

# **NORTHAMPTON COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

## **Minutes for Monthly Board of Directors Meeting**

**Tuesday, October 14, 2025, 7:00 PM ( In-Person & Virtual)**

Joel Geiger, Chairman, called the Board meeting to order at 7:08 PM with the following Board Members, staff, and guests in attendance:

Joel Geiger, Chairman  
Rich DiFebo, Director  
Nate Pritchard, DM  
Jim Lawrence, Staff\*

Brian Fulmer, Vice Chairman  
Rich Budihas, Director\*  
Caitlin Skibiel, DEP Field Rep\*

Will Carpenter, Treasurer  
Jeffrey Keifer, Director  
Carrie Cevicelow, Staff

Virtual\*

### **Introduction of Guests**

None

The Chairman also announced an executive session had taken place on September 9, 2025, following the Board meeting to discuss personnel matters.

### **Additions to Agenda**

Nate Pritchard added the following item under New Business:  
G. Penn Vest Letters of Support

### **Invitation for Public Comment**

None

### **Acceptance of Minutes**

Brian Fulmer made a motion to accept the September 9, 2025 Minutes 2<sup>nd</sup> Will Carpenter. Motion carried. 5/0

**Note:** Rich DiFebo joined the meeting at 7:12 PM.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Will Carpenter provided an overview of the Treasurer's Report for September 2025. Discussion ensued. Will Carpenter made a motion to table the Treasurer's Report for September 2025; 2<sup>nd</sup> Brian Fulmer. Motion carried. 6/0

### **Payment of Bills**

Nate Pritchard, District Manager, provided a summary of the bills for approval; noting that the school tax bill was paid, and an invoice was also received for grass cutting services through June, which aligned with the contracted pricing. Rich Budihas made a motion to approve the payment of the bills as presented, 2<sup>nd</sup> Rich DiFebo. Motion carried 6/0

## **Correspondence**

Nate Pritchard presented the correspondence to the District. The first was a request for a letter of support from Palmer Township. The second was a notification from the County Revenue Appeals Board confirming the successful change of the District's property status from commercial to tax-exempt. This exemption becomes effective January 1, 2026. While the current year's property taxes were still required, no property tax bills are expected moving forward. Nate noted that township and municipal billing should automatically update based on the county's records, and he will confirm this process.

## **Reports From Cooperating Agencies – (NCRS)**

None

## **State Conservation Commission Report – (DEP)**

Caitlin Skibiel (DEP) provided the State Conservation Commission report. The Environmental Education Grant is currently open, with applications due November 14. The Commission is also coordinating a financial training and district funding overview for board members. Proposed dates are November 13 or 14, and the session will be held virtually due to a state travel restriction. The District will explore hosting board members together in person while engaging virtually with Commission trainers. The ongoing state budget impasse has paused travel for Commission staff, delayed certain state-funded reimbursements, and resulted in the postponement of some trainings.

## **Old Business**

A. 2023-2024 Audit Updates - Nate Pritchard reported that the District is on track to receive the draft 2023 audit documents by the end of the month. Once finalized, the auditor will immediately begin the 2024 audit, which is expected to be completed by year-end without the need for an extension. The 2024 timeline should be shorter due to the auditor's increased familiarity with District records. Nate noted that all necessary county records have been provided, and the auditor will review any outstanding questions regarding prior general fund balances that were not transferred to the District.

B. NCCD Office Construction Updates - Nate Pritchard reported that demolition for the office renovation project is scheduled to begin October 27. The contractor anticipates completing the project within four weeks. The building permit is valid through November 26, and an extension can be granted if needed. The contract requires completion by December 27, with liquidated damages applicable beyond that date.

To accommodate construction impacts, staff will operate under an increased remote work schedule. A new VPN has been established to allow secure remote access to the District Database. When construction nears completion, arrangements will be made to move permanent office furniture into the updated spaces.

