

Indian River County Florida

*Indian River County Administration Complex
1800 27th Street, Building B
Room B1-501
Vero Beach, Florida*



Meeting Minutes – Unapproved

Monday, November 28, 2023

1:30 PM

Indian River Soil and Water Conservation District Supervisors

Robert C. Adair, Jr., Chairman: District 1

Dr. David L. Cox, Secretary/Treasurer: District 2

Charles Kennon Hendrix, Member: District 3

Christine Kelly-Begazo, Member: District 4

George F. Hamner, Jr., Member: District 5

Linda Caggiano, District Staff Assistant II: IRSWCD

1. CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Robert C. Adair, Jr. called meeting to order at 11:05 A.M. A roll call was conducted.

Supervisors in attendance: Robert C. Adair, Jr., Chairman
Dr. David L. Cox
Charles Kennon Hendrix
Christine Kelly-Begazo
George F. Hamner, Jr.

Staff in attendance: Linda Caggiano, Staff Assistant II, IRSWCD
Eric Charest, Interim Natural Resources Director

Public in attendance: Mike Johannsen, Indian River Neighborhood Association
Honey Minuse, Vero Beach Resident
Laura Moss, BOCC of IRC

2. ADDITIONS/DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA/EMERGENCY ITEMS:**3. OLD BUSINESS:****A. Certified Conservation District Official Program Reports:**

- i. Dr. David L. Cox: Thursday, October 19, 2023
 - ❖ Approximately 7-8 SWCD's were represented at the meeting (Staff and/or Supervisors). Some included staff.
 - ❖ Activities mentioned by other SWCD's: Community Outreach, Barn Owl Box & Bat Box Activity for High Schools, Public Service Announcement, Contest, Soil Classes, mobile irrigation labs, summer camps, Cost-Share, and Grants. At least a portion of the SWCD's staff salary is paid by the County and or other sources to support staff.
 - ❖ How valuable was the meeting for a Supervisor to attend? The meeting required a Supervisor to take two (2) days away from his work to attend, so it rated about a 3 out of 10.
 - ❖ How essential was the meeting for our District to attend? Very essential for our Board member to attend, great information being shared. But needs room for improvement.
- ii. Christine Kelly-Begazo Friday October 20, 2023
 - Mentioned that all SWCD's are being watched. AFCD is keeping track of who attends, who doesn't, who leaves early and who stays. Suggested that our Staff should attend the next meeting.
 - ❖ Honey Minuse mentioned that several years ago when Florida Legislatures were trying to dissolve all the Florida SWCD's. The City of Vero Beach passed and signed January 18, 2022 a Resolution opposing the dissolving of the Soil and Water Conservation Districts and in support of the Indian River Soil and Water Conservation District. What we are discussing is very important to the effectiveness of the SWCD's to continue. The step-up, credibility and out-reach of the all the Florida SWCD's, very positive comments for the Districts that were not in attendance at the meeting in Gainesville.
 - ❖ Robert C. Adair, Jr. mentioned to Eric Charest that the Board "Greatly Appreciates" the funding that the County provides to keep the District going in terms of our Staff Assistant's salary, benefits, operating expenses, and office space. The Board of Supervisors recognizes that the County's In-Kind is very important for our District to have a Staff Assistant who is fulfilling the duties really well.
 - ❖ Christine Kelly-Begazo asked if the Association of Florida Conservation Districts SWCD's has a presence at the Florida Association of Counties? We need to have their face

in front of all the Commissioners and speak with the Districts what they do and do for the County and the farmers.

- ❖ Commissioner Laura Moss mentioned that the Florida Association of Counties annual meeting is in June, and that they meet in November to go over Agenda, and again in January in Tallahassee. Commissioner Laura Moss has already had her assistant ask Kathy Copeland's opinion as to what is the best time to speak to the legislators in Tallahassee about matters. She will speak to Kathy Copeland, Legislative Aide for IRC.
- ❖ Robert C. Adair, Jr. mentioned that he recommends that our Staff Assistant ask to bring up as a topic/motion in one of the Association of Florida Conservation Districts (AFCD) meetings if they attend the Florida Association of Counties. And if so, could they describe what the SWCD's do and how important they are to garner support throughout the State of Florida. He opined that this would assist government agencies to deal with the backlash SWCD's are hearing from our legislators. They need to help legislators understand how important SWCD's are. This would offset State Legislators seeking small government, by eliminating independent Districts like SWCDs.

