

Hillsborough Soil and Water Conservation District
Meeting of the Board of Supervisors
September 12, 2024 @ 2:00 PM
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; Special Counsel Tom Gonzalez; Dr. Joe Walsh (Executive Director); Kathy Eckdahl (Staff).

Absent: none

Items 1-3

Call to Order/ Pledge of Allegiance/Introductions: Chair Gill called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.; led the Pledge of Allegiance; welcomed attendees and asked for introductions.

Partner Agency and Vendor representatives in attendance: Simon Bollin (Hillsborough Agriculture Economic Development); Leslie Diaz-Alvarez, District Conservationist-NRCS; On MS Teams: Ellen Cruz (Regional Director of FL Dept of Ag and Consumer Services); Ken Griner, Jeff Whealton, Thomas Stevens SWFWMD FARMS Program Group; Amber Smith (SWFWMD Intergovernmental Affairs); Ed Sherwood, Tampa Bay Estuary Program; Stephen Gran, UF/IFAS Hillsborough County Extension Director.

Public in attendance: Elizabeth Tompkins, Tyler Barrett, Amy Morie, Aly Sullivan, Gretch Hoke

Item 4: Public Comment: None at this time.

Item 5: Public Correspondence: Received email from Mrs. Tompkins. Public records request for A. Brooks was completed. An email search was completed by Hillsborough County Attorneys Office. All items requested were sent to Brooks.

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

Item 6a: None at this time.

Item 7 & 8: District Seat 3 & 5: ED Walsh announced resignation of Supervisor Proctor effective August 30, 2024. Each Supervisor received the letter of resignation from Supervisor Proctor. ED Walsh reported that the first vacancy for Seat 3 closes Sept 20, 2024, and the vacancy application window for Seat 5 closes Oct 3, 2024. Supervisor Morris asked for more information on the candidates specifically a resume. A short interview will be held for each qualified candidate during the next board meeting.

Item 9: Minutes of Board Meeting August 8, 2024: minutes were reviewed. Supervisor Morris moved to accept the minutes as presented. Supervisor McCullough seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

Item 10: Partner Agency Reports:

- a. Tampa Bay Estuary Program, Ed Sherwood presented to the board a review of the purpose, significance, program priorities and recovery efforts of the Tampa Bay Estuary program. The focus of his presentation was on nutrient enrichment of Tampa Bay. The amount of

- nutrients from point sources in the stormwater runoff has been significantly reduced. Monitoring data is pointing to non-point sources particularly of nitrogen to Tampa Bay. Non-point sources contribute about 2,000 tons per year. Chair Gill and Supervisor Morris were open to ideas as to how the District could get involved with Tampa Bay Estuary Program. Mr. Sherwood suggested focusing on documenting the reduction and management of nutrients associated with the various BMPs and also of pursuing FDEP restoration grant funds. The Board directed ED Walsh to work with Mr. Sherwood.
- b. NRCS Report from Leslie Diaz-Alvarez, District Conservationist-NRCS. She presented a summary of activity for the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). The deadline for applications for the FY2025 programs is November 1, 2024. A joint outreach event between Plant City and Brooksville NRCS offices' is in the planning stages. Chair Gill endorsed ED Walsh to continue his efforts with NRCS in Hillsborough County and budding relationship with Pinellas County Extension Service.
 - c. SWFWMD FARMS program group: Jeff Whealton gave the Board an overview of the FARMS program with emphasis on the Mini-Farms component. Ken Griner added that October begins the new fiscal opportunity for the mini farms program. The SWFWMD supports projects focusing on automation, well, valves, pump stations and pipes. ED Walsh requested that SWFWMD engage in the development of the districts FY2025 Strategic Plan. ED Walsh also reported that the District will be hiring a career service position with the technical chops to work directly with NRCS and SWFWMD.
 - d. Hillsborough Agribusiness Development: Simon Bollin reported that the internship program for FL Veterans is going strong; over \$772,000 dollars has been spent on internships. His second item concerned the impacts of stormwater runoff from developments impacting on local farms. Chair Gill inquired about disaster relief for this problem. Bollin responded that unless the storm is named, there are no disaster funds. ED Walsh and Chair Gill stressed that storm damage is a priority of interest of certain constituents of the District and we are looking to include in the FY2025 Strategic plan. Bollin agreed that preventive maintenance needs to be done prior to the rainy season i.e. clean ditches.
 - e. Ellen Cruz (Regional Director of FL Dept of Ag and Consumer Services) encouraged participation in the current Agricultural Loan Program for structural damage. Chair Gill brought up the liability that comes to our row crop producers using Ag plastic when the heavy rains come which results in sheet flow and drainage problems. RD Cruz suggested that farmers inform the FSA offices in Gainesville and Bartow as soon as possible so FSA can help. RD Cruz also brought up the Wounded Warrior event scheduled for Oct 11 which is sponsored by FDACS. The Board was asked to help get the word out about this event. Further, she described the Farm to School program's efforts to bring Fresh From Florida products to our public schools. Lastly, she pointed out the exciting news that FDACS is pumping up the BMP's cost share up from 60% to 90% when historical data is exchanged.
 - f. Stephen Gran, UF/IFAS Hillsborough County Extension Director. Shared the news that a new Urban Forestry agent has been added to the staff. Otherwise, Ag Agents are continuing to work on the following specialties: small farms, livestock, plant diseases associated with strawberry transplants. ED Walsh will continue to work with Stephen on a variety of subjects including the Strategic Plan and technical services.

