

Empire Chapter – Soil and Water Conservation Society

Council Meeting Minutes

10:00 AM – 12:30 PM

May 14, 2009

Cayuga County SWCD, Auburn, NY

Present: Henry Kelsey, Don Kuhn (by phone), Bub Barra (by phone), Brad Schwab, Scott Fitscher (by phone), and Greg Albrecht

1. Welcome and adjust agenda (Greg)

Administrative

2. Review minutes from March 13th Council Meeting (Greg)

- Motion to accept minutes by Bub. Seconded by Don. Motion carried.

3. Treasurer's report (Brad)

- Review orders and publication inventories.
- Brad will check with Lisa regarding potential error in double counting of scholarship and investments in the Treasurer's report.
- Motion to accept Treasurer's report by Henry with Brad's check on the potential report discrepancy. Seconded by Don. Motion carried.
- Reviewed Lisa Miller's invoice (#5) for administrative services for March 12, 2009 through May 11, 2009 totaling \$851. Motion to pay Lisa by Greg. Seconded by Henry. Motion carried (check #1931).

4. Investment update (Brad)

- Empire Chapter is on file with HSBC and NYS as a corporation, but our by-laws state that the Chapter is a not for profit. Determined acceptable to be a not for profit for public and corporation for business.
- Transfer of funds for the Fletcher Scholarship account from Lesko to HSBC is arranged and should occur within a week of this meeting.
- For future use, Auburn branch of HSBC was very helpful in guiding us through the medallion certification process.

5. PayPal transfer update (Greg)

- The Chapter's PayPal account has been linked to a checking account at HSBC dedicated for transfers from PayPal. From this checking account we'll transfer to our main Chapter account at HSBC, providing further security. This has been established and works well. Lisa will periodically make transfers from PayPal to the HSBC checking account.

Programmatic

6. Chapter support for 2009 SWCS Annual Conference participation (July 11-15, Dearborn, MI) (Greg)

- Gary Sick is nominated to serve as Delegate for the Empire Chapter at the House of Delegates at the SWCS Annual Conference. Dana Chapman and Rich Wildman also requested travel support for the conference from the Chapter.

- Motion to accept the nomination of Gary Sick as the Empire Chapter Delegate and to reimburse the travel and conference expenses up to \$1500 for Gary, \$1000 Dana, and \$1000 for Rich was made by Henry. Scott seconded. Motion carried.
- House of Delegates Resolutions
 - Gary Sick shall recommend that the National Capital Chapter's (NCC) resolution to create and offer a leadership forum should include selection criteria that specifically afford for regional diversity.

7. CDEA request for Conservation Skills Workshop support (Greg)

- CDEA requests \$750 in support of the 2009 Conservation Skills Workshop. Motion to support CDEA for the 2009 Conservation Skills Workshop in the amount of \$750 made by Scott. Seconded by Brad. Motion carried.
- Chapter shall include a pamphlet in Conservation Skills Workshop notebook and set up our display at the workshop (pending the display can be located; all in meeting will look for display).
 - Need to make an Empire Chapter brochure, including who we are, what we do, how to join, and the benefits of membership (networking, professional development, scholarships, awards, international meeting support, mini-grants, training, etc.).

8. Continue 2009 Empire Chapter Annual Meeting Discussion (mid-November) (Henry)

- 2nd week of November
- Potential theme: regulatory update, funds for practices and technological solutions to meet regulatory

9. Mini-Grant update (Scott and Mini-Grant Committee)

- Two conference calls of the mini-grant subcommittee (Scott, Dianna, Henry, and Greg) have been held. See rough combined notes, attached.
- Discussion and reaction to the subcommittee report during Council meeting:
 - Council supported payment of 100% of the awarded amount up-front, but also supported a follow-up report be sent to the Chapter at the conclusion of the project to show impact. Chapter should use project reports to show impact, promote the Chapter, and motivate further conservation efforts.
 - Use language from our mission (i.e., web home page) in the criteria.
 - Annual caps and timing of RFPs and fund awards was agreed upon in principle, but need to better gauge of annual income – expense for Chapter before deciding on a final approach. Greg and Lisa will refine income and expense summary for next Council meeting.
 - Need to add “timeline” and “final report guidelines” to the application/RFP content.

