

**BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
ULSTER COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT  
5 PARK LANE  
HIGHLAND, NY 12528  
February 26, 2026**

- 1. OPENING MEETING** - The **MEETING** was **CALLED TO ORDER** by Chairman L. Tantillo at 9:00 AM. Directors Present: K. Nolan, J. Delaune, J. Kovacs, and S. Van Nostrand. B. Davenport joined at 9:05. Directors Absent: F. Wilklow. SWCD Staff in attendance: J. Wedemeyer - Executive Director, C. Hensdorf – District Technician, A. Sandor – District Technician, M. Garfinkle – Ashokan Basin Project Manager, I. Gedicks - Stream Assessment Coordinator. Guests: Ella Cattabiani - Senior Environmental Resource Technician for the Ulster County Department of the Environment.

**2026-2-1 Tantillo made the Motion, J. Delaune seconded, to enter into Executive Session at 9:01 AM to discuss a particular employee. All in favor.**

**The Board came out of Executive Session at 9:03 AM.**

**2. WORK REPORTS**

Written staff reports were mailed and emailed to Board Members prior to the meeting for review (attached to the filed minutes).

**a) SWCD**

**J. Wedemeyer - (see attached staff report)**

**AEM** – AEM irrigation system, cover crop certification, close to 800 acres certified. Late harvest and early winter affected cover crop germination but program has been growing. Submitted annual AEM report early. C. Hensdorf helped significantly Fall 2025 while SWCD short-staffed.

Assisting with easement on Million Dollar Farm.

J. Wedemeyer mentioned M. Garfinkle working hard on stream restoration projects. A. Sandor assisted with 60 % Design SWPPP review for Broad Street Hollow.

(B. Davenport joined meeting at 9:05 AM.)

Round 27 - two bids received and CRF Round 6 wrapped up. CRF Round 7 hope to get bids, legal notice for invitation to bid for irrigation project put into paper yesterday. Explanation of bid procurement and need for Legal Notice due to project estimation cost over \$35,000.

J. Wedemeyer noted that C. DeGroot is on extended leave; all staff are working to keep operations running as needed.

Town of Marbletown Water Quality study mentioned, C. Hensdorf was instrumental in this project.

Nolan noted employee evaluations and emphasized excellent work by C. DeGroot. DeGroot received excellent evaluation but did not receive top score in some categories - Nolan noted a top score would be warranted based on performance. Employees encouraged to use full range of scores to reflect their work including top scores.

**C. Hernsdorf – (See attached staff report.)**

Noted working with assessors from municipalities over the last few weeks, some of whom are reviewing all assessments resulting in additional soil worksheets.

Wedemeyer noted SWCD attendance at Assessors Association meeting held in Kingston on 2-25-26.

Nolan thanked Hernsdorf for time spent working on additional assessments. Discussion about digitizing assessments.

**A. Sandor – (See attached report).**

Noted positive experience with SWCD during onboarding process. USDA clearances have not been received to date but are in progress. SWCD purchased laptop for use in meantime.

Discussion of social media updates and positive response from public.

**b) AWSMP**

**M. Garfinkle – (see attached report)**

Two new staff brought on since last Board meeting, I. Gedicks in attendance. SCA Intern brought on through funding from Greene County.

Pushing forward with two large stream restoration projects, Broad Street Hollow and Hollow Tree Brook. Will be submitting for permitting soon and anticipating construction this summer. Landowner coordination and outreach has been a focus.

Assessment and monitoring prospective dates for the upcoming field season are in progress. Anticipate beginning this work in April if weather allows. Will be conducting new stream feature inventory with help of staff and SCA Intern Brooke, streams to be inventoried, TBD.

Upgrade of survey equipment has been a long approval process through DEP due to high cost associated, approval anticipated today. Looking to purchase soon to streamline and update data collection to bring into 2026.

Buffers scheduling in progress. Taylor looking to hire invasive species contractor and move towards deer fence installation for riparian buffer project that was not completed last Fall. DEP is very happy with this project.

Nolan noted some residents are interested in possible use of edible nut trees as buffer trees, especially Chestnut. Will reach out to Taylor. Interested in outreach regarding Shandaken projects, Garfinkle will connect Nolan with L. Zucker (CCE).

**Ian Gedicks – (see attached report)**

Looking forward to Spring field work and has been going through past data and working on habitat and monitoring reports. Wedemeyer noted that reports are high-quality and completed in timely manner, Garfinkle agreed and noted Gedicks has been helping to get tasks over the finish line.

