

KONA SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, January 20, 2022

MEETING HELD: Office and ZOOM

DIRECTORS PRESENT: Jeff Knowles, Greg Hendrickson, Barbara Anderson, Mark Peterson

KSWCD STAFF: Mary Robblee, Robin Hill

NRCS STAFF: Laura Nelson, Pulelehua "Lele" Kimball, Suzanne Krueger

GUESTS: Debi Kokinos, Sue Aronson, Reynaldo Cancino, Jeff Shattuck, Charles Bittenbring

I. **WELCOME:** The KSWCD Board Meeting called to order 8:08 am by Chairman Knowles.

II. **MINUTES:** Thursday, December 16, 2021 KSWCD Board Meeting Minutes. Need to revise to include Cancino Farms did not follow conservation plans.

✓ *Motion made to approve Meeting Minutes from December 2021 **with revision.**
Approved.*

III. **REPORTS:**

A. **FINANCIAL REPORTS (KSWCD):** Robin and Barbara - Reports sent via e-mail to all directors prior to Meeting for Board review.

i. **Accounts Payable:** Mauna Kea Sign \$108.90

ii. **Statement of Financial Position:** General Checking: \$1,394.58 / County Funds: \$13,825.77 / Savings: \$45,151.38 (Total: \$60,581.16)

iii. **Statement of Financial Income and Expense:** \$10,040.24 Total Expenses.

✓ *Motion made to approve Statement of Financial Position, Statement of Financial Income and Expense from December 2021. Approved.*

B. **CONSERVATION ASSISTANT REPORTS:** Robin

i. **NRCS / USDA Reports (SF-425, SF-270, etc.):** Overdue Reports caught up. Payments in process.

ii. **National and Hawaii Associations of Conservation Districts (NACD & HACD):** Current Reports are due.

iii. **County of Hawaii Report:** Now that NRCS / USDA reports are approved, we can work on the County Reports. Robin and Debi will be working in the financial reports and Mary working on the technical reporting.

C. **DISTRICT PLANNER REPORTS (KSWCD):**

i. Conservation Plan for TMK 8-8-003:001 (88-1575 Hawaii Belt Rd.) Will come back to this Agenda item when Cancino Farms arrive to meeting.

- ii. Subdivision Reviews: Consolidation PL-CON-2021-000004 and Subdivision PL-SUB-000028 – neither have water causes.

D. NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION SERVICE (NRCS) / KONA SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT (KSWCD): Laura and Greg.

- i. **General NRCS:** Service Center is at 25% capacity so 4 staff members at one time. Teleworking. Closed to visitors. Can meet outdoors and site visits. Travis Thomason returns on Monday. Nationwide NRCS is adding another 3500 positions. PIA is requesting and waiting to hear about positions.
- ii. **2022 Farm Bill:** Program concerns about how fast Targeted Conservation Delivery (TCD). DC Meeting considering local fund pools again. CSP still scheduled for mid-February. EQIP CIC program not rolled out yet (new program CSP / EQIP mash-up) but possibly mid-February.
- iii. **Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP):** working with Greg & Susan. Document reviews, signatures, and uploads. Scope of work description to be e-mailed.

IV. OLD BUSINESS:

- i. **LEO'S CLUB:** Hiki Ola donated plants for Elementary School planting last Saturday. Working on Outreach - possibly radio ads.
- ii. **COOPERATOR OF THE YEAR: Jill Wagner of Future Forest for their Native Plant Restoration** Sign received. Picnic scheduled 2/15/2022 from 11am-2pm. Planning menu. Jeff to bring grill.
- iii. **HIKI OLA OUTREACH GRANT OPPORTUNITY:** Grant is moving along. Webinar yesterday. One-on-one with program manger on 1/24. Revised scope of work, contract negotiations, reviews, and signatures. Funding will take about 2 months. Starting activity is to sample and interview Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders particularly in farming and what are the barriers. Cultural Anthropologist to help collect data and how to tailor workshops.

BACK TO DISTRICT PLANNER / CONSERVATION PLAN FOR TMK 8-8-003:001

(88-1575 Hawaii Belt Rd.) CANCINO FAMILY FARMS: Complaints have been received. Lele's attached report to be reviewed. Miscommunication on conservation plan. Extensive grubbing, and possibly grading, and this was not identified on the Conservation Plan. Initial Conservation Plan was flailing of trees (with tractor), and cover crop for erosion control and addition of organic matter. The plan was re-shaped. Land was recontoured to plant orchard and that's fine but there is a process: 1) County and get a permit or 2) KSWCD and the Grading and Grubbing approval process. The District is designed to help farmer but cant save them from permitting mistakes after the fact. Grading and Grubbing was not in the initial Conservation Plan and there was clearly grading and grubbing on the property.

The District is an incentive based organization of people in the community to help provide Technical Assistance and help farmers make good choices for the land, guide them in conservation practices and funding opportunities such as NRCS, and Federal Farm Bill Programs.

The District has not approved any G&G on the Cancino Farm (Papa Bay area), as this was not a part of the Conservation Plan, and G&G Exemption Ordinance requires grading work

submitted and stamped by a licensed engineer – again this was not requested or included. **This means that a G&G permit is still required.**

After much back-and-forth conversations between the landowner and District Board Members it is determined that it is beneficial to work with Cancino Family Farms in preserving some of the only remaining dryland forest in Kona. It has been recommended that the heavy equipment operation be stopped until the high-quality forest areas can be documented and GPS points on forest preservation map created. Currently the area that being bulldozed is clearing and changing the landscape of high valued forest (sandalwood, lama trees, undisturbed ground cover, etc.) Reference 7-page report from Lele.

It has been suggested that KSWCD send a letter, and work with the County Inspector who Rey has been interacting with. Rey will provide the name. KSWCD will send a letter and copy of Conservation Plan. There is significant opportunity for conservation and restoration. Let's investigate all options. New plan to be detailed in what the plan includes, and what the plan does not include (including exemption or working with County)

Community Member Questions:

1) What is the status of work under the Conservation Plan approved in March 2019? It appears that work being done now is beyond the limits of that plan.

- Answered during the meeting.

2) If work on that plan is not complete, what is the schedule for completion?

- Reynaldo would like ASAP but restricted by operators schedules and availability.

3) If the current work is beyond the area approved in the March 2019 plan, under what authority is it being done. If it is not under the conservation plan and there is no county issued grubbing and/or grading permit, is the work properly permitted?

Community Members can seek own legal counsel

4) How much longer will the grading work continue regardless of whether it is part of the March 2019 conservation plan or not?

-Developing a Conservation Plan that addresses additional acreage on property. Early in the planning process.

5) If the work is part of the March 2019 conservation plan why is there no grass being planted or other erosion controls in place as required by the plan?

- Seeds have been planted but there has been no rain. Bermuda grass was planted and is growing. Erosion has not been a problem.

6) In July 2020 Mary Roblee told me there should be no heavy equipment, that the work was to be flailing. There are several piece of heavy equipment being used daily. How does this change in equipment comply with the conservation plan?

- This question has been answered during the meeting – same as answer number 1.

7) The December site visit apparently identified several items that were not in compliance with the conservation plan. What specifically is KSWCD and/or USDA or whoever else is part of this project going to do to a) enforce compliance and b) sanction or penalize for the failures?

- We do not have policing authority under the law. Helpful at this point to notify County of the Conservation Plan.

I. NEXT MEETING: Thursday, February 17, 2022 @ 8:00am

VI. ADJOURN: KSWCD Board Meeting ended at 10:31am with computer dying, ending Zoom meeting.