

**WHEELER SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES**

February 25, 2021

Meeting location: TELECONFERENCE

To join the meeting from a computer, tablet or smartphone:

<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/513840053>

To dial in using a phone:

United States: +1 (312) 757-3121

Access Code: 513-840-053

The board meeting was called to order by Director Collins at 6:12 p.m. by his watch.

Directors

Jeremiah Holmes
Wayne Lindquist
Jason Davis

Assoc. Directors

Employees

Chase Schultz
Cassandra Newton
Brooke Moore
Bodie Brown

Others Present

Debbi Bunch, MJDBCWC
Damon Brosnan, NRCS

AGENCY REPORTS

Mid John Day – Bridge Creek Watershed Council, Debbi Bunch: Debbi stated that two of the three completion reports noted in her report are complete and she is waiting on match documentation for the third. She advised that the Watershed Council has a meeting tentatively scheduled for March 11th, but she is waiting on one of the board members to confirm availability.

NRCS, Damon Brosnan: Damon stated he just sent publication to the papers to announce the April 16th signup deadline for EQIP, which is the North Slope Ochoco forestry funding pool for Wheeler SWCD and also includes the recently awarded RCPP, which takes in Butte Creek, Kahler, and Winlock funding pools. Damon advised the general signup for CSP was extended to April 30th. Damon stated the new soil conservationist who replaced Abby will be starting March 29th and Jessica is staying busy getting cultural resource surveys completed.

Debbi asked Damon to send her the press release to include in the SWCD newsletter that will be going out in March.

DISTRICT STAFF REPORTS

District Manager: Chase stated that his written report is current.

Chairman Holmes asked how the Circle Bar project turned out. Chase advised that it worked out alright. Director Lindquist asked if the new owners will continue project work and Chase advised that the current and new owners are in the process of working out contract terms, but he has had a few conversations with the new owners.

Field Tech II: Bodie advised that he attended the Oregon State Weed Board meeting and the OSWB will be opening an emergency grant cycle with \$500,000 available in funding, which the deadline for applications will be in April. Bodie stated the budget was reduced significantly considering that in 2020 there were a total of 58 grants awarded with a total funding of \$1.65 million. Bodie advised that there is approximately \$9,000 remaining for biocontrols and he is confident additional funding will be available through APHIS.

Field Tech I: Brooke stated her monthly report is current.

Director Davis asked about the work on 2017 and 2018 contracts noted in Brooke's report. Chase advised these are RCPP juniper projects that were delayed due to cultural resource surveys and the contractor misjudging the progress. Brooke advised that the 2017 and 2018 projects are almost finished. Chairman Holmes asked if the projects were handcuts or machine cuts. Chase stated the remaining projects are machine cut and pile.

MONTHLY BUSINESS

MINUTES: The February 11, 2021 special meeting minutes were presented for review. **Due to not having a quorum, the minutes could not be approved.**

The February 11, 2021 executive minutes were presented for review. **Due to not having a quorum, the minutes could not be approved.**

BUDGET EXPENSE REPORT: The budget report dated February 16, 2021 was presented for review.

Chairman Holmes asked how the District is sitting cash wise. Chase advised he has not had time to review the latest budget report. Chairman Holmes asked Chase if the fund requests noted in his report totaling approximately \$50,000 would be District funds and Chase confirmed.

Director Davis stated the TA Contract Services/Wages on line 34 of the General Fund Expenditures has exceeded the budgeted amount and asked if there are additional expenditures the District will have before the end of the year. Chase and Cassi both advised they are unsure of the allocation to that line item without reviewing the budget folder, but they will advise the Board in detail at the next meeting.

Director Lindquist asked if the District received the grant funding for the telework equipment purchased. Cassi advised the funds had been received and covered the full expenditure. Director Lindquist asked why the expense reduced the budgeted amount and Cassi advised that the grant funding received is allocated to line 19, Misc. Grants on the General Fund Resources budget page. She explained that all revenues and expenditures must be allocated to the corresponding budget category and having expenditures fully covered by grant funding does not eliminate the expenditure from the budget reporting.

Due to not having a quorum, the budget expense report could not be approved.

BILLS: The check register dated February 17, 2021 – February 25, 2021 was reviewed.

Director Davis **moved that the bills dated February 17, 2021 – February 25, 2021 be approved**, Director Lindquist seconded the motion. The **motion carried unanimously.**

OLD BUSINESS

CATERER COMPENSATION REVIEW: Chase advised that per the Board's decision in October, he reached out to Ginger Hunt for follow up on the adjusted servings and per-plate cost. He stated that Ginger is content with the current agreement, so no further action is required at this time.

ANNUAL MEETING: After a brief discussion, the directors present suggested doing the annual meeting virtually and asked the staff's preference. The staff agreed that the virtual option would be best due to the uncertainty of continued pandemic restrictions. The date for the annual meeting was tentatively set for April 29th to allow time to approve and adopt a resolution and the staff to prepare for the virtual setting. Chairman Holmes suggested instead of having a speaker, having the Bodie, Brooke, and Debbi speak on the projects in place and any future plans. They agreed.

NEW BUSINESS

MEETING LOCATION: Director Davis stated he spoke with Sandi Hiatt, who advised that it is ultimately up to the Board of Directors as to location of where the meetings are held, as long as it is within the District's boundary. She further advised that it is best to have internet and phone capabilities, but suggested that the location should at least have phone capabilities; however, it is not required. Cassi stated that she would prefer to have both internet and phone due to the difficulty of knowing when people join the virtual meeting if only using the phone.

Chairman Holmes stated that it is convenient for the staff to have laptop capabilities, so questions are answered throughout the meeting versus having to wait between meetings. He further stated that the ability to have other agencies partake in the meetings is beneficial. He advised that the process is under way to have internet installed at The Rock in Spray, so connectivity will improve.

The travel distance to Spray versus Service Creek was discussed. All present agreed the distance was not an issue.

Cassi suggested speaking to Debbie Greninger regarding the availability of The Rock before the Board votes to approve the change in location. Chairman Holmes suggested requesting to hold District meetings at The Rock at least through the end of the fiscal year.

Cassi asked Chairman Holmes if the Spray Fire Hall will have internet when it is finished and if that would be an option to hold meetings. He advised that there is not currently internