***Escambia Soil and Water Conservation District***

**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS' MINUTES**

**September 19, 2024**

# Board Members in Attendance

Mr. Travis Tharp, Chair; Mr. Johnnie Odom, Vice-Chair/ Acting Treasurer; Mr. Jeff DeWeese, Member.

# Attendees

Mr. Joshua McElhaney, USDA/NRCS; Mrs. Debbie Williams, Escambia County NRCD.

# Call to Order

Mr. Travis Tharp called the meeting to order at 9:00am. Quorum was present to officially hold meeting.

Those present stated the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag in unison.

# Minutes of the Last Meeting

Mr. Jeff DeWeese made a motion to approve the August 2024 regular Board meeting minutes. Mr. Johnnie Odom seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Mrs. Carollyn Taylor had sent over the August 2024 workshop minutes for approval. However, Mrs. Debbie Williams had not printed them out for Board review. Mrs. Williams will send out to the Board members in order they may review and approve at the October 2024 workshop meeting.

# Acknowledgment of Public Notice

Meeting advertisement published.

# Treasurer's Report

Bank statement was reviewed by the Board and the notice of inactivity from the bank. Mr. Odom will go to the bank to deposit funds to maintain activity compliance.

# Old Business

Discussion on the Board's goals and objectives core areas to focus on such as duties of the Board, education, outreach and website materials. The Board reviewed several best management practices and template formats in which will help the Board create their own.

Mr. Odom made a motion to empower the Chairman to finalize and to post the scope of the Board's goals and objectives. Mr. DeWeese seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Brief discussion held on the county's budget workshop and on the current one vacant seat on the Board.

**New Business**

Mrs. Williams gave the following background on Florida DEP's Florida Recreational Development Assistance program 2025 Southwest Escambia Sportsplex Nature Trail grant in which the Natural Resources Conservation Division will be applying for.

'Escambia County Natural Resources Conservation Division is seeking to implement a 1.3 mile nature trail at Southwest Escambia Sportsplex and is seeking the Escambia County Soil and Water Conservation Board's thoughts on the

matter. The main section of the trail will be located within the conservation area of the park and will traverse through a multitude of mesic and wet soil ecosystems including but to limited to pitcher plant prairies, pine Flatwoods, and two year round ponds'.

'The Sportsplex is already home to a multitude of youth sports that provide ample opportunities for youth to enjoy exercise and play. Because the park is already heavily used, our goal for the trial is to provide both the youth and their parents with a more leisurely outdoor experience within the park, while also educating them on the importance of urban conservation. The trail will consist of multiple picnic areas, wildlife viewing "stations," and educational opportunities.'

'However to accomplish the trail two bridges will need to be built over canals that were dug to assist in timber operations in the past. This grant will fund those bridges, picnic tables, benches, educational signs, and any other trail improvements that are needed to create a safe and functional nature trial for Southwest Escambia Florida.'

After discussion of project and with all in favor, the Board stated:

'The Escambia Soil and Water Conservation District supports the planned by the Escambia county Natural Resources Conservation Division to implement a nature trail at the Southwest Escambia Sportsplex. The location within the Sportsplex is ideal and the Sportsplex itself is situated near schools and community offices such that it will be easily accessible by a significant portion of the Southwest Escambia populace. We believe the trail will be endowing value and significantly advances the objectives for witch this Board exists.'

Discussion held on the possibility of changing the workshop times for the next couple of months. Further discussion will be discussed at the next workshop meeting.

**Reports**

Mr. Joshua McElhaney, District Conservationist, gave an update on the office workload pertaining to Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

Signup deadline will be November 1, 2024.

With no further business coming before the Board, Mr. Odom made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Mr. DeWeese. With all in favor, meeting adjourned at 10:10am.

Mrs. Carollyn Taylor, Secretary (Signed minutes on file)