

CHAPTER FOUR

DISTRICT DIRECTOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES

Section 1. District Director Duties

A conservation district is a governmental subdivision of the state with statutory powers and responsibilities; districts have the authority to address natural resource and conservation issues. As locally elected public officials, district directors are responsible for the operation and management of their district. Directors develop district policy, which is implemented by their staff. Primary duties performed by conservation district directors, either as individuals or as a member of a district board of directors, include:

- Prepare for district board meetings in advance by reading previous minutes and current financial statements
- Attend and engage in board meetings and district functions
- Arrange for capturing accurate records (board minutes) of all proceedings, resolutions, regulations, and orders issued or adopted (see Appendix D)
- Oversee the management of all district-owned funds, facilities, and equipment
- Establish and review district policies
- Read, understand, approve, and sign all conservation district grant agreements
- Oversee the preparation of an annual budget and appropriations act and maintenance of an approved bookkeeping system that reflects all income and expenditures
- Oversee the preparation of an annual financial statement and provide for a biennial audit
- Oversee district staff, including (see Chapter Ten):
 - o Hire personnel based on district personnel policy
 - o Review staff's performance yearly and provide administrative supervision
 - o Draft and review annual work agreements
- Attend and engage in MACD State Council meetings, region meetings, and the summer and fall conferences
- Participate in training sessions conducted by MDARD and its partners

- Remain informed of legislation and policies of local, state, and federal government about conservation issues
- Maintain contact with local, state, and national public officials to keep them informed of the district's activities and conservation needs
- Raise awareness of the district's mission, products, and services
- Sponsor and actively participate in public education activities to stay informed of local natural resource conservation issues
- Develop a succession plan for recruiting qualified board members (see Chapter Twelve)

Section 2. District Director Officer Designations

A majority of the directors (three) constitutes a quorum of the board, and the concurrence of a majority in any matter within their duties is required for the board's determination. A director is entitled to expenses, including traveling expenses necessarily incurred in the discharge of his or her duties. A director may be paid a per diem for time spent undertaking his or her duties as a director (CD Law - Section 9307 (5); Appendix A).

CD Law (Section 9307 (1); Appendix A) states: "a conservation district board shall consist of five directors" and "the board shall designate a chairperson annually"; this is the only board position that a district must designate. However, MDARD strongly recommends conservation district boards select officer designations for vice-chair, treasurer, and secretary. These offices have essential functions, and appointment to those offices spreads the duties over the entire board and not on one individual. Districts may combine these offices (e.g. secretary/treasurer) or leave the offices separate. The board designates the duties of each board position (CD Law Section 9307 (7); Appendix A). Typically, the duties and responsibilities are as follows:

Duties of the Chair:

- Conduct district meetings in compliance with the Open Meetings Act (OMA, see Chapter Thirteen)
- Preserve order and decorum during meetings (see Appendix E for Robert's

Rules of Order for beginners)

- When necessary, sign all acts, contracts, and proceedings of the district
- Call for a vote on all properly presented motions
- Vote in case of a tie vote, roll call vote, or vote by ballot
- Receive input from other board members, district manager, NRCS DC, and others to assemble topics for the meeting agenda (preparation of the agenda is often designated to the district manager)
- Act as or appoint another director to be a liaison for the board and the district employees

Duties of the Vice-Chair:

- Become familiar with the responsibilities of the chairperson
- Preside as chairperson in their absence

Duties of the Secretary:

- Become familiar with the responsibilities of the chairperson
- Preside as chairperson in the absence of both the chairperson and vice-chair
- Review all written reports, including grant proposals
- Ensure all district meeting minutes are recorded accurately, in compliance with OMA, signed, and submitted to MDARD (see Appendix D)
- Oversee the preparation of the annual report (see Chapter Eight)

Duties of the Treasurer:

- Review all financial reports prior to the monthly board meeting and be prepared to report to the board on the district's financial standing (see Appendix F for a list of accounting terms)
- Review and sign all bank statements (for separation of duties, bank statements can be mailed directly to the board treasurer) and bank reconciliation reports
- Review the district's bank account monthly (obtain access to online banking)
- Monitor and approve financial revenue by reviewing each deposit

Section 3: Associate Directors

Conservation districts are encouraged to include associate directors onto their board of

directors. Associate directors have all the privileges of being a director, except they cannot make or approve motions. Associate directors bring a great deal of knowledge and insight to the district and, through participation and attendance, understand the district well to become a board director when needed or interested.

Section 4. Conservation District Policy

The board is entrusted with the authority to establish policies to govern the conservation district. Board policy establishes the parameters and guidelines for board directors, committees, and staff. All policy decisions should be made by majority vote of the board and recorded in meeting minutes. Adopted policies should be reviewed annually. The board should ensure policies have the following qualities:

1. Policies are thorough and complete, covering all likely scenarios and questions.

Remember policies are:

- Answers to questions before they are asked
- Solutions to situations before they arise
- Defined set of procedures to follow – before they are needed
- The ‘rules of the game’ and define who must follow them

2. Policy language is clear, succinct, and understandable

3. Policies are fair and equitable

4. Policies are legal and current with the latest regulations and laws. They provide for privacy, security, and confidentiality when required or as prudent.

Required List of District Policies:

The following is a list of subjects on which conservation districts must adopt policy:

- Freedom of Information Act (FOIA): as local units of government, districts are subject to FOIA requests and must adhere to all FOIA laws. A FOIA policy must be available on the district’s main internet presence, often the district’s website and/or Facebook page (see Chapter Thirteen)
- Credit Card: required by law even if a district has no credit card. An example is found in the CD Uniform Accounting Procedures Manual (found on MACD’s website)

- Investment Practices: required by law even if a district has no investments (see Chapter Thirteen). An example is found in the CD Uniform Accounting Procedures Manual

Recommended List of Employment and Board/District Operations Policies:

The following, recommended by MDARD and MACD, is a list of subjects on which conservation districts should adopt policy (many of which can be rolled into one personnel policy; MACD has a personnel policy template for CDs to use):

- Anti-nepotism
- Anti-sexual harassment
- Board policies and procedures (attendance, authority of board members, subcommittees of the board, public comment)
- Bonding
- Capitalization
- CD inventory
- Check signing
- Classification of employment levels
- Conflict of interest (board and staff, see below)
- Disciplinary and grievance
- Emergency and safety procedures
- Employee conduct
- Employee performance evaluations
- Employer responsibility
- Equal opportunity employment
- Fundraising/gifts to and from the district
- Orientation program
- Overtime/compensatory time
- Partner relations
- Payment authorization
- Payroll procedures

- Personnel records
- Petty cash
- Privacy rights
- Provisionary status
- Purchasing
- Segregation of duties
- Smoke/drug free workspace
- Structure of the district (chain of command, delegation of duties to district manager)
- Travel reimbursement
- Vacation, leave, and benefits
- Vehicle use
- Telework/remote work
- Volunteer
- Whistleblower
- Work hours/office hours

Conflict of Interest:

Staff and board members should perform their official duties in a manner free from conflict of interest. The maintenance of unusually high standards of honesty, integrity, impartiality, and professional conduct by district employees and board directors is essential to ensure the proper performance of district business as well as to earn and keep public confidence in the district.

Section IV: Bonding Policy

All district directors and employees entrusted with funds or property shall obtain a minimum \$10,000 surety bond (see CD Law, Appendix A).