

Soil and Water Conservation Society—Empire State Chapter Council Meeting Minutes

January 28, 2016

1:00 – 3:00 PM

The Natural Resource Center

7413 County House Road

Auburn, NY 13021

1) Welcome

- a. Peter Wright, President called the meeting to order at 1:10 pm.
- b. Jessica Sargis, Lisa Miller, Jason Schenck, Jason Cuddeback and Brad Schwab were in attendance.
- c. Scott Fitscher participated via teleconference.

2) Review of Minutes from November 17, 2015 meeting

- a. The minutes were compiled by former secretary, Elaine Dalrymple, and were accepted as submitted.
- b. **ACTION ITEM:** New Secretary, Brad Schwab, will redact the financial information from the minutes and forward them to Pat and Carol Barry to be uploaded to the website.
- c. Going forward, the minutes will cite the Treasurers Reports for specific information regarding the finances of the Chapter.

3) Review the Treasurer's Reports

- a. 2 reports were available: 2015 year-end and 2016 year-to-date.
- b. Jess agreed to help Lisa present the report to the Council in Ray's absence.
- c. Lisa shared with the Council that the tax preparation service fee will remain the same in 2016 (for budgeting purposes)
- d. Lisa has updated our accounting ledger to reflect the most recent status of the Endowments. Lisa has completed/forwarded the tracking spreadsheet and has approval that it was done correctly.
- e. Since the last meeting we were sent a check from New York State in the amount of \$97,847.63. Knowing this was a mistake, Lisa investigated it and found that it was in fact a FEMA reimbursement meant for Steuben County. We agreed that Lisa should shred the check now that we are sure it does not belong to us.
- f. Lisa put together a preliminary budget for Council review. The draft included less expected revenue from publication sales than we budgeted for in 2015. The expense for Lisa's time was also budgeted lower based on the decreased sales.
- g. Aside from a typo on the cover page of the year-to-date report, both reports were accepted by the Council as submitted.

4) Recap of the Annual Meeting

- a. The Council congratulated Jess on her work putting together what was considered by all to be a great meeting.
- b. Jess has forwarded the new Council Officers list to Ankeny.
 - i. **ACTION ITEM:** Jess will inquire about the annual reporting that has been required by Ankeny in the past. She will also ask if we are required to forward our IRS Form 990 to them.
- c. We compiled ideas for Chapter improvement that were discussed briefly at the Annual Meeting (see item 5 below for more detail).

5) Goals of the Chapter

- a. Regain support (membership, corporate, governmental...both financial support and the support of others who align with our mission)
 - i. Modify our "model" to address the new reality facing organizations like ours. We are not the only professional society that is facing membership decline. Where do we start?
 1. Peter reiterated the idea that short, regional meetings could help us accomplish all of the goals above. In a follow-up email he asked the Regional Reps for feedback about potential topics and locations for these meetings. He also asked for feedback about the scholarships: "Do they go to people who will be working with us in the future? Would more and smaller ones be better targeting Envirothon teachers or students?"
 - a. We began to brainstorm a general plan for what these meetings might look like. Some key aspects of the brainstorming were that the meetings should last about 3 hours, in a free venue, and cover a timely topic.
 - b. These meetings would "Bring the material to the members in a timely manner" instead of requiring them to travel to a centralized meeting only once per year.
 - c. We all agreed that we need to do a better job knowing who our members are and what is important to them.
 - d. **ACTION ITEM:** Jess will develop a Google map of our membership to help us understand who and where they are.
 2. Develop a 30-second "elevator speech." How do we sell the benefits of Society membership if we never take a minute to compile them internally?
 - a. **ACTION ITEM:** Peter will put together a rough draft for review at the next Council meeting.

- b. Increase our income through traditional and/or new ways.
 - i. We talked again about finding a way for the publications to be included in the price of the Stormwater trainings.
 - 1. **ACTION ITEM:** Jason Cuddeback will talk with Doug Kierst (Cayuga Co.) and try to glean information that could help us move forward with this.
 - ii. Is there a potential for more sales if we offer returns instead of bulk discounts?

6) General Discussion

- a. It was noted that there is no link to our Facebook page from our website.
 - i. **ACTION ITEM:** Jason Cuddeback will forward the link to Brad, who will forward it to Pat and Carol Barry with the redacted 11/17/2015 meeting minutes.
- b. There was consensus among the Council members who were present that supporting the attendance of the National Meeting is a valuable endeavor for our Chapter.
- c. The budget got preliminary approval "with an asterisk next to the scholarships." This will be decided as we try to answer the questions posed by Peter in item 5(a)(i)(1) above.
- d. The next meeting is scheduled for March 24, 2016 from 1pm-3pm at the Natural Resource Center, 7413 County House Road Auburn, NY 13021.

7) Adjourn

- a. All were in favor on a motion by Jess, second by Jason Schenck. Meeting adjourned at 3:00 PM.

Minutes taken by Brad Schwab, Secretary