

DRAFT

Minutes

North Dakota Association of Soil Conservation Districts Board of Directors Meeting

via Zoom

March 11, 2022

The meeting was called to order by President Rocky Bateman at 8:04 am.

ATTENDANCE: Rocky Bateman, Keith Bartholomay, Monte Bloms, Steve Gilje, and Kent Pedersen
Absent: Gary Dathe, Kelly Froelich, Sam Partlow, Paul Schmitz, and Albert Wood.

OTHERS ATTENDING: Kristi Fettig, Gina Fracassi, Brian Johnston, and Jesse Thompson.

NEW BUSINESS

RIPE / Rural Investment to Protect the Environment – Brian Johnston reviewed what information he has received on RIPE. The Farm Bureau and Small Grain Growers reached out to Brian and would like the input of the NDASCD for planning the government funded program (3 year pilot) for 1-2,000 farmers/producers to receive grants and use environmentally friendly practices for up to 2 years and on the 3rd year report progress. Brian stated this is in the beginning stages of planning and the board does not need to commit. Keith Bartholomay and Rocky Bateman would like the NDASCD to bring ideas to the table and support RIPE.

Keith Bartholomay moved NDASCD support RIPE in the early stages of planning. Kent Pedersen seconded the motion. All board members present voted aye.

Absent: Gary Dathe, Kelly Froelich, Sam Partlow, Paul Schmitz, and Albert Wood.

The motion passed unanimously.

COLA / Cost of living adjustment for employees – Brian reviewed the cost for the remainder of this year and for next year to increase the Association and LON employee's wages 7%. Brian told the board he cannot afford to lose any more staff because currently the Association/LON is down 2 full-time staff.

Monte Bloms moved to increase wages by 7%. Kent Pedersen seconded the motion. All board members present voted aye.

Absent: Gary Dathe, Kelly Froelich, Sam Partlow, Paul Schmitz, and Albert Wood.

The motion passed unanimously.

OTHER BUSINESS

SCD concerns presented at the meeting on February 24th, at the Quality Inn, in Bismarck, ND – Brian Johnston and the board reviewed the concerns from the last meeting. The following were discussed:

Meeting minutes not being posted and emailed to districts – Monte Bloms discussed with the board that a few districts have had issues with receiving meeting minutes. The meeting minutes are posted on the NDASCD's website. Brian suggested an email to the districts informing them where to find the minutes on the website. Rocky also asked the minutes be emailed to all districts once

approved. Brian Johnston asked he gets meeting minutes from all the districts so the board is aware of what is going on. Gina Fracassi will email a request to area districts asking for meeting minutes. Monte also explained the districts would like to see financial reports. The board agreed if a financial report is approved during the meeting, it will be emailed out with the minutes and a district can call and request financial reports also. The board doesn't like the idea of posting financials on the website for other nursery competitors to see.

Employee wages – Rocky discussed that districts would like to see how much Brian Johnston and his employees are earning. Brian stated he has some employees who feel that salary should be kept private. Brian doesn't know if you can legally post someone's salary on-line. The board agreed they will see detailed reviews of the employees' salaries but it is not for public consumption because of legal implications.

Ordering deadline for ND SCDs – Rocky Bateman discussed with the board issues districts are having with the October 1st deadline due to OHF. OHF has moved their grant due date back to March from mid – summer and he believes that is enough time to place an order without moving LON's deadline up much further. Rocky believes that if the deadline is moved to December that would impact total out of state purchases that bring in a large amount of LON's revenue. Monte Bloms attended an area III district meeting and told the board there is a resolution circulating with a deadline of December 1 and he believes it is a bargaining tool to get a deadline of November 1. Districts are wanting a change in the cancellation policy also. The earlier the deadline, the bigger the percent of an order should be allowed to be cancelled.

Rocky Bateman entertained a motion to set the priority ordering deadline to November 1, with no cancellations. Cancellations may be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Further cancellation policy changes will be addressed at the next board meeting. Kent Pedersen moved to accept the motion. Monte Bloms seconded the motion. All board members present voted aye.

**Absent: Gary Dathe, Kelly Froelich, Sam Partlow, Paul Schmitz, and Albert Wood.
The motion passed unanimously.**

Tree Storage – Jesse Thompson, LON Nursery Manager, talked with the board regarding the concerns he has with storing trees that have been purchased. He is forecasting next year the trees will be pulled and graded sooner than this year. Rocky did tell the board he had heard from many counties they do not have adequate cooling systems to store trees long term. Jesse did iterate the fact the sooner the trees leave LON it would help with the mold situation many of the districts have had with LON trees. Monte suggested if districts can pick up trees sooner that they could receive pricing discounts.

Pricing – Rocky stated that this year's prices are set. Pricing will be an on-going issue that the board will resume at the next meeting. The districts would like to get discounted prices rather than get a rebate. Steve Gilje informed the board his district would rather see commercial nurseries pay more and districts get a discount since they own LON. Rocky had directed Brian to do an annual per unit cost of production analysis to price trees.

Seed – Brian talked with the board how LON needs help from the districts picking seed. Especially lilac. Rocky brought up the fact that seed previously bought from Ukraine would not be approved by the NRCS. Rocky received emails from Mary Podoll and the NRCS would not be able to cost share those seeds brought in. Rocky asked Brian if he had been in touch with Towner Nursery to get seed. Brian explained to Rocky that at the moment no one has lilac seed available. It may take 1-2 years before our seed is stocked up. Monte brought up the idea that the Association/LON needs to get the Employees association on board with getting districts to help pick seed. If the districts won't help LON will have to buy commercial seed.

Production – Rocky has been asked by many districts “why the tree shortages?”. Rocky would like to see a system designed to implement a “two year” planting plan, so LON won’t be caught short. This is a subject that will have ongoing discussions with the board members and their districts to find better ways to avoid tree shortages in the future.

Tree variety phase out – Monte discussed with the board some districts would like input on what variety of trees LON phases out. LON has 78 varieties and needs to start weeding out varieties that no one is buying. Brian said if a district wants a variety that LON does not carry, the district can commit to the sale and get LON the seed then LON would have no problem growing it. Monte talked about districts being concerned LON will get rid of Russian Olive. LON is one of a handful of nurseries that grow it. The nursery plans to continue to sell Russian Olive. Monte suggested if there is a variety that will be phased out, LON needs to find a suitable replacement for those trees that the districts can use. No trees will be phased out with our first contacting the districts for input.

Next meeting date – The board will plan a Zoom meeting in April if any new business comes up. Otherwise, the board will meet in June. Association employees will set a date and notify the board.

Rocky Bateman adjourned the meeting at 10:24am.