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MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING April 4, 2025

Supervisors Present: Felipe Lovato, Jr., Chairman
Tom Carroll
Gerald Chavez
Larry Gomez

Absentees: David Cain
Aubrey Dunn

Others Present: Dierdre Tarr, District Manager
Adam Clark, Pattern Energy
Lainey Fastnacht, Administrative Assistant
Roy Gibson, Associate Supervisor
Jason Martin, NRCS
Katie Mechenbier, NMDA
Crystal Medina, New Mexico Forest and Watershed Restoration Institute
Rachel Mixon, USGS
Felicia Speranske, NRCS
Katheryn Taylor, Claunch-Pinto volunteer
Michael Whiting, USGS

CALL TO ORDER:

The regular meeting of the Board of Supervisors of the Claunch-Pinto Soil and Water Conservation District (CPSWCD) was called to order by Chairman Felipe Lovato, both in person and via Zoom at 8:05 a.m.

Welcome Attendees:

The chairman welcomed those present and thanked them for joining the meeting.
The meeting was opened with the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by a moment of silence.

APPROVAL/DISAPPROVAL OF AGENDA:

The board reviewed the agenda. **ACTION TAKEN:** Larry Gomez moved to approve the agenda. Tom Carroll seconded the motion. The motion carried by voice vote: Felipe Lovato, aye; Gerald Chavez, aye; Tom Carroll, aye; Larry Gomez, aye.

APPROVAL/ DISAPPROVAL OF MINUTES:

The board reviewed the minutes of March 07, 2025. **ACTION TAKEN:** Gerald Chavez moved approval of the minutes of the March, 2025 meeting. The motion carried by voice vote. Tom Larry Gomez seconded the motion. Felipe Lovato, aye; Gerald Chavez, aye; Tom Carroll, aye; Larry Gomez, aye.

TREASURER'S REPORT:

ACTION TAKEN: Larry Gomez moved to approve both the treasurer's report for March 2025 and the vouchers. Gerald Chavez seconded the motion. The motion carried by voice vote: Felipe Lovato, aye; Gerald Chavez, aye; Tom Carroll, aye; Larry Gomez, aye.

OTHER FINANCIAL MATTERS:

REPORTS:

NMDA Report:

The written report for April is in the board members' packets.

FO Report:

The written report is included in board members' packets. Ms. Speranske reported on reductions in personnel, her resulting workload, and when she would be in the Mountainair NRCS office. Referring to the written report, she said that there are four rather than three preapproved CSP applications. CSP renewal letters have been mailed. She reiterated the application deadline is June not December. From six to eleven archaeological surveys will be conducted.

District Manager's Report:

The district manager reported on needed repairs: to gutters and the hoop house due to wind damage, a pickup and one of the chippers. The chairman suggested the usefulness of having a leaf blower to clean the dirt out of the chippers. The district manager will find out whether insurance can cover any of the expenses.

CORRESPONDENCE:

No report.

UPDATE ON GRANTS:

Watershed Health Grant – Water Trust Board:

The district manager reported on the projects that the Estancia Basin funding is spent on: the work should begin on the Highway 337 project in three to four weeks. The traffic control plan has been approved both by district three and district five. She described progress on the bureaucratic process involved. A letter has been sent to landowners explaining that the work will go to the Chilili Land grant where the work is taking place. A portion of the work on the Highway 55 project will be on rightaway through the Tajique, Torreon and Manzano land grants. Laurence Crane of the NM State Forestry told the district manager that he can get the December 2025 deadline extended for Highway 55 work. The 337 project has a December deadline. Everything is in place to begin work on the north side of the highway.

The district manager reported that there are mountain lions, including one cub, in evidence on the Goat Canyon project in Deer Canyon. She described precautions being taken by the work crew.

Some training for the field technicians needs to take place concerning how to make changes in the practice plans for the private landowners and contractors.

Regarding the Rio Grande projects, there are ten small projects in the Taos area. There are some projects in Acoma and the Grants area. The district manager also described work to rid the Dripping Springs Ranch of Russian olive and salt cedar. The area is the birthing area for big horn sheep, so clearing these plants will make the area more secure for the young sheep.

New Mexico State Forestry:

The district manager signed a contract with the Chilili Land Grant project to thin an area near its water tank. Work should start in a week.

Lawrence Crane from NM State Forestry will work on a work plan for the NFL grant.

The final report and reimbursement request have been submitted for the agreement with state forestry for the liaison who represented state forestry in meetings with the forest industry. The report was submitted to board members.

Collaborative Forest Restoration Program:

The district manager will meet with forest service representatives on the Bartolo project in the coming week because Pablo Romero needs to do some clean up in the area. Mr. Romero said that he has been receiving conflicting instructions. She wants to resolve the situation so that she can submit a reimbursement request for him.

Regional Conservation Partnership Program Grant (RCPP):

The district manager will meet with Felicia Speranske to discuss questions regarding cultural a resource survey. When that survey is finished, all of the cultural resource surveys will be complete for the 2018 funding. One survey needs to be finished on the 2019 funding.

FEMA Project:

The district manager is working on finishing all the requirements of this project so the contracts can be finished and the work can start. She described how the contractor will manage the work.

