

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission met February 7, 2011, at the Agriculture Building Board Room located at 2800 N. Lincoln in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The meeting was called to order at 9:35 a.m. by Chairman Mike Rooker. He stated this was a regularly scheduled meeting in accordance with the Open Meeting Law, Title 25, Sections 301 and following as amended. The agenda for this meeting was posted at 9:15 a.m. on February 4, 2011, at the front entrance of the building.

ROLL CALL

Kim Tweed, Executive Secretary, took roll call and the following members were in attendance:

Mike Rooker, Chair
Dan Lowrance, Secretary
Jim Grego, Member (arrived at 9:45 a.m.)
Matt Gard, Member

Members absent:

George Stunkard, Vice Chair

Others in attendance were:

Mike Thralls, Executive Director
Ben Pollard, Assistant Director
Steve Coffman, Financial Management and Human Resources Director
Robert Toole, Conservation Programs Director
Shanon Phillips, Water Quality Program Director
Mike Kastl, Abandoned Mine Land Program Director
Mike Sharp, Information Technology Director
Lisa Knauf Owen, District Services Director
Mark Harrison, Information Representative
Janet Stewart, General Counsel
Gary O'Neill, Natural Resources Conservation Service Assistant State Conservationist
Clay Pope, Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts Executive Director
Jim Reese, Secretary of Agriculture
Blayne Arthur, Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry Associate
Commissioner
Keili McEwen, Office of the Governor
Ben Felde, eCapitol.net
Kim Tweed, Executive Secretary

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mr. Lowrance led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

A motion was made by Mr. Gard and seconded by Mr. Lowrance to approve the minutes of the January 4, 2011, Commission meeting as written. Those voting aye were: Gard, Rooker, and Lowrance. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND FORESTRY

Mike Thralls, Executive Director, introduced Jim Reese, Secretary of Agriculture. Secretary Reese stated that he is looking forward to working with the Commission. He then introduced Blayne Arthur, Associate Commissioner and legislative liaison for the Department.

DISTRICT DIRECTOR RESIGNATIONS AND APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Thralls presented recommendations for appointment of conservation district directors as listed in Exhibit #1. A motion was made by Mr. Gard and seconded by Mr. Lowrance to approve district director appointments as listed with terms to expire as indicated. Those voting aye were: Gard, Rooker, and Lowrance. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

CLAIMS/FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Steve Coffman, Financial Management and Human Resources Director, presented the claims and financial statement as listed in Exhibit #2. A motion was made by Mr. Lowrance and seconded by Mr. Gard to approve the claims and financial statement. Those voting aye were: Gard, Rooker, and Lowrance. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

PRESENTATION OF AGREEMENTS

Ben Pollard, Assistant Director, presented agreements for approval as listed in Exhibit #3. He recommended ratification of agreement (a) as it was previously approved by Chairman Rooker. A motion was made by Mr. Lowrance and seconded by Gard to ratify agreement (a). Those voting aye were: Gard, Rooker, and Lowrance. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

Mr. Pollard recommended approval of the new agreement listed as (b). A motion was made by Mr. Gard and seconded by Mr. Lowrance to approve the new agreement. Those voting aye were: Gard, Rooker, and Lowrance. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

Mr. Pollard recommended approval of the amended agreement listed as (c). A motion was made by Mr. Gard and seconded by Mr. Lowrance to approve the amended agreement. Those voting aye were: Gard, Rooker, and Lowrance. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

Mr. Grego arrived - 9:45 a.m.

OUT OF STATE TRAVEL REQUESTS

Mr. Thralls presented travel requests as listed in Exhibit #4. He recommended ratification of the request listed as (a) as it was previously approved by Chairman Rooker. A motion was made by Mr. Lowrance and seconded by Mr. Grego to ratify the request as listed. Those voting aye were: Gard, Rooker, Lowrance and Grego. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

Mr. Thralls recommended approval of the new request listed as (b). A motion was made by Mr. Grego and seconded by Mr. Lowrance to approve the new request. Those voting aye were: Gard, Rooker, Lowrance and Grego. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

KIOWA COUNTY CD REQUEST FOR CONSOLIDATION FUNDS

Mr. Thralls stated that this request was tabled last month. He noted that the initial consolidation of the Kiowa County Conservation District and the Mountain View Conservation District does not fit the plan as it is not on a county boundary.