C. NACD TA2022 Close Out Status - Nate Pritchard reported that the District has provided all required documentation to the County regarding the NACD Technical Assistance Grant (2022). The County has agreed with the District's reconciliation and confirmed that approximately \$23,000 is owed to the District. A W-9 has been submitted, and the District is awaiting payment. Follow-up communication will continue until the closeout is completed.

D. NCCD Committee Notifications & Scheduling - The Board discussed public notification requirements for NCCD committee meetings. Based on guidance and practices from other districts, the Finance Committee and Executive Committee will be publicly noticed due to the financial and policy matters they address.

Will Carpenter made a motion to set the Finance Committee meetings at 1:00 PM and the Executive Committee meetings at 2:00 PM on the third Thursday of each month, beginning November 20, 2025, with public notices to be issued accordingly. 2<sup>nd</sup> Brian Fulmer. Motion carried. 6/0

E. PACD Lawn Conversion Grant – Disbursement #1 – Nate Pritchard reported that the District has received the first reimbursement payment of approximately \$10,400 from the PACD Lawn Conversion Grant. The participating landowner has provided documentation showing more than \$13,000 in eligible project expenses to date. The District will issue the first disbursement check to the landowner. A second grant reimbursement is anticipated in January, to be disbursed once additional expenses are submitted and approved.

## **New Business**

A. November Meeting Date - The Board discussed the next meeting date, 11/11/25 falling on Veterans Day, which is a District holiday. As the meeting takes place in the evening and will not conflict with holiday activities, the Board agreed to keep the meeting on the originally scheduled date.

B. NACD TA 2025 Grant Application - The District is preparing its application for the NACD Technical Assistance Grant for 2025, due November 7. Nate Pritchard explained that the request will reflect a 40% staffing allotment to align with changes in nutrient management delegation funding. Jeffrey Keifer made a motion to submit the NACD TA grant application with the 40% staffing allotment. 2<sup>nd</sup> Rich DiFebo. Motion carried 6/0

C. NACD 2026 Dues - The Board reviewed the annual membership dues for NACD. As in previous years, funds are budgeted to support the Gold Level membership at \$775. Brian Fulmer made a motion to approve payment of the NACD 2026 Dues at the Gold Level. 2<sup>nd</sup> Will Carpenter. Motion carried 6/0

D. Letters of Support – The Board reviewed a request from Palmer Township for a letter of support to accompany its PennVest funding application for the Wedgwood Drive Stormwater Swale Rehabilitation Project, which involves improvements to a failing stormwater swale in a highly urbanized neighborhood. District staff recommended support, noting the project is consistent with land use and stormwater management goals. Jeffrey Keifer made a motion to issue the letters of support for each application. 2<sup>nd</sup> Rich Budihas. Motion carried 6/0

E. Board Office Rotation/Nomination Policy - The Board discussed the rotation of officer positions, noting that while no formal policy currently exists, the District has traditionally followed a two-year informal rotation in which the Vice Chair assumes the role of Chair. Members agreed that maintaining this informal rotation promotes shared leadership and board engagement. Consensus was reached to continue the informal two-year rotation without adopting a formal written policy. Officer terms will continue to follow the existing two-year cycle aligned with the calendar year.

F. 2026 Insurance Updates - The District Manager presented a 2026 health insurance option, noting that the current plan would see a significant rate increase. An alternative Capital Blue Cross level-funded PPO plan with nearly identical coverage is projected to reduce overall costs. The District will continue covering 90 percent of premiums, with employees contributing 10 percent. The Board agreed with the District Manager moving forward with the alternative level-funded PPO plan effective December 1, 2025, to be reflected in the 2026 budget.

G. PennVest Letters of Support - Jim Lawrence briefed the Board on two PennVest stormwater funding requests submitted by the Bethlehem Township Municipal Authority: the Sculac Stream Restoration Project and the Easton Avenue Flood Mitigation (Phase 1A) Project. Both projects have undergone District permitting review. Will Carpenter made a motion to issue letters of support for both applications. 2<sup>nd</sup> Brian Fulmer. Motion carried 6/0

### **Activity and Committee Reports**

- A. Executive Committee – Joel Geiger reported that the Executive Committee met on September 25, 2025, to discuss the Board Office Rotation Nomination Policy, which was later included on the full board agenda for further discussion. The next meeting is scheduled for November 20, 2025.

- B. Finance Committee – Will Carpenter reported that the Finance Committee met on September 25, 2025, and reviewed the status of the audit and county reimbursement for TA 2022. The committee also discussed implementing a monthly profit and loss comparison, the upcoming budget process, and future review of the District’s financial policies. The next meeting is scheduled for November 20, 2025.
- C. Education / Outreach Committee – Carrie Cevicelow reported the Outreach & Education Committee met on Friday, October 3, 2025, to review the finalized fall newsletter, which was published on the District’s website on October 8. The committee discussed progress for the 2026 Envirothon, and the upcoming State Envirothon Coordinators Meeting on October 29 in Lancaster, to be attended by Carrie and Paige. Final preparations were made for the October 23 Teacher Workshop. Additional discussion included upcoming social media posts, educational materials, and event planning. The next committee meeting is scheduled for November 7, 2025.
- D. Resource/Facilities Committee – Rich DiFebo reported that the Resource/Facilities Committee met on September 18, 2025 to review ongoing contractor services and facility maintenance needs. The committee is securing updated quotes for HVAC and boiler maintenance, pest control, and snow and groundskeeping services to ensure competitive pricing for 2026. Discussion also included developing a long-term facilities plan to prioritize future capital improvements such as siding, painting, and deck repairs. The next meeting will be held in November.
- E. DG&LVR QAB – Jim Lawrence reported that he met with Rich Budihas, who has joined the Quality Assurance Board and will attend ESM (Environmentally Sensitive Maintenance) training in October. Jim and Alexis recently attended the statewide workshop in Gettysburg, meeting with Penn State staff to review ongoing projects and discuss program updates. The Heiden Road project remains pending due to delays in state funding; the District will issue the contract once funds are received.
- F. Karst Geology Advisory Council – Nate Pritchard reported that progress continues on statewide hazard mapping led by the Pennsylvania Geological Survey. The Act 167 stormwater planning process with LVPC remains pending, though model ordinance recommendations are under discussion. Nate will present a karst and stormwater guidance update at the upcoming Lehigh Valley Greenways Municipal Partners event. An informal meeting with advisory council members and a former PennDOT engineer is planned to discuss long-term stream restoration efforts along Bushkill Creek. There have been no updates from DEP regarding Hercules Quarry’s permit request to deepen operations.

### **Conservation District Staff Reports**

The staff reports were emailed prior to the meeting. During the staff reports discussion, it was noted that Kara, Ag Specialist, is continuing her nutrient management training and progressing well. While direct collaboration with NRCS staff is temporarily paused due to the ongoing federal government shutdown; Kara is continuing other district-related work and backlog tasks.

### **Announcements**

- A. NCCD Teacher Workshop – October 23<sup>rd</sup>, Charles Chrin Community Center, Palmer Twp., PA
- B. LVG Greenways Municipal Partners Breakfast 10/28 @ 8:30AM - Wilbur Mansion, Bethlehem, PA
- C. LVG Greenways Elected Officials Mixer – 10/29 @ 5:30PM - Rising River Brewing, Macungie, PA

### **Set time, date, and place of next meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled for November 11, 2025, 7:00PM, Lower Nazareth Township Building, Suite 110, Conference Room, 623 Municipal Dr., Nazareth, PA ( In-Person & Virtual, check website agenda for Zoom Link).

### **Adjournment**

Jeffrey Keifer made a motion to adjourn the meeting; 2<sup>nd</sup> Rich DiFebo. Motion carried. 6/0  
The meeting was adjourned at 9:21 PM.

Submitted by Carrie Cevicelow, Recording Secretary to the Board