



Meeting Minutes
December 15, 2023
Zoom Call

Executive Committee Members

+ Caitlin Stewart, President
Jessica Armstrong, Vice President
Joann Burke, Secretary
Katy Kemmeren, Treasurer
Alice Halloran, Member at Large

Division Representatives

Rebecca Campbell, Division I
Maren Stoddard, Division V
Corrina Aldrich, Division VI
Travis Ferry, Division VII

Absent

Jason Cuddeback, Division II
Carla Yaw, Division III
Shawn Murphy, Division IV
Olivia Calandra, Division VIII



Minutes

- I. **Call to order** – President Stewart called the meeting to order at 12:04 p.m.
- II. **Frank Bratt Scholarship** – Campbell reported she received three applications for the December round of Frank Bratt Memorial Scholarship. Alex Marks submitted an application requesting \$250.00 for Deer Steward I Training, Andrea Centola submitted an application requesting \$500.00 for ES 5100 Geographical Information Systems Course, and Shawn Murphy submitted an application requesting \$325 for Wood Badge Leadership Training. The Division Representatives ranked the applicants.
 - **A motion was made by Halloran, seconded by Armstrong to approve the December Frank Bratt Memorial Scholarship award winners: Alex Marks in the amount of \$250; Andrea Centola in the amount of \$500; and Shawn Murphy in the amount of \$325. Murphy abstained. Carried.**
- III. **Water Quality Symposium** – Armstrong stated she wanted to discuss not for this year but potentially next year increasing the registration fee for Water Quality Symposium. She was confused on how the registration fee was determined. She thought you took the cost of rooms, food, and any other expenses into consideration. She stated the cost of food has increased and we should look into raising the cost of the registration for Districts in the future. We are giving two freebies to Districts this year to attend WQS.

She suggested keeping the expenses on the radar to see if we should raise the registration fee at all. Stewart responded that she thinks it would be a good idea to increase registration fees a little bit for this year. She stated that we are seeing an increase in inflation and hotel costs and districts have enjoyed a level cost in registration for years. Plus, they are receiving two free full weeks of registration. She was in favor of raising registration fees this year. Halloran stated she wondered how this will affect some districts as they complained about Conservation Skills Workshop costs, and she wondered if anyone has gotten any feedback at all. Armstrong agreed with Halloran, and she wondered if we received pushback would people want to attend but she wondered if we only raised it \$50 then see how districts react. Out of the surveys from last year, there were not any feedback on costs except for someone who appreciated the one freebie per county. Aldrich stated with the two "freebies" that should offset a slight increase and \$50 seems very reasonable. Stoddard stated she did not think \$50 was not reasonable to ask. For her division, managers and board members value sending technicians for training so they have not had any cost issues. She suggested we ask for more detailed information on the surveys on why people have complaints about the costs of trainings like Conservation Skills Workshop. Campbell asked what the true cost is of what it costs to send someone to Water Quality Symposium and the cost of what we are asking. Armstrong stated that the rooms were \$116 per night, and we charged \$520 for a single room and \$420 for a double room with a roommate for the entire event. If everyone stays 3 nights plus the food. You are looking at approximately \$150 we cover plus we are covering two free people that must be factored in. She felt covering two free people and raising the fee this year would not be that big of a deal. Armstrong stated as a manager, she always pushes her employees to attend trainings no matter the costs because it's valuable for them but other district managers might see it differently. Stoddard stated you might get people stating that we have all this money from the 4-Hour Online Fund so why increase the cost. At some point you must pull off the band aid and increase the fee. We do not know how long we will have this extra funding and if in 5 years the money is gone, and you must make a huge increase in the fee that would be more dramatic. If we can increase the fee in small increments and they realize they are getting the two free tickets it will be fine. CDEA board and Division Representatives can explain this. Campbell stated the two free tickets can cover half the offices around her. Everyone is understaffed so she does not see there being a problem raising the fee. This event is a terrific opportunity that people recognize, but they are receiving two free tickets. Stoddard stated that they are receiving \$520 more than last year. Halloran stated it is not a problem with her district because she will send her staff to anything, but we have all this money so why don't we spend it on this. Armstrong stated another thing she was taking into consideration is that DoubleTree is not always going to be able to fit all of us and we are having that issue this year. We have looked at bigger venues and they cost more so she wondered if we increased the fee this year that it will balance out if we move to a larger venue. She asked should we discuss this at the annual meeting this year, that we are not going to fit in at this location anymore and we will see an increase in costs. This year we covered two people and next year we may

