

**GENERAL SERVICES COMMITTEE**  
**May 16, 2023**

Present: Ian Gilbert, Chair; Richard Chartrand, Vice-Chair; Phil Hathway; Josh Leviker; and Andrea Moroughan.

Others present: Legislators Larry Dolhof, Thomas Osborne, Lisa Virkler, Jessica Moser, and Jeffrey Nellenback; County Manager, Ryan Piche; County Treasurer, Eric Virkler; County Attorney, Joan McNichol; and Human Resources Director, Caitlyn Smith.

Committee Chair, Ian Gilbert, called the meeting to order at 1:03 p.m.

Legislator Moroughan moved to approve the April 18, 2023 committee meeting minutes, seconded by Legislator Leviker, and carried.

**Lewis County Soil and Water Conservation District – Nichelle Swisher, District Manager**

Nichelle Swisher shared that the mission of the Lewis County Soil and Water Conservation District is to support a comprehensive natural resource program for county residents, landowners and municipalities by implementing projects that will preserve, protect and enhance the wise use of the county's soil, water and related resources. The Dust Bowl was the reason that Soil and Water Conservation Districts were created.

The District Board of Directors are Ashley Marolf, Grange Representative and current Chairperson; Brian Reape, Farm Bureau Representative; Jennifer Myers, At Large Representative; Andrea Moroughan, Legislative Representative and Vice-Chairperson; and Thomas Osborne, Legislative Representative and Secretary. The Legislative representatives serve a one-year term, and all others serve a three-year term. The District Staff are Nichelle Swisher, District Manager for over 17 years in Lewis County; Michael Durant, District Technician; Carla Yaw, Treasurer; Alexis Lyndaker, Watershed Ag Conservation Specialist; and a Pratt Northam Workship Intern as a Water Quality Technician.

In the Soil & Water Conservation District the County Legislature appoints the Board of Directors by appointing two legislative representatives, a Farm Bureau representative, a Grange representative, an At-Large representative for Urban, Suburban, and Rural Non-Farm Landowner interest, an At-Large representative for Practical Farming (optional), and an At-Large Representative (optional). At the state level the Governor appoints the members of the NYS Soil and Water Conservation Committee; this is the organization that set the policy programs. The Lewis County Soil & Water Conservation District is a contract agency through the county. Employees are not members of the union.

The technical assistance that Districts provide to the communities are public involvement, project implementation, protecting public health and safety, natural resource management, and land use planning. They handle the Environmental Assessments for the county, better known as SEQRAs. They also help write grants to get funding to implement projects.

Protecting Public Health & Safety consists of water supply protection, flood protection, emergency watershed protection, right of way maintenance, road salt monitoring & safe storage, septic system siting & maintenance, and emergency spill containment plans on farm and watershed level. Public Involvement consists of public participation with stakeholder advisory groups, conflict resolution and complaint investigations, consensus, coalition building & networking, local capacity building, and environmental education.

Land Use Planning consists of soil interpretations, site plan reviews, stormwater management, stream corridor management, floodplain management, recreation & open space planning, farmland protection, wetlands protection, watershed protection, and GIS data management. Project Implementations consist of grant/contract administration, interagency cooperative agreements, permit applications, project survey & design, layout/construction inspection, operation & maintenance plans, BMP implementation on public & private lands.

Natural Resource Management is unique to New York State and consists of agricultural environmental management, mined land reclamation, forest management, including urban wildlife & fisheries habitat, stream corridor restoration, wetland construction & delineation, aquatic weed control, shoreline protection, and waste recycling. The Soil & Water Conservation District is also the lead agency for the Water Quality Coordinating Committee, which is the management of nonpoint source pollution management. Nonpoint source pollution is oil, pet waste, herbicide, fertilizer, road salt, bacteria, sediment, and any other contaminant that ends up on the ground naturally or from human activity. Rainwater and snowmelt pick up these contaminants as it washes over yards, sidewalks, driveways, parking lots, and fields and deposits them into surface water as nonpoint pollution.

To help manage the nonpoint source pollution the Soil & Water Conservation District does erosion control and hydroseeding for municipalities for free, they hold the blackwater watershed conference each year, they help with permit assistance for water quality protection, do shoreline cleanup with the Black River Trash Bash, and handle culvert assessment and replacement to promote fish passage. The watershed groups in our area are St. Lawrence River Watershed (Indian River & Oswegatchie, and 8 counties); Oneida Lake Watershed (5 counties); Black River Watershed (5 counties); Salmon River/Sandy Creek Watershed (3 counties); and Mohawk River Watershed (14 counties). The district staff serve on all watershed groups.

