

## **Chapter 11: Annual Meetings**

An annual meeting (IC 14-32-4-6) of all land occupiers in the district is to be held during the first quarter (January, February or March) of each calendar year. The purpose of the meeting is for the supervisors to “make a full and an accurate report of the activities and financial affairs of the district since the previous annual meeting”. A second required purpose for the meeting, is to conduct an election for any vacant elected supervisor positions.

### **Sec. 1 General Planning Process**

#### **Planning Committee**

A well planned meeting will present a positive image of the district to all in attendance. A planning committee should be established well in advance (2 – 3 months is a good rule of thumb; though venue, speakers, and caterers are often booked earlier) to plan the meeting details. The committee will recommend the date, time and location of the meeting, as well as plan the program. Recommendations for the annual meeting should then be presented to the SWCD governing body (supervisors) for approval prior to entering into any commitments regarding the meeting.

#### **Accessibility**

The District Law (IC 14-32) requires that SWCD meetings be held in accessible (Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant) locations. It is crucial that attention to this detail be given when holding the District Annual Meeting. For more information, see Chapter 9, entitled “Legal and Liability Issues”, Section 10 “ADA Guidelines” of this manual.

#### **Advertisement / Notification**

According to the Accounting and Uniform Compliance Guidelines Manual for Special Districts as stated in Chapter 9 <https://www.in.gov/sboa/files/Special-Districts-Manual-Chapter-9-2014.pdf>, the meeting is required to be advertised by two “legal” notices in a local newspaper of general circulation. The first notice must appear at least fourteen (14) days before the annual meeting date, and the second notice must appear at least six (6) days before the meeting date. There must be an interval of at least six (6) days between the two insertions. To allow for a cancellation, an alternate date may appear on the legal advertisement. If a meeting cannot be held on the advertised date or the alternate date, the meeting must be re-advertised. Public funds may be used for paying legal advertising costs. The SWCD qualifies for the government rate. Keep documentation of the notices locally.

Other forms of advertising and publicity (e.g. direct mail letters, news stories, additional newspaper ads, radio & TV, etc.) should also be considered to better publicize the meeting and increase the attendance.

#### **Program**

There are two legally required elements for the annual meeting program; (a) report of the activities and financial affairs of the district since the previous meeting, and (b) conduct an election for any vacant elected supervisor positions. Of course, a quality meeting will go beyond the bare minimum legal requirements. This is the district's opportunity to tell their story, report accomplishments and educate those in attendance on relevant conservation topics. The program should be entertaining, as well as informative.

## **Sec. 2 Annual Report**

The district law (IC 14-32-4-6) requires that "the supervisors shall make a full and an accurate report of the activities and financial affairs of the district since the previous annual meeting". The law also requires that "The supervisors shall provide a copy of the annual report presented at the meeting to the board (State Soil Conservation Board) and, upon request, to: (1) other cooperating agencies; (2) residents of the district; and (3) any other individual or entity that requests a copy of the annual report."

The annual report is an opportunity to report to the public and contributors on the previous year's activities, conservation accomplishment and financial status. It should be utilized to educate the reader on issues relevant to the district and conservation in general.

When preparing the financial affairs, please also note the state examiner (State Board of Accounts) requires annual financial reports covering the full period of each fiscal year. These reports shall be prepared, verified, and filed with the state examiner not later than sixty (60) days after the close of each fiscal year via Gateway. The reports must be filed electronically.

## **Sec. 3 Procedure for Conducting an Election at the annual meeting**

The district law also requires that an election be held at the annual meeting for the purpose of filling any vacancies in the elected supervisor position either by the expiration of an existed elected supervisors term of office and/or to fill a vacancy of an elected supervisor position that may have occur during the year due to death, resignation, etc The complete details on preparing for and conducting the election of one or more supervisors at the annual meeting is provided in section 3 of chapter 3 of this manual. Below is a brief description of the election process:

The district law (IC 14-32) requires the SWCD board chairman to appoint an Election Committee in October, and submit the names of the committee to the State Soil Conservation Board by November 1. The election committee is to be made up of a supervisor, as committee chairman, and two (2) interested citizens.

The election committee's duties include:

- selecting qualified individuals as prospective nominees to fill any vacancies that exist among the elected supervisors of the district,
- contact and ascertain the willingness and ability of each individual to serve if elected,

- submit the list of nominees with the qualifications for certification and printing of a sample ballot to the State Soil Conservation Board by December 1,
- place the names of the prospective nominees selected in nomination at the annual meeting and provide the opportunity for additional nominations to be made from the floor,
- Ask for any nominations from the floor and provide ample time for individuals to speak up. You may be challenged if not enough time is given.
- If individuals are nominated, after nominations are closed, allow any nominees from the floor to speak to the public. The election committee should facilitate this process and outline ground rules. Ground rules may include a time limit and items of discussion that may be presented, such as their qualifications by training and experience to perform the duties. The election committee may also ask if they meet the requirements as outlined above.
- If there are no nominations from the floor, the election proceedings may continue.

Election proceedings:

(A) if only one (1) candidate is nominated, allow for the election of the sole candidate by the land occupiers by a show of hands; and

(B) if more than one (1) candidate is nominated, distribute a ballot to each land occupier present at the meeting.

- if a ballot is distributed, collect and count the ballots after each land occupier present at the meeting has had an opportunity to vote. Then collect and count the ballots after each land occupier present at the meeting has had an opportunity to vote.
- report the results of the election to the chairman

\*Per State Soil Conservation Board guidance, noted in the July 2020 minutes, if at any point a candidate chooses to withdraw from the election, the candidate must submit their withdrawal for candidacy in written form for documentation purposes.