SWCC Grant (6/30/2025):

Crystal Medina reported that the content for the hub site is being organized and finalized with special attention being paid to its accessibility to the public. She is working on the section concerning lessons learned so that other soil and water conservation districts can benefit from them. A social networking map is also being developed that shows the funders and partners that the Claunch-Pinto district has. She expects to give an update at the next board meeting.

The district manager reported that she will provide pictures of the district's work and history for Kim Kostelnik to include in the land use plan.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**Capital Outlay – FY2022/2023 Remaining Capital Outlay Funding -- \$49,475.60:**

The district manager said that the district is included in the capital outlay bill with a request for \$100,000 to buy at least one vehicle. The governor hasn't signed the bill yet.

Mr. Gibson said that he requested three quotes for a stump grinder and received two quotes from Four Rivers and one from Wagner. The quotes include a reduction for CES contracts, of an 18% discount. Mr. Gibson described the features of the stump grinders and stated the prices of the options. He recommended the Miller stump grinder, even though it is twice as expensive, because it is designed for heavy duty use. Mr. Gomez agreed with Mr. Gibson's recommendation provided that there is an appropriate warranty. Mr. Lovato explained why he recommended that the district buy a stump grinder.

ACTION TAKEN: Tom Carroll moved to buy the Miller stump grinder for \$21,098.80. Mr. Chavez seconded the motion. Motion carried by voice vote: Felipe Lovato, aye; Gerald Chavez, aye; Tom Carroll, aye; Larry Gomez, aye.

Torrance and Lincoln County Wind Energy, Presentation on SunZia, Adam Clark:

Mr. Lovato thanked Mr. Clark for the work of Pattern Energy on removing Russian olives and salt cedars with result that water is resurfacing in the Abó arroyo.

Mr. Clark reviewed his history with Claunch-Pinto and the district's substantive concerns with the company's projects. He talked about how the development of best management practices for such things as ground disturbance and erosion control came into being. These practices became requirements for the construction contractor. He said that he was proud of the practices and that the projects were better for them. He said that the district management insisted that the company look into its fire management practices. He said that the district manager was part of the group of entities with a vested interest in the projects such as BLM. He described the project mitigation actions of the SunZia project. He gave examples of some of the actions -- a section of land along the Rio Grande which is planned as a sandhill crane habitat.

He said that the agreement between the district and Pattern is for \$75,000 to remove the Russian olives and salt cedars as well as other projects on its land. He said that working with the district has made the company's projects more successful. This work can serve as a model for working with other environmental groups. Mr. Lovato raised a concern about invasive weeds that might result from the work. Mr. Clark said that controlling the weeds was built into the environmental plan and construction contract.

Mr. Gomez raised concerns about soil disturbance, the fragility of the soil and erosion and the maintenance of the power lines at a later date. Mr. Clark described mitigation and reclamation efforts that are a legal requirement budgeted for five years.

The district manager thanked the Claunch-Pinto board for paying expenses involved in presenting a case at the New Mexico Public Regulation Commission and in working with the State Land Office and New Mexico State Forestry as well. Mr. Clark said that because of the district manager's work, the involvement of lawyers was minimal.

NEW BUSINESS:**Budget Committee for FY2025 – 2026:**

Mr. Lovato appointed David Cain, Tom Carroll and Gerald Chavez to the budget committee.

Infrastructure Capital Improvement Projects:

The district manager called the board's attention to the Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan (ICIP) FY 2027 – 2031 with the intention of updating the plan for FY 2027 – 3032. She brought up some items for consideration such as solar panels on covered car park and new trucks plus a vehicle for conducting the business of the district's office. She expressed her concern regarding NRCS's lease of its offices in the district's building, including the district's dependence on the NRCS computer system. She said that the district should investigate getting its own system. What might be needed was discussed. She mentioned other things that the board should keep in mind: that she will make the final payments on the district's chippers, one in April and one in September and that money is still owed on the district's property and building. She explained that the ICIP is a plan for the future and makes it possible for her to apply for grant money or capital outlay funds. She suggested some other possible needs for funding and challenges that the district may face. A resolution approving the ICIP needs to be passed at the June meeting.

REPORTS:**South Central Mountain RC&D:**

No report.

EBWPC:

The district manager reported that the committee has new equipment in the wells but it isn't in operation yet. She talked about the contribution that SWCA has made to this work.

OTHER:

The district manager will attend a Forest and Watershed Restoration Institute workshop in Las Vegas, NM concerning monitoring. She will make a presentation on the monitoring that is being done with the Greater Rio Grande and Estancia Basin.

A resolution for the supervisor election will be on the May board agenda. She will invite the forest service to give a presentation to the board. She will also ask PNM to give a presentation on its fire management plan.

Michael Whiting, of USGS mentioned that his office in Albuquerque has a fire response team that could possibly support the area in case of fire. Mr. Gomez mentioned several arson attempts in the area. The district manager said that if a fire starts west of Mountainair, it could destroy Mountainair.

NEXT MEETING SCHEDULED:

Regular meeting: Friday, 8:00 a.m. on May 2, 2025 at the Natural Resource Conservation Center, located at 1206 South Highway 55, Mountainair, NM.

ADJOURN:

There being no further business to come before the regular meeting of the Claunch-Pinto Board was adjourned.

FELIPE LOVATO, CHAIRMAN

GERALD CHAVEZ, SECRETARY