(O. Valez-Juarbe joined meeting 9:17)

**c) NRCS**

**O. Valez-Juarbe** – Received deadlines for 2026, working on 2026 applications, twice as many applications as last year as a team. Deadline is in May. Allocations about the same for EQIP, about three times amount for CSP, may be able to get more applications funded through CSP than EQIP. Cost share has dropped dramatically for certain practices, citing irrigation as an example. Regenerative pilot program had a few applications, very similar to EQIP process.

(O. Valez-Juarbe left meeting 9:19)

Kovacs looks forward to working with a staff as new legislative Board member.

Discussion of scheduling District Law training for J. Kovacs.

**3. NEW BUSINESS**

**a) Annual Organizational Meeting**

**2026-2-2 Nolan made the Motion, Kovacs seconded to affirm M&T Bank as the official bank of the Ulster SWCD. All in favor.**

**2026-2-3 Kovacs made the Motion, Nolan seconded to appoint all three local daily newspapers: The Kingston Freeman, New Paltz News and Middletown Times Herald Record, as the official newspapers of the Ulster SWCD. All in favor.**

**2026-2-4 Davenport made the Motion, Nolan seconded to have monthly Board Meetings on the fourth Wednesday of the month, subject to change when necessary. All in favor.**

**2026-2-5 Nolan made the Motion, Kovacs seconded to have the Audit Subcommittee meet in May in hopes DeGroot will be able to participate to complete the District's internal audit, prior to the external audit in June. All in favor.**

Discussion of District Annual Plan of Work, to be reviewed and adopted in October.

Review of schedule of Individual Policies accepted as written in attached 2026 Organizational Meeting memo.

**2026-2-6 Delaune made the Motion, Nolan seconded to retain Leonard Tantillo as District Chairman. All in favor.**

**2026-2-7 Nolan made the Motion, seconded by Kovacs, to retain Delaune as District Vice-Chairman. All in favor.**

**2026-2-8 Nolan made the Motion, seconded by Delaune, to retain Van Nostrand as Secretary to the Board. All in favor.**

Discussion of Len Tantillo's 50 years of service on SWCD Board and need for celebration.

- b) **2025 Employee Performance Evaluations** – All Highland employee evaluations and evaluation of Garfinkle have been completed by Wedemeyer. Garfinkle completed Shokan evaluations as their direct supervisor. Discussion of evaluation process for Wedemeyer for 2026.
- c) **Cover Crop Program Additional Acreage Reimbursement Approval** – There are some farms that are eligible to be reimbursed over the cap. Three farms can be reimbursed for additional acres.

**2026-2-9 Nolan made the Motion, Davenport seconded, to approve reimbursing all farms that qualify for cover crops over the cap, estimated to be approximately \$3000.00 total for all. All in favor.**

Discussion of reimbursement for cover crops through County (ARPA), Wedemeyer noted that approximately 2/3 of farmers approached did not want to sign release of information to County. Discussion of benefits of cover crop program.

- d) **Round 27 Sealed Bids for Agricultural Best Management Practices** – Two bids received for two projects of almost identical nature, agrichemical mixing facility projects. Bid 1 by Pioneer Pole Building Inc. of \$103,228.00 for structure and masonry. Bid 2 by Lancaster Pole Building for \$123,739.00 for structure and masonry. Wedemeyer recommended accepting lower bid and recognized quality of work seen by Pioneer on other projects in Ulster County.

**2026-2-10- Nolan made motion to accept Pioneer bid of \$103,228.00, Kovacs seconded. All in favor.**

- e) **Internal Audit Scheduling** – discussed prior.
- f) **2026 Winter Newsletter**– The District's Annual Newsletter was included in board packet. Discussion of newsletter formatting updates by Sandor. Mention of Tantillo 50 years of service should be included in 2027 newsletter. Send any other items to Sandor throughout the year if wishing to include in next newsletter.
- g) **2026 Water Quality Symposium** - WQS will be attended by Sandor and Tollefson, Garfinkle noted that SCA Intern will be attending as well through funding by Greene County. SWCD attendance fees have already been paid, request for retroactive approval of attendance fees as no January meeting was held to approve prior.