10. Climate Change Conservation Initiative update (Greg on behalf of Paul Salon)

- Paul Salon is in discussion with many working on climate change policy and research with the idea of developing and offering a climate change forum at the 2010 SWCS International Conference.

11. Skaneateles Watershed Ag Program (member: Mark Burger) – Development of Gravel and Earthen Road Brochure

- Brochure has been completed and looks to be an excellent resource.

12. Meeting Adjourned

- Motion to adjourn by Greg. Seconded by Henry. Motion carried.

Empire Chapter – Soil and Water Conservation Society

Notes: from the Mini Grant subcommittee meeting (teleconference)

March 20, 2009

May 12, 2009 3:00pm teleconf notes (in red) – Greg, Henry, Scott

Present: Greg A., Dianna P., Henry K., Scott F. – note taker

Mini-Grant action plan –

Purpose: To re-energize and improve the overall mini grant process. To establish guidelines under which the mini grant program will function. To develop an annual “budget” or timeline schedule of expenses.

Discussion – new items to be incorporated into the mini grant program:

1. verify if applicant is a current SWCD member. Update the application form to incorporate all the impending changes being discussed. **ACTION: Dianna** to update application form as appropriate
2. recipients of grants will need to acknowledge the SWCS ie. source of grant on pamphlets
3. recipients of grants will provide a brief report of their project or impact statement. Should the SWCS award 50% of the grant up front and provide 50% after the report is received?
 - projects will be fully funded upfront. “Soft” follow up by the mini grant coordinator will insure that grant stipulations have been met.
 - 100% payment to recipients upon award; project report required and essential for any prospect of future minigrant funding.
4. types of grants – emphasize any of the following? – tighten up criteria and types of projects? **ACTION: Henry** to coordinate & develop criteria
 - A. The Empire Chapters donations will all be managed through two formal programs: scholarships or minigrants (i.e., no more side donations, such as currently with some organizations).
 - B. Focus will be on educational projects (trainings, outreach, demonstrations, etc.) and not projects solely aimed at implementation of practices. For instance, if a project is focused on implementation of a practice, it must have a demonstration/outreach component to be considered.
5. establish an annual grant timeline – **ACTION: Greg** to contact Brad and Lisa regarding budget constraints within the calendar year relevant to awarding

grants from an accounting / bookkeeping perspective.

a. annual cap?

- Need to determine annual income – expense amount and set a cap reasonably within that annual amount.

- mini grant \$1200 average annual expenses over last 5 years

- non-competitive scholarships and contributions (mini grants) annually \$4000 in recent years: use this benchmark as an annual budget cap.

Propose a \$6000 annual budget for all non-competitive scholarships and contributions (mini grants) - \$3000 + \$3000

- propose a \$6000 total budget, no single grant will exceed \$1500

- Minigrants will fund educational projects and may be awarded on consecutive years, per the ranking by the Council.

- Annual cap: \$6000, split \$3K in fall (award made after Sept. 30) and \$3K in spring (6 months later).

b. application deadlines 2x annually, spring and fall?

- Greg – SWCS FY is October – September, fall and spring mini grant awards would work with this cycle.

c. If no applications, rollover \$ to next annual funding cycle?

- recommend rollover of any unused \$ within a FY

- recommend rollover of any unused \$ the next FY with Council approval

- Allow rollover of un-awarded funds in minigrant sub-account; so mini-grant sub-account may grow over time, but a minimum will always be met. Council will decide amount available per bi-annual RFP.

6. Simple, "two page" application:

- o Project contact info and title
- o What will project do?
- o Why is project needed?
- o What's the outcome?
- o Budget

ACTION: Scott badgers his fellow committee members into submission to complete their tasks.

Next meeting? We plan to provide some/all of the ideas discussion at the next council meeting on Thursday May 14.

Teleconf concluded at 4:09