Item 11: Treasurer’s Report: Treasurer Morris presented the financial reports for May 2024– Aug 2024. Outstanding checks from the Hillsborough 100 account are still a concern for the board. Treasurer Morris asked ED Walsh to contact the winners one last time with the outstanding checks. Treasurer Morris moved to accept and file for audit the financial reports for May 2024-August 2024. Supervisor McCullough seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

Item 12: Special Counsel’s Report: Mr. Gonzalez reported that no update was available from the County Attorney’s Office on the potential to convert the district from independent to dependent status. Mr. Gonzalez continues to work with the Hillsborough County Attorney’s office and no timeline is available.

Item 13: Fall AFCD Meeting Nov 1, 2024: Supervisor Morris raised again his desire to attend the AFCD meeting to be held in the Fort Walton Beach vicinity. ED Walsh pointed out that the trip would be 4 days roundtrip to attend. Supervisor Morris moved to allow him to have the discretion to attend based on the agenda and availability of funds. Supervisor McCullough seconded. Motion carried 3-0. ED Walsh was directed to transmit the agenda to Supervisor Morris and find out if County funds could be used for Supervisor Morris’ travel.

Item 14: Director’s Report:

14a. Progress on Audit FY2024: County procurement has informed Dr. Walsh that they are offering the districts auditing services on a 3-year contract. They had received at least 3 bids and Hamilton and Associates was not among them. He also pointed out that if the district becomes a dependent district it would no longer be required to file audits on its own.

14b. Update on Ag Expo Nov 2024: Signed up for a booth and paid entrance fees with county funds. Gathering materials to present at expo.

14c. Annual Performance Evaluations: Staff evaluations are on schedule thru the county e-performance system. ED Walsh will send his self-evaluation to the board for their consideration prior to December 2024.

14d. Work Plan Options: ED Walsh has been soliciting agency and trade group input on possible technical services and strategic plan priorities for months. He is beginning the draft of a Strategic Plan now with the goal of posting it for public review and input to meet the Oct 1 legislative mandate.

14e. Use agreement for the Fire Station: there had been confusion over specific insurance premiums that real estate services was demanding the district to purchase. Dr. Walsh has confirmed with Safety and Risk management that all of the questionable premiums are already covered under the county insurance assessment paid out of the operating budget. Real Estate services is cleaning up the use agreement at this time. The Chair will need to sign the use agreement on behalf of the board for the current office location.

Item 15: Upcoming Events and Other Notices: none at this time.

Item 16: Next Board Meeting:

Budget Meeting: Oct 4, 2024 @ 10 AM

Workshop for Strategic Plan & Work Plan: November timeframe

Next Board Meeting: Oct 4, 2024 @ 10 AM

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

Item 17: Adjournment: Chair Gill adjourned the meeting 3:43 PM.