only be able to cover one person or two people but must raise the fee. Halloran stated the cost is reasonable. The conference her and Armstrong attended in the fall was only 2 or 3 nights and it was not as good as this one. Armstrong agreed. Halloran stated \$50 is reasonable. Stoddard added attendees are getting continuing education credits as well. Armstrong stated we can increase the fee \$50 with an increase in inflation then bring up at the annual meeting the potential the change in location and increase in price next year. Stewart stated that Murphy brought up that Amanda Barber was reviewing our budget and she questioned how sustainable the Water Quality Symposium is at the current price right now. Stewart stated if we did not have 4-Hour Online Funds we would be sunk. 4-Hour Online Funds are not always going to be there but she does not know that. She felt that managers are responsible for putting training expenses into their training plan that is a requirement to meet Performance Measures. Your staff must have a training plan and there must be funding in your budget for this. This is a CDEA function, and we bust our butts for these people she was in support of a \$50 increase.

- **A motion was made by Stoddard, seconded by Campbell to increase 2024 Water Quality Symposium registration fee \$50. Carried.**

Discussion ensued regarding NRCS registration.

- IV. Donation** – Stewart received a request from Jessica Verrigni to send a \$500 donation to the Ward W. O’Hara Agriculture Museum for hosting the Sediment Control Certificate Program Review course. Stewart shared Verrigni’s email – “What a venue! They have a great space, and their museum is amazing. They do not charge a fee for room rental so we would like to make a donation to the museum through the NYSCDEA (Certificate program funds of course) I was thinking \$500 would be a nice donation for using their facilities for 2 days. How do we go about making this happen?” Stewart stated this is like Tom Eskildsen’s request for a donation to the fire department for using their facility for Conservation Skills Workshop. CDEA has historically done this, and we do have the funds in the 4-Hour Online Fund. Halloran asked how much we gave to the fire department. Burke stated she thought \$250 but we did not make a motion. Cuddeback just requested it. After the meeting Eskildsen sent a revised budget form for Conservation Skills Workshop. Campbell stated that Murphy responded to an email to her and Stewart he stated that when Conservation Skills was held in Cortland, they used the Cortland Grange Building and the Cortland Fire Hall and the standard donation was \$100 for the week but sometimes if they only used a spot once or twice they would send \$50. Stewart found the 2024 budget for Conservation Skills Workshop and stated they have a budget line item for room usage donation for \$500. Stewart asked what everyone felt about \$250 a day. Is it too high or too low? Halloran asked how many days was the \$500 in Conservation Skills Workshop going to be for? Stewart stated she did not know because it depended on how many classes would be held at the hotel. Halloran stated she thought it was too high. Stoddard stated she could speak for the Agriculture Museum venue as she attended the training. They did a tremendous job

accommodating us. She felt \$500 was appropriate as we were there multiple days. Aldrich stated case by case basis is not a bad way to address it. Halloran stated her only concern is from now on we will be paying \$250 a day donation. Stewart stated she doubts they will get many requests because not many people read the minutes. Stewart thanked Halloran for her great comments. She believed it should be on an individual basis. Stewart stated since she has been on the board since 2016, they have always gotten room donation requests from Conservation Skills Workshop, and this is the first time we have received one from the Certificate program review class. Kemmeren asked where the funds will be pulled from. Stewart stated Verrigni asked for the funds be pulled from the certificate program funds.

- **A motion was made by Campbell, seconded by Stewart, to approve a donation in the amount of \$500 to Ward W. O’Hara Agriculture Museum for the use of their facility to hold a NYS Erosion and Sediment Control Certificate Program review class.**

V. Adjournment

- **A motion was made by Ferry, seconded by Halloran to adjourn the meeting at 2:38 p.m. Carried.**

Respectfully submitted,



Joann Burke

CDEA Secretary