

**KOSCIUSKO/ELKHART COUNTY
JOINT DRAINAGE BOARD MEETING
AP JONES HEARING
MAY 22, 2025
9:00 A.M.**

PRESENT

CARY GRONINGER – CHAIRMAN – KOSCIUSKO COUNTY DRAINAGE BOARD MEMBER
MATT MOREHOUSE – VICE CHAIRMAN - ELKHART COUNTY DRAINAGE BOARD MEMBER
LYNN LOUCKS – ELKHART COUNTY DRAINAGE BOARD MEMBER
DENNIS DARR – KOSCIUSKO COUNTY DRAINAGE BOARD MEMBER
MIKE HUFFMAN – WHITLEY COUNTY RESIDENT

ALSO PRESENT

JIM MOYER – KOSCIUSKO COUNTY SURVEYOR
SANDY ANGEL – DRAINAGE BOARD SECRETARY
ANDY HELTZEL – AREA PLANNING
STEVE SCHWEISBERGER – ELKHART COUNTY SURVEYOR’S OFFICE

LANDOWNERS PRESENT

STEVE AND SHELIA CHARLTON
DEE NEFF COLE-COLE
DAVID STAYTON

CARY GRONINGER – CHAIRMAN CALLED THE MEETING TO ORDER.

BOARD FORMATION

JIM MOYER STATED THE BOARD NEEDED TO APPOINT A FIFTH BOARD MEMBER NOT AFFECTED BY THE AP JONES HEARING. MOYER RECOMMENDED THAT MIKE HUFFMAN OF WHITLEY COUNTY BE APPOINTED AS THE FIFTH MEMBER. MATT MOREHOUSE MADE A MOTION THAT MIKE HUFFMAN BE APPOINTED. LYNN LOUCKS SECONDED THE MOTION, AND ALL WERE IN FAVOR. MATT MOREHOUSE NOMINATED CARY GRONINGER AS THE CHAIRMAN. LYNN LOUCKS SECONDED THE MOTION AND ALL WERE IN FAVOR. DENNIS DARR NOMINATED MIKE MOREHOUSE AS VICE CHAIRMAN. LYNN LOUCKS SECONDED THE MOTION, AND ALL WERE IN FAVOR.

ABANDONMENT OF BAKER ARM IN WETLAND AREA

JIM MOYER EXPLAINED THAT IN THE NINETIES THE UPPER ARM OF THE AP JONES, KNOWN AS THE BAKER ARM, WAS RECONSTRUCTED THROUGH ELKHART COUNTY. THE UPPER END THERE IS UNDER WATER IN A WETLAND AREA. THERE HAVE BEEN ISSUES IN THE PAST IN MAINTAINING TILE IN A WETLAND. MOYER WOULD LIKE TO ABANDON THE BAKER ARM THAT IS IN THE WETLAND AREA, WHICH IS APPROXIMATELY 1,500 FEET. CARY GRONINGER ASKED IF THERE WAS AN OUTLET STRUCTURE THERE. MOYER SAID THERE WAS AND HE WOULD LIKE TO VACATE THE ARM UP TO THE OUTLET STRUCTURE. WE WILL CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN THE OUTLET CONTROL STRUCTURE. MATT MOREHOUSE MENTIONED THAT THE OUTLET HAS GOTTEN MUCH LARGER OVER THE YEARS. MOYER SAID HE WOULD INVESTIGATE THAT AREA. LYNN LOUCKS ASKED IF IT AFFECTED ANY FARMLAND IN THE AREA. MOYER SAID EVERYTHING DRAINS INTO THE WETLAND BOWL. LYNN LOUCKS MADE A MOTION TO ABANDON THE BAKER ARM IN THE WETLAND AREA UP TO THE CONTROL OUTLET. MATT MOREHOUSE SECONDED THE MOTION AND ALL WERE IN FAVOR.

HISTORY AND DRAIN STATUS

ON JANUARY 26, 2017, AT THE KOSCIUSKO COUNTY DRAINAGE BOARD MEETING A MOTION WAS MADE AND PASSED TO ADVERTISE FOR A MAINTENANCE ASSESSMENT HEARING ON THE AP JONES AT \$4 PER ACRE WITH A \$25 MINIMUM. IN FEBRUARY OF 2017, A LETTER WAS RECEIVED FROM ELKHART COUNTY WAIVING RIGHTS TO PARTICIPATE IN A PUBLIC HEARING ON PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE WATERSHED. ON FEBRUARY 23, 2017 AT THE KOSCIUSKO COUNTY DRAINAGE BOARD MEETING, THE SURVEYOR SAID HE NEEDED MORE TIME TO PREPARE FOR A HEARING ON THIS DRAIN. ON JANUARY 26, 2023 AT A DRAINAGE BOARD MEETING, THE SURVEYOR SAID THE AP JONES WAS A JOINT DRAIN WITH ELKHART COUNTY, AND ASKED THE BOARD TO APPOINT TWO MEMBERS TO THE JOINT BOARD. MOYER FEELS HE IS WORKING WITH VERY LIMITED INFORMATION REGARDING THE HISTORY OF THIS DRAIN. THE LAST MAINTENANCE HEARING WAS IN 1968. THE DRAIN COLLECTS \$1,347.21 ANNUALLY AND ELKHART COUNTY PAYS 37% OF THAT, WITH KOSCIUSKO PICKING UP THE REMAINING 63%. THE ANNUAL COST TO MAINTAIN THIS DRAIN IS APPROXIMATELY \$7,800. THE OPEN DITCH IS IN MUCK GROUND AND NEEDS MORE REGULAR MAINTENANCE, AND A LARGE AREA NEEDS TO BE DEBRUSHED AND MAINTAINED ON THE SPRAY PROGRAM.

