

Berkshire Conservation District Monthly Meeting
Tuesday, July 7, 2020 at 5:00 PM
Remote Meeting
Call-in number is 1(646) 876-9923. Meeting ID 132436088 #

Minutes from June 2, 2020 Meeting

1. Call to Order at 5:02pm, and Determination of Quorum

Present:

Supervisors: Adam Galambos, Ron Kujawski, David Ellis, Donna Kittredge

Program Administrator: Cynthia Grippaldi

MACD Representative: Jane Obbagy

2. Public Comment Period

Adam checked the waiting room where no members of the public were present.

3. NRCS Report/Comments from Gary Blazejewski

Gary was unable to attend but sent a report from which Adam read: NRCS has funded approximately 30 projects in Berkshire County. Gary is optimistic we will be able to reach out to many landowners in Berkshire county regarding the Nutrient Management program. For the record, Cynthia will ask Gary to clarify when the aforementioned projects occurred.

Adam asked if Jane Obbagy wished to comment. She said MACD was awarded a contract with NRCS headquarters. The project is for NRCS to produce a manual on how NRCS can interact with small farms. Work will probably begin in September and will be done in Massachusetts.

4. Secretary's Report — Submitted by Donna Kittredge

Cynthia had two small edits — Jane Obbagy's name was misspelled under #1 in the May, 2020 Minutes. Under item #4, add a dollar sign in front of the numbers. Ron moved to accept the minutes as amended, David second. All in favor.

5. Treasurer's Report — Submitted by David Ellis

See Treasurer's report for May 2020 numbers. David mentioned we need to find another insurance carrier for next year as they extended it for one more year due to COVID. The May 28 invoice from Mike of \$570 includes storage which is a new item. David can mail a check to Mike on June 3 for storage of the No-till. Ron moved to accept the Treasurer's report, David second. All in favor.

6. District Supervisors

- Ron asked about supervisor access to the field office. He suggested we need to decide if we should all go through the background check. Adam asked if conservation districts in the state or across the country meet outside the field office. Jane Obbagy said it works both ways — some meetings take place in the field office and others meet elsewhere. Cynthia said the district began holding meetings in the field office, then the Athenaeum, then Arizona Pizza. Jane said holding the meetings in a public space may be for ease of the public to attend. Discussion will continue.
- Ron asked about the benefits of membership to NACD. David found we paid \$25 in the past. Jane said MACD has paid \$750. Ron asked what are the advantages of joining NACD. Jane

suggested that the emails NACD sends to members contain information about grants that may be of interest to BCD.

- Adam stated his continued interest in getting together to meet about framework, having ample associates and supervisors, working with strategic partners, grants, goals, etc. for BCD.

7. Program Status

- Cynthia emailed UMass extension with questions related to Nutrient Management and is waiting to hear back on how we can work with it in the Berkshires.
- She texted Mike who said Travis Atwell plans to rent the drill from us. Mike planted 4 ½ acres recently and has a few others lined up for August.
- Adam is happy with the No-till Feedback Survey that Cynthia wrote asking farmers for their feedback. He suggested it be sent as a google form to avoid paper use.
- Adam brought up advertising and how to best use our funds to reach our target audience regarding No-till rentals. He had great response using Facebook advertising on a project in the past with a 40% response rate and 10-15% conversion rate. Cynthia has posted its availability on our regular Facebook page. Ron suggested we look beyond Berkshire county for rentals. Cynthia sent Hampshire/Hampden District info saying we can offer it to surrounding counties but has not heard from them. Discussion continued regarding reaching out to Columbia county and/or southern VT which is closer to Cheshire. David suggested we talk to Mike to ask of his availability and how far he could travel with the seeder and what the travel distance limits are regarding insurance. David asked if there are any ag fairs where we could show off the seeder (when and if things get back to normal). Jane suggested tapping into UMass Extension for suggestions on advertising.

8. Program Administrator Update

- Cynthia reported that we got funded for the pollinator grant. Out of the \$3,500 grant, we received \$1,500. Out of the \$1,500, we would use \$1,000 to purchase native plants and \$500 for any signage, outreach, education, etc. David asked about the purpose of purchasing plants for the pollinator grant. Cynthia said it would be to set up a couple of pollinator gardens on public land, for instance at a school, or public office.
- Housatonic Valley Association Collaboration is applying for a non-point source pollution grant and they would like us to collaborate as they think it fits with our Nutrient Management and No-till programs. They're looking to hire someone to run this program. Cynthia and Gary are talking with them to possibly have their new hire come work with BCD/NRCS once a month. HVA is looking for a letter of support from us.
- We have three insurance policies: 1) liability insurance that expires July 20 to protect 2M liability that Ned pushed to protect the board in the event something happens with No-till and we're working on renewal, 2) a policy that protects the No-till equipment and, 3) a basic policy for business and workers' comp paid on May 5.
- Cynthia received a letter from MDAR (Mass Department of Agricultural Resources) stating our Nursery Agent License expires on June 30. We have applied in the past because we've held plant sales but the info from MDAR does not state what the license is actually for. It is assumed we need it for resale to the public. Dave suggested we apply later if we decide to hold the sale. We will ask Ned what the history of having this license is.

9. New Business

There was no new business to discuss.

10. Comments and Announcements

Cynthia received a note from Holly saying she's not going to continue on as a supervisor. We would still like to have another farmer on our board. Our posting for supervisors in BEAT's newsletter had been removed but we will ask to repost for supervisor positions again. Adam hopes to reach out to more farmers with his new job at BNRC. Adam spoke with farmer Greg Caprone who is unable to join BCD due to his many commitments.

11. Adjournment

At 6:30pm, Ron motioned to adjourn, second by David. All in favor.