Motion: Dr. David L. Cox made a motion to have Staff Assistant, Linda Caggiano contact the Association of Florida Conservation Districts (AFCD) and asks if they have a presence at the Florida Association of Counties meetings. If the AFCD does not attend the Florida Association of Counties meetings, then Indian River SWCD recommends/suggest that AFCD attend the Florida Association of Counties. AFCD needs to describe what the SWCD's do and how important they are to garner support throughout the State of Florida for the government agencies that deal with the backlash SWCD's are hearing from our legislators. Seconded by Christine Kelly-Begazo. Motion carried unanimously.

- ❖ George F. Hamner, Jr. asked if our District prepares a verbal annual report of what our District does do and speaks annually to our Board of County Commissioners?
- ❖ Linda Caggiano mentioned, no we do not.
- ❖ Christine Kelly-Begazo mentioned, she asked Linda that a few weeks prior. We need to emphasize how much money is going to constituents/farmers.

Motion: George F. Hamner, Jr. made a motion to have an annual verbal summary of what our District has done and the benefits of SWCD's to our Indian River County Board of County Commissioners to know what SWCD's do and why we do it for the County, so when the BOCC goes to Tallahassee or the Florida Association of Counties they are informed. Seconded by Christine Kelly-Begazo. Motion carried unanimously.

B. Review of Polling Ranking of Board Priorities (Discussion):

- ❖ Robert C. Adair, Jr.: Earlier, Dr. David L. Cox discussed constructive activities for SWCDs to be involved with, including: Public Service Announcements through social media; Contests, mobile irrigation labs, summer camps, community outreach, Barn Owl Box & Bat Box Activity for High Schools, public lands, feral hog control. We can pursue grant funding, but we need to have someone on the board, hire someone, or subcontract a grant writer, administratively time consuming and how the District will carry it forward.
- ❖ Christine Kelly-Begazo: USDA-NRCS has a mobile irrigation lab here in Indian River County. Working closer with Andrea Lazzari, who is starting to work more with urban agriculture, new farmers and having our District help her make that connect USDA-NRCS will help mitigate the irrigation lab.
- ❖ Robert C. Adair, Jr.: Agricultural land has changed in the past eight-ten years. Small Ranchette booklet created by the Board of Supervisors.

- ❖ Christine Kelly-Begazo: We need to be more pro-active and inclusion with other expertise. I will draft a PowerPoint presentation for public forum on Small Farms and Ranchettes.
- ❖ Robert C. Adair, Jr: We will open it up again and take your suggestions.
- ❖ Christine Kelly-Begazo: We need to be more inclusive of making sure that our ideas are not just passed along. We saw a huge change in the last ten years. We should have been ahead of the game by being more inclusive of these small farmers who will eventually take over, the majority of agriculture in the county.
- ❖ Robert C. Adair, Jr.: I am going to appoint Christine Kelly-Begazo to review the Small Farms, Ranchettes, and Country Estates Best Management Practices (BMPs) Booklet and make recommendations and the Board will review them.
- ❖ George F. Hamner, Jr.: Item 2 on the Poll Rankings – IRSWCD to consider holding a Water Conservation forum with ALL stake-holders present. This alludes to your public service announcement. You talk about handing out written documents, a potential success or to be successful, you need to help people with their success. Put together a PowerPoint, something we can take to the public, HOA’s, Condos would love to have speakers. Take this to the public, in person verbally will be more pro-active. On Saturday - January 20, 2024, Pelican Island Audubon Society has a forum on Native Plants. Need something that talks about the District, but shows what is good for the County improves the area. That would be better than a booklet and a forum. “ Manage to Succeed”.
- ❖ Commissioner Laura Moss: Do both the Ranchette Booklet and the speaking to the community. Provide two (2) copies of the Booklet to my office after it is updated. When people come into the Building Department it could be a part of what is required for them to them to get a permit.
- ❖ Mike Johannsen: Indian River Neighborhood Association is sponsoring the event in January at Pelican Island Audubon Society. We will have a table outside and Indian River Soil and Water Conservation District can hand out booklets.
- ❖ Robert C. Adair, Jr.: The District needs to be represented at the Saturday - January 20, 2024, Pelican Island Audubon Society forum.

4. NEW BUSINESS:

- A. George F. Hamner, Jr. mentioned Pelican Island Audubon Society -Native Plants.
 - ❖ Christine Kelly-Begazo mentioned that IR County has several native plant gardens throughout the County that were planted and donated buy civic groups. This is a problem with finding people that will maintain the gardens. Most importantly, the planterings need signage to be educational and effective.

5. ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, the Chairman adjourned the meeting at 12:14 PM.

Robert C. Adair, Jr., Chairman

Date

David L. Cox, Secretary/Treasurer

Date