The drafted plans by New York State drastically change the structure of Soil & Water Conservation Districts. The draft proposal removes the two county legislative representatives from the district board, requires the district board to have 7 members, establishes a Special Soil Health Fund requiring a new tax to be assessed on tons of commercial fertilizer use, removes the Farm Bureau representative and the Grange representative, and replaces one with a Northeast Organic Farming Association member. This change had absolutely no input from the state or local district committees. There are only 3 organic farmers in Lewis County.

Soil & Water Conservation District is asking for a formal resolution by the Lewis County Board of legislators opposing this draft legislation. Legislator Hathway moved to fill the request by putting forward a resolution in opposition for the next board meeting, seconded by Legislator Chartrand, and carried. The next request was to appoint Mr. Fred Munk as an At-Large representative to the district board as soon as possible. Legislator Hathway moved to fill this request with a resolution at the next board meeting, seconded by Legislator Moroughan, and carried.

Legislator Chartrand stated that he knows Mr. Munk and thinks that he would make a great addition to the current board. In response to Legislator Hathway's question, Nichelle stated that Lewis County Soil & Water Conservation District was formed on January 8, 1942. Legislator Dolhof questioned why the state proposed these changes, Nichelle stated that there really is no good explanation as to why they are going in this direction because they never asked for input from anyone.

The following dockets were reviewed:

1. Appointing James Dicob of New Bremen, NY as a member of the Lewis County Junkyard Review Board effective January 1, 2023 through December 31, 2027.  
AYE   5              NAY   0
2. Pursuant to Local Law No. 2-2007 finding and determining that an unsafe structure shall be demolished and removed and to set hearing for final order (312 Number Four Road, Town of Watson)  
AYE   5              NAY   0
3. Pursuant to Local Law No. 2-2007 finding and determining that an unsafe structure shall be demolished and removed and to set hearing for final order (7091 West Main Street, Village of Port Leyden)  
AYE   5              NAY   0
4. Authorizing supplement 1 to agreement between Lewis County o/b/o Highway Department and Fisher Associates for Marshey Road over West Branch Oswegatchie Bridge project to provide sub-consultant services related to National Historic Preservation Act compliance for this bridge as set forth in the proposal at a cost not to exceed \$26,000.00.  
AYE   5              NAY   0

5. Approving an agreement between County of Lewis o/b/o Lewis County Highway Department and C&S Engineers, Inc. to provide the design and other scope of services related to the Complete Streets Project on Blue Street and Main Street/CR 41 in the Hamlet of Glenfield, NY, at a cost of \$171,724.00 as set forth in the proposal.

AYE 5                      NAY 0

6. Awarding bid and authorizing agreement with Tioga Construction Co., Inc. for the replacement of West Road culverts over Mill Creek and Mill Creek Tributary in the Town of Turin in the total amount of \$825,000.00

AYE 5                      NAY 0

The Clerk to the Board pointed out that there will be two more resolutions for the June Board meeting, one to award the bid for the demolition of the Trinity Avenue property, and the second to award the bid for the PSB parking lot project.

Ryan Piche reported that Park Strategies, LLC will be here next month to give an update on their lobbying efforts on behalf of Lewis County. Larry and Ryan talked with Kevin Bronner with Park Strategies earlier in the week and found out that there is a bill with Democratic sponsors on both the Senate and the Assembly to allow registration for up to 70 inches wide and 2,000 pounds with several categories for the fees. The Oswego County ATV Ride will be held on June 3<sup>rd</sup> this year for anyone who wants to join.

There being no other business to come before the committee, Legislator Chartrand moved to adjourn at 1:42 p.m., seconded by Legislator Moroughan, and carried.

Prior to the beginning of the Health & Human Services meeting, Legislator Gilbert asked for a quick minute to update the board on a meeting that took place with the magistrates, that he and Ryan attended. The meeting went well and allowed the group to brainstorm idea about how to consolidate Town Courts. The group didn't want to go in the direction of a district court but are interested in consolidating some of the Town Courts. Ryan pointed out that traditionally the Public Safety Building has not had room for a holding cell, which causes arraignments to happen in the middle of the night. After conversations, with Tim Thayer and Ed Amelio, it looks like there could be a small capital project to create a holding cell in the near future. The magistrates would like the Tug Hill Commission to review the idea of consolidating before proceeding in that direction.

Respectfully submitted,  
Cassandra Moser, Clerk of the Board