**2026-2-10 Nolan made the Motion to approve funds for Sandor and Tollefson attending Water Quality Symposium, Kovacs seconded. All in favor.**

- h) **ARPA Funding for District Projects** – SWCD will be reimbursed \$22,000 for 2025 Cover Crop program, up to \$6,000 per farm. Will be used for AEM projects. Board approved this last year. Working with County Executive on renewing professional services contract for \$200,000

from the County to support projects. Anticipate finalizing in March, Board will be kept apprised by Wedemeyer.

Discussion of ARPA funding for Hudson Valley sustainability projects.

**2026-2-11- Nolan made a motion, Kovacs seconded, to enter into Executive Session at 9:48 AM to discuss a particular employee. All in favor.**

**The Board came out of Executive Session at 9:50 AM. No Motions were adopted, passed, or agreed to in Executive Session.**

Discussion of salary increase for Hensdorf.

**2026-2-12- Nolan made a motion, Kovacs seconded, to approve salary increase of \$2,000 to Hensdorf effective January 1, 2026. All in favor.**

- i) **Draft UCSWCD Farmland Protection Support Program** – SWCD has been in discussion for approximately one year with Ulster County Economic Development regarding \$100,000 of County funds that could be allocated to SWCD for farmland protection. Wedemeyer and Delaune developed a draft program proposal for how the funds would be utilized, as this would be out of the scope of the current professional services agreement. This draft proposal was sent to Economic Development for review over a month ago. SWCD has not received comments regarding the proposal from Economic Development to date.

Discussion ensued that without input from the County regarding the proposal, a new professional services agreement cannot be executed and SWCD cannot move forward. Delaune noted concern as a Board member that this program would require significant staff time and there is no provision in place by the County to reimburse SWD staff for this time; Tantillo voiced agreement with this concern.

Delaune suggested reaching out to local land trusts and asking for input on the draft proposal, then sending any comments to County. Board will also draft a letter regarding this program and send to County for comment.

Discussion of SWCD buffer projects and maintenance needed for buffers to survive. Board previously approved \$6,000 to assist with buffer planting projects in 2026.

- j) **Part C funding for Farmland Protection Easement Appraisal** –Approval needed for \$3,500 from Part C to cover appraisal at Fino Farms.

**2026-2-13- Nolan made a motion, Delaune seconded, to approve \$3,500 for farm appraisal at Fino Farms. All in favor.**

Wedemeyer stated that SWCD will be reimbursed for these funds once easement closes with Scenic Hudson.

A farm in Pine Plains (Columbia County) reached out, after Board Meeting agenda had been sent, regarding renting SWCD No-Till Drill to seed approximately 25 acres with native seed. Columbia County equipment does not have native seed box needed for this work. SWCD Rental Agreement states the office does not rent equipment outside of Ulster County, however if it can be done in a way that does not impact Ulster County farmers then it should be considered. An additional fee for use out

of County may be a good course of action and could be used to help over maintenance costs or staff time associated with renting out of County. A restriction could also be put in place that the equipment cannot be rented out of County if an in-County party is scheduled to rent within 48 hours. As seeding is not anticipated until May, decision will be tabled until March Board Meeting for further research and discussion.

#### 4. OLD BUSINESS

- a) Welcome Amanda Sandor. No comments.
- b) Welcome Ian Gedicks. No comments.

Nolan made mention of Ashokan Release Working Group, advisory group related to Lower Esopus Creek Management Plan and Ashokan Basin releases.

(J. Delaune left the meeting at 10:16am)

Cattabiani mentioned Hudson River Foundation will be giving out grant funds that are tied to projects that improve water quality in the Lower Esopus. HRF is looking for connections with other grant-funded projects to maximize impact of this funding.

- c) 2026 Approved County Appropriation – Legislature voted on SWCD ask for \$187,000.

#### 5. MINUTES APPROVAL – 2026-2-14 Nolan made the Motion, Kovacs seconded, to approve the November Board and January Special Board Meeting Minutes. All in favor.

#### 6. FINANCIAL REPORTS AND ABSTRACTS – 2026-2-15 Nolan made the Motion, Davenport seconded, to approve the November 2025, December 2025, and January 2026 Financial Reports and Abstracts. All in favor.

7. **NEXT MEETING** - The next Board Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 25th at 9:00 AM.

#### 8. ADJOURNMENT

2026-2-16 A Motion was made by Nolan to Adjourn the Meeting at 10:31 AM, seconded by Kovacs. All in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,

Amanda Sandor  
District Technician