



**NORTH CAROLINA
SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION COMMISSION
WORK SESSION MEETING MINUTES
January 7, 2024**

Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services
Division of Soil & Water Conservation
Sheraton Imperial Hotel RTP
Empire Rooms A & B
4700 Emperor Boulevard
Durham, NC 27703

Commission Members	Guests	Guests
Chris Hughes	John Beck	Regina Kilpatrick
Billy Kilpatrick	Josh Vetter	Mike Willis
James Lamb	Bryan Evans	Jennie Hanifan
John Langdon	Michael Shepherd	Shelby Kaplan
Brian Parker	Scott Melvin	Mike Murphy
Derek Potter	Helen Wiklund	Craig Myers
George Teague	Lisa Fine	Landon Swisher
Commission Counsel	Ken Parks	Joseph Wenzel
Phillip Reynolds	Eric Pare	Guests - Online
Guests	Tom Hill	Anne Coan
David Williams	Keith Larick	Lorien Deaton
Julie Henshaw	Elise McLaughlin	Heather Reichert
Matt Safford	Rachel Smith	

Chairman Langdon called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m. Chairman Langdon inquired whether any Commission members need to declare any conflict of interest, or appearance of conflict of interest, that may exist for agenda items under consideration, as mandated by the State Ethics Act. Chairman Langdon stated the meeting guidelines and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

- 1. Approval of Agenda:** Chairman Langdon asked for comments on the agenda. None were declared.
- 2. Approval of Meeting Minutes:** Chairman Langdon asked for comments on the minutes. None were declared.
 - 2A.** November 14, 2023, Work Session Meeting Minutes
 - 2B.** November 15, 2023, Business Session Meeting Minutes
- 3. Division Report:** Chairman Langdon recognized Director David Williams to present. A copy of the report is included as an official part of the minutes. Director Williams stated the report will

be presented at the business meeting. Director Williams stated two of the four new employees that joined the Division are in attendance. Director Williams asked Ms. Shelby Kaplan and Ms. Elise McLaughlin to introduce themselves.

4. **Association Report:** Chairman Langdon recognized President Teague to present. A copy of the report is included as an official part of the minutes. President Teague stated the report will be presented at the business meeting.
5. **Executive Director's Report:** Chairman Langdon recognized Mr. Bryan Evans to present. A copy of the report is included as an official part of the minutes. Mr. Evans stated the report will be presented at the business meeting. Mr. Evans welcomed everyone to the Annual meeting.
6. **NRCS Report:** Chairman Langdon asked if Mr. Tim Beard will be in attendance to present the report later this afternoon. Director Williams stated Mr. Beard will be in attendance to present the report. A copy of the report is included as an official part of the minutes.
7. **Consent Agenda:** Chairman Langdon recognized Mr. Eric Pare and Mr. John Beck to present. Copies of the reports are included as an official part of the minutes.

7A. Supervisor Appointments:

- Mitchell Haigler, Cabarrus SWCD, filling the unexpired appointed term of Kevin May, Jr. for 2022-2026 with an attached resignation letter from Mr. May

Mr. Pare stated that at the November 15th Commission meeting Mr. Glenn Pruitt was conditionally appointed by the Commission. Mr. Pruitt neglected to submit a resignation letter because Mr. Pruitt switched from an elected seat to an appointed seat. Since that time, the Division received Mr. Pruitt's resignation letter.

7B. Supervisor Contracts: 6 contracts; totaling \$42,808

8. **Job Approval Authority:** Chairman Langdon recognized Mr. Josh Vetter to present. A copy of the report is included as an official part of the minutes.
 - 8A. **Applications:** Mr. Vetter stated there are three applications that have been submitted and the practices have been verified. The Division staff and the Job Approval Authority Committee recommend approving these applications.
9. **Technical Specialist Training Update:** Chairman Langdon recognized Mr. Michael Shepherd to present. A copy of the report is included as an official part of the minutes.
 - 9A. **Audit Results:** Mr. Shepherd stated the Division conducted a random 10% audit that is required of all Technical Specialists submitting training credits each year of the required continuing education credit. Fifty-seven training course credits were submitted. Thirty-four technical specialists were audited, and all are in order.
 - 9B. **Training Fulfillment Report:** Mr. Shepherd stated the Commission's Rule requires technical specialists are required to complete six hours of training every three years to renew their

Technical Specialist designation. Three out of four technical specialists successfully completed their six hours of training to maintain their designation. Mr. Ronald Zurlinden did not complete the training. Mr. Zurlinden stated he will not continue to use his technical specialist designation and let his designation lapse.

- 10. StRAP Progress Update:** Chairman Langdon recognized Mr. Matt Safford to present. A copy of the report is included as an official part of the minutes. Mr. Safford stated the report will be presented at the business meeting.

There was discussion about the work being done across the state, and the limitations of the StRAP inspections due to the need to hire more staff so the grantees can get reimbursed in a timely manner. Work does continue to increase and comes in under budget which allows grantees to add work to their projects. There is a need to hire additional part-time inspectors as well as an inspector for the Division and to handle technical assistance for much of the Eastern part of the State and work with the grantees. Inspections are twofold and there have been a few delays due to storms and inspections taking place. The application timeline was highlighted, and the Division will present award recommendations to the Commission at the March meeting and contracts will last until December 31, 2026.

- 11. Engineering Services Workload Report:** Chairman Langdon recognized Mr. Scott Melvin to present. A copy of the report is included as an official part of the minutes. Mr. Melvin stated the report will be presented at the business meeting. Mr. Melvin stated there is still a backlog with the workload, but we are making improvements with the backlog.

Director Williams proposed rescheduling the March 20 Commission meeting a week later to March 26 and 27 in Raleigh since it conflicts with the NACD Fly-In.

Commissioner Parker stated he has a conflict with the May 15 meeting due to a NASCAR All-Star Race event in North Wilkesboro from May 12 – 19.

IV. Public Comments: Chairman Langdon asked for public comments. Chairman Langdon asked about the livestock and various sheds used for cattle related to the Cost Share Program. There was much discussion about the various Best Management Practices (BMPs) and plans, i.e., Nutrient Management Plan and Waste Management Plan and the rate of inspections for the first five years of the practice. It is a much-needed practice in the western part of the state. Chairman Langdon stated there are Coastal and Piedmont cattleman that can prosper from this program. Chairman Langdon asked to improve and keep the farmers aware of the Cost Share Programs.

Deputy Director Henshaw stated all Cost Share Programs have a review committee that will review district's ideas. The Technical Review Committee (TRC) helps advise the Commission and the Commission sets policy and approves the funds to be spent. There will be regional Cost Share training in February.

Commissioner Potter challenges all districts when they select a new district board member that they have enough knowledge to be an involved supervisor without being discriminatory.

Commissioner Potter understands that the Division is short-staffed but asked if we can streamline the workload and be more efficient when it comes to engineering and construction. Local districts should be a part of the streamlining efforts without reducing the integrity of the programs and practices. Ms. Rachel Smith stated that the districts can handle easier matters while the Division can focus on the more complex issues.

Chairman Langdon suggested holding another Commission retreat in March or May perhaps on Tuesday before the work session and use that time to brainstorm/have an open discussion to gain a better understanding of the direction of the Commission and Division for the future.

Mr. Mike Willis encouraged the Commission to consider engineering delays, legislative needs, what is expected of Soil & Water and the StRAP Program, and where the Cost Share Program will be five years from now as topics for discussion.

Chairman Langdon asked the Commissioners for their comments about the retreat. Commissioner Hughes stated the Saturday before the Annual meeting might be a good day to have the retreat every year after the initial meeting. Commissioner Potter stated the idea is to network and lay out ideas and do not get overly technical or have a set agenda.

V. Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 11:01 a.m.

David B. Williams, Director
Division of Soil & Water Conservation, Raleigh, N.C.

Helen Wiklund, Recording Secretary

These minutes were approved by the North Carolina Soil & Water Conservation Commission on March , 2024.