CHANGE IN WATERSHED

JIM MOYER SAID THE SURVEYOR'S OFFICE PREPARED A WATERSHED AREA AND CALCULATED THE COST FOR EACH PROPERTY OWNER IN THAT AREA. NOTICES WERE MAILED OUT NOTIFYING PROPERTY OWNERS OF THIS. AFTER THE NOTICES WERE SENT OUT, A FLAW IN THE COMPUTER PROGRAM WAS IDENTIFIED. THE WATERSHED AREA HAS BEEN SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCED AND A NUMBER OF PROPERTY OWNERS WERE REMOVED FROM THE WATERSHED. MOST OF THESE WERE IN THE BONAR LAKE AREA WHICH WAS DETERMINED TO DRAINS INTO LAKE WAWASEE. BASED ON THE REVISED WATERSHED, WE WILL NEED TO RECALCULATE THE COST FOR EACH PROPERTY OWNER.

ADVERTISED RATE DETERMINATION

JIM MOYER PRESENTED VARIOUS OPTIONS FOR RATES PER ACRE AND MINIMUMS. HE ASKED THE BOARD TO DETERMINE THE RATE AND MINIMUM THEY WANT TO ADVERTISE. CARY GRONINGER CLARIFIED THAT \$7,800 WAS THE ANNUAL COST TO MAINTAIN THE DRAIN. MOYER SAID THERE IS 5,800 FEET OF DRAIN THAT NEEDS DEBRUSHED AND PUT ON BRUSH CONTROL TREATMENT IN THE NEXT TWO YEARS. DEBRUSHING WOULD BE ABOUT \$1,800. 4,000 FEET OF THE OPEN DITCH NEEDS TO BE CLEANED IN THE NEXT TWO YEARS. THE DRAIN IS CURRENTLY IN DEBT \$4,477.20, WHICH IS OVER FIVE YEARS AT THE CURRENT RATE OF \$1.25 AND ACRE WITH A \$5 MINIMUM. CARY GRONINGER ASKED IF THERE WERE ANY REMONSTRATORS. MOYER SAID MOST OF THE REMONSTRATIONS HE RECEIVED WERE NO LONGER IN THE WATERSHED. HE HAD ONE, WADE TURNER, ON THE EAST SIDE THAT FEELS HIS WATER DOESN'T FLOW INTO THE AP JONES. MR. TURNER WASN'T ASSESSED IN THE PREVIOUS WATERSHED, BUT WILL BE IN THE NEW ONE. MOYER SAID HE HAS CHECKED THE PROPERTY AND FEELS IT DOES DRAIN INTO THIS WATERSHED. DAVID STAYTON, A LANDOWNER IN THE WATERSHED IN THE FAR EAST OF THE WATERSHED WAS PRESENT AND STATED HE WAS IN SUPPORT OF THE ASSESSMENT. HE EXPRESSED APPRECIATION OF THE WORK THE BOARD HAS DONE AND IS WILLING TO WORK WITH THEM TO HELP MAINTAIN THE DRAIN. CARY GRONINGER MENTIONED THAT THE BOARD SHOULD ALSO TAKE IN TO CONSIDERATION THAT THE DRAIN IS CURRENTLY IN DEBT, AND WE WOULD LIKE TO ELIMINATE THAT. AFTER MUCH DISCUSSION, DENNIS DARR MADE A MOTION TO ADVERTISE THE RATE OF \$6 PER ACRE WITH A \$40 MINIMUM AND 4 YEAR COLLECTION. MATT MOREHOUSE SECONDED THE MOTION AND ALL WERE IN FAVOR.

DATE FOR PUBLIC HEARING

THE DATE OF THE NEXT PUBLIC HEARING WAS SET FOR AUGUST 28, 2025 AT 9:00 AM.
THE SURVEYOR’S OFFICE WILL SEND OUT THE NEEDED NOTIFICATIONS.

ADJOURN:

BEING OF NO FURTHER BUSINESS, LYNN LOUCKS MADE A MOTION TO ADJOURN. MATT MOREHOUSE SECONDED THE MOTION AND ALL WERE IN FAVOR.

KOSCIUSKO/ELKHART JOINT COUNTY DRAINAGE BOARD

CARY GRONINGER – CHAIRMAN
KOSCIUSKO COUNTY

LYNN LOUCKS – ELKHART COUNTY

MATT MOREHOUSE – VICE CHAIRMAN
ELKHART COUNTY

MIKE HUFFMAN – WHITLEY COUNTY

DENNIS DARR – KOSCIUSKO COUNTY