Discussions centered around the boundaries of the Kiowa County, Washita County, Custer County and Deer Creek Conservation Districts. Mr. Lowrance noted that the consolidation of the Kiowa County and Mountain View Conservation Districts occurred prior to the funds being available and that the Commission should stay with the basic principal of county boundaries. Mr. Thralls suggested letting the district know that it would be considered for consolidation funds if it would proceed with discussions of county boundaries.

After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Lowrance and seconded by Mr. Grego that in order to be considered for consolidation funds the Kiowa County Conservation District would have to complete the consolidation down to the county boundary. Those voting aye were: Gard, Rooker, Lowrance and Grego. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEMBERS

Mr. Gard and Mr. Rooker reported on attending the National Association of Conservation Districts annual meeting and stated it was a good meeting. Congressman Lucas gave a video address to the group and Chief Dave White spoke as well.

Mr. Grego reported on attending the Pushmataha Conservation District board meeting and he commended Lisa Knauf, District Services Director, for her assistance in resolving a personnel issue in that district. He also attended a joint meeting of the Checotah and McIntosh County Conservation Districts and he commended Mr. Pollard for his work with those districts.

Mr. Rooker also reported on attending an NRCS field day in Pottawatomie County regarding wetlands.

OKLAHOMA CONSERVATION COMMISSION STAFF

Administration - Executive Director: Mr. Thralls stated that the Governor's State of the State address is today and the budget proposal will be presented as well. He provided a copy of a news release stating that the Governor is calling for a 3% to 5% reduction for state agencies. Mr. Thralls stated that any cut to the agency will likely result in fewer people.

Mr. Thralls stated that House Bill 1541 authored by Representative Jason Murphey is an agency consolidation bill. One of those consolidations is the Oklahoma Scenic Rivers Commission into the Commission. The current OSRC board would be reformed as an advisory board with the governing responsibilities transferred to the Commission. This would include fees, law enforcement officers, and fines. The consolidation states that it shall result in a fiscal savings. However the current OSRC staff salaries are considerably lower than Commission staff salaries. They have 8 FTE and can hire seasonal employees.

Mr. Thralls stated that he is scheduled to give an overview of the Commission to members of the House Ag Committee.

District Services Division: Lisa Knauf Owen, Director, stated that work on the personnel issue in the Pushmataha Conservation District has been concluded and that the former employee will begin making restitution payment through the District Attorney's office. The district is now advertising for a new secretary.

Ms. Knauf Owen stated that staff worked with districts to prepare employee W-2s and federal payroll tax reports.

Water Quality Program: Shanon Phillips, Director, highlighted the best management practices that have been completed in calendar year 2010 as listed in the report. She stated that the Environmental Protection Agency is pleased with Oklahoma's performance. Ms. Phillips stated that a meeting is being scheduled in June for Region 6 states to discuss issues and successes, and that other states are requesting how Oklahoma gets its success stories.

Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Program: Mike Kastl, Director, stated inclement weather has hampered progress on current projects. He then discussed the Shouse, Azbill and Reves Phase 2 projects.

Financial Management and Human Resources Division: Mr. Coffman stated that the shared services agreement with OSF to provide payroll assistance was a success the first month. He also stated that staff sent out 1099s for bond program recipients.

Information Technology Division: Mike Sharp, Director, stated that the operating systems on the servers and the email system have been upgraded. The webmail used by districts has been improved. IT staff will be available at the OACD state meeting to assist district employees with computer issues. Mr. Sharp stated that GIS Day at the Capitol is March 2 and that 35 agencies have signed up to participate.

Conservation Programs Division: Robert Toole, Director, referenced his division's written report and offered to answer questions. He stated that operation and maintenance and rehabilitation work continues but has been hampered by the inclement weather. He stated that the Sallisaw 18M dedication will likely be later than anticipated due to weather delays. Mr. Toole commended Mr. Sharp for his work with the watershed assessment project and placing information on the servers and capturing video.

Administration - Assistant Director: Mr. Pollard has been working on issues with the NRCS office space and how it is working with conservation districts. He commended Gary O'Neill, NRCS Assistant State Conservationist, for working to keep districts and NRCS offices co-located. Districts that are landlords are being challenged to meet NRCS office space requirements. A session at the state meeting is being planned to discuss this topic.

Mr. Pollard reported that the first contract for the FEMA Sugar Creek project was delivered to the Department of Central Services. The AML Program staff will be managing the contract.

Mr. Pollard reported on attending a joint meeting of the Checotah and McIntosh County Conservation Districts where consolidation was discussed. The real challenge of consolidation is to reduce personnel as that is where the savings are however these districts already share one employee so the savings would be minimal. Mr. Pollard will also be meeting with the three Caddo County districts to begin dialogue and options in those districts. Mr. Pollard noted that so far this year the Commission has reduced by three FTE and districts have 10 fewer benefitted positions.

OKLAHOMA ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

Clay Pope, Executive Director, discussed consolidation stating that Representative Martin has introduced a bill to consolidate districts and the bill is in the Rules Committee. It is unlikely it will get out of committee. He also discussed the bill to consolidate the OSRC with the Commission.

Mr. Pope stated that discussions with Congressman Lucas have begun regarding the federal budget and EPA issues.

OACD staff gave presentations on legislative relations, the carbon program, the EcoPass and wildlife credits at the NACD meeting. Mr. Pope stated that Congressman Lucas and Chief White gave good addresses at the meeting.

Mr. Pope stated that Lt. Governor Lamb is confirmed for the state meeting as well as Neal McCaleb, Gary Sherrer and Jim Reese. Congressman Lucas is confirmed to attend the National Watershed Coalition meeting and the NACD South Central meeting.

Mr. Pope stated that the carbon initiative and the wildlife credit proposal made the first cut of a new CIG grant. He also stated that staff had to obtain social security numbers for participants in the North Canadian River project in order to sent out 1099 forms for carbon payments.

USDA-NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

Gary O'Neill, Assistant State Conservationist, stated that State Conservationist Ron Hilliard was attending a Range Society Meeting in Montana. He provided a written report and highlighted the Health Forests Reserve Program.

Mr. O'Neill stated that the NRCS made 2500 payments totaling \$19.5 million for the Conservation Stewardship Program and the Environmental Quality Incentive Program. April 1 is the deadline to obligate money for EQIP. The CSP sign-up closed with 1240 applications. 63 of those have been ranked. The money has to be obligated by May 16.

The NRCS is operating under a Continuous Resolution through March 3 and is hearing there may be possible rescissions.

The Conservation Reserve Program sign-up begins March 14. Oklahoma NRCS has been selected for a National Civil Rights Review the week of March 21. Mr. O'Neill stated that Tom Christensen will be attending the OACD state meeting.

Mr. O'Neill reported on personnel change stating they are advertising for a district conservationist in Durant, the State Assistant Conservationist for Operations, and 5 technical positions.

NEXT MEETING

The next regular meeting of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission will be held on Tuesday, March 1, 2011, at the Reed Conference Center, 5750 Will Rogers Road, Midwest City, Oklahoma beginning at 10:00 a.m.

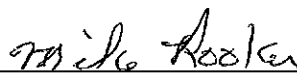
CHANGE TIME OF MARCH MEETING

A motion was made by Mr. Grego and seconded by Mr. Gard to change the time of the March 1, 2011 meeting to 7:30 a.m. Those voting aye were: Gard, Rooker, Lowrance and Grego. Nay votes: none. Motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business a motion was made by Mr. Grego and seconded by Mr. Lowrance to adjourn. Those voting aye were: Gard, Rooker, Lowrance and Grego. Nay votes: none. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 11:05 a.m.

Approved by the Oklahoma Conservation Commission on March 1, 2011.



CHAIR