2023 |
| ● Hillsborough 100 account | \$10,407.98 | Balance as of February 28, 2023 |
| ● Mini-Farms account | \$11,569.19 | Balance as of February 28, 2023 |
| ● Envirothon | \$415.68 | Balance as of February 28, 2023 |

Soil & Water Conservation District budget 1st page was provided to the board comparing FY20-FY23. TOMPKINS reported to date the budget has doubled and continues to be funded by increasing amounts every year. The annual financial audit for FY21 was provided to the board. The audit for HSWCD FY21 came back clean. FY21 Financial report was submitted to state agencies.

MORRIS moved to accept and file for audit the financial report for February 28, 2023. McCOLLOUGH seconded. Motion passed.

INTERIM COUNSEL

HEARING reported that he is the interim counsel for the HSWCD board and can provide general information to the board regarding Sunshine Laws, Public Records and other legal matters.

REPORTS

FDACS REPORT

WARREN reported on the Cost-Share program. Which FY2022-23 ends June 30. Farmers/ranchers and growers are encouraged to participate in the program. Commissioner of Agriculture, Wilton Simpson, has extended the suspension for IB until April 30, 2023

SWFWMD Farms Program

WHEALTON reported annual funding was sent to NRCS and several projects are in process. Mobil Irrigation Lab (MIL) services also are available.

SWFWMD

LaRICHE - no report at this time.

Hills. Ag. Economic Development

BOLLIN- reported April 11th meeting of AEDC is to be held and legislative items are to be discussed. Military Agricultural Tour was a success. BOLLIN explained there was a higher participation than in years past. AEDC participated in a Food Box giveaway. Total of 400 boxes were distributed. GILL encouraged BOLLIN to reach out to HSWCD for help in the Food Box giveaway. BOLLIN reported that spring continues to be a good time for Hops crops and reported that the Redner Foundation donated \$65,000 dollars for hops research.

NRCS

TOMPKINS reviewed the NRCS report provided by Leslie Diaz-Alvarez, NRCS District Conservationist. TOMPKINS reported NRCS received 44 applications for EQUIP. Emergency EQUIP (due to Hurricane Ian) produced a total of 14 applications. CSP has received 18 applications for FY23 for cropland and pastureland. FSA has no pending applications at this time. New office furniture for the NRCS office will be delivered in late April 2023. TOMPKINS reported USDA has extended the deadline for Emergency Conservation Program applications from FL producers in 28 counties including Hillsborough and provided article to the board.

REQUEST FOR NON AGENDA ITEMS - none at this time.

BUSINESS

NACD Fly-In was a success! MORRIS, PROCTOR, and TOMPKINS attended. TOMPKINS reviewed information shared with Rep. Gus Bilirakis, Rep. Laurel Lee, and Rep. Kat Cammack. Meetings were also held with staff from Rep. Buchanan, Castor, Franklin, Luna, Soto, Billrakis, and Lee's offices. Information presented in each meeting was very well received. MORRIS, PROCTOR, and TOMPKINS commented very positively about the Fly-In. Issues addressed included: renewal of the Farm Bill which addresses Agriculture, Nutrition, Conservation, Forestry Policy and Climate Change. Thank you cards will be sent to every representative visited.

POSITION STATEMENT

TOMPKINS presented a position statement written for the board pertaining to the 2023 U.S. Farm Bill. The statement on Farm Bill 2023 would be sent to every district and supervisor in FL to encourage other boards to speak with their congressional delegation. TOMPKINS recommended that the statement be taken to the quarterly meeting of AFCD. TOMPKINS pointed out that $\frac{2}{3}$ of agricultural requests are denied and 2023 Farm Bill needs 1.2 billion dollars in funding for conservation. MORRIS moved to accept statement on Farm Bill 2023 and forward to AFCD. McCULLOUGH seconded. Motion passed.

STATE LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

TOMPKINS requested HEARING to provide legal opinion on crafting the local bill addressing issue related to SB1078. SPECIAL COUNSEL HEARING stated he will provide a legal opinion prior to the next regular board meeting. TOMPKINS reported she is following legislation prohibiting the purchase of Florida Agricultural land by hostile foreign entities and at the Federal level they are aware of this issue.

UPDATE AUDIT:

FY 2021 audit was submitted.

EDUCATION PROGRAMS:

March 2-12, 2023 Strawberry Festival was attended by staff and supervisors. HSWCD had 2 presentation tables in the Grimes Building and participated in the Farm Credit breakfast and Grand Parade Luncheon.

April 12, 2023 Hillsborough 100 Conservation Challenge Kickoff Luncheon will be held at The Regent. Supervisors were encouraged to participate.

EPC to present Arbor Day Project.

May 4, 2023 EPC "Clean Air Fair" - Downtown Tampa

Mini Grants: 16 different youth groups have been awarded mini-grants from HSWCD to conduct conservation projects. Recipients will be recognized at the Hillsborough 100 Luncheon. Groups include: Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts, Eagle Scouts, Girl Scouts, 4-H, FFA, Winthrop Arts, schools and others.

Scholarship applications for the Michael Hepburn Memorial Scholarship and Roy Gene Davis Scholarship will be reviewed and winners presented at Kickoff Luncheon.

April 18-21, 2023 Spring Ag Ventures at the State Fair Grounds. HSWCD staff will present "Our Perfect Pollinators". 3rd graders will be provided a mini lesson on pollination, create a small model bee and have a snack at our presentation table.

NACD/HSWCD Poster contest "One Water" is being promoted. 3 out of the 5 state winners in Florida were from Hillsborough County this past year.

UPDATE Urban Grant: Joint grant won by City of Tampa, Coalition of Community Gardens and HSWCD. The purpose of the grant is to promote urban agriculture and gardens.

JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Job descriptions of HSWCD employees were provided to the board. The Executive Director job description was not available for this meeting.

GILL read a list of issues written by staff member - Eckdahl. TOMPKINS spoke in rebuttal to these items. There was discussion about what the next steps were at this point. MORRIS moved to have County HR speak to all staff and ensure each employee has their job description. McCULLOUGH commented about the motion.

SPECIAL COUNCEL HEARING reported that HR will look into this. No complaints were filed. HR was not aware of various issues raised. Board discussed how best to proceed and the timeframe. SPECIAL COUNCEL HEARING explained County HR will interview the personnel involved. MORRIS moved that the board requests County HR fully investigate the complaints raised in Ms. Eckdahl's letter as well as any other concerns that are raised by our employees during the investigation and report back to us through Special Counsel HEARING and that Special Counsel HEARING consider the facts reported by the County and advise the board to any employment concerns. GILL seconded. Motion passed.

OTHER BUSINESS

April 7, 2023 Budget Workshop will be rescheduled. MORRIS moved to move the Budget Workshop. GILL seconded. Motion passed.

Position Statement on US Farm Bill was signed by all supervisors.

Discussion of past board business including audit and fines. TOMPKINS advised the board she wants to pursue getting fines reduced or eliminated as a private citizen. GILL and YOUNG commented on this issue.

McCULLOUGH moved to suspend TOMPKINS with pay until the investigation is complete pending the findings of the County HR investigation. GILL seconded. MORRIS, McCULLOUGH, and TOMPKINS commented. Show of hands: Yea: McCULLOUGH; Nea: GILL, MORRIS
Abstained: PROCTOR, YOUNG. Motion failed.

RSVP for Hillsborough 100 Luncheon was asked of supervisors.

Next Regular Board meeting April 19, 2023 at 3 pm at FSGA.

MEETING ADJOURNED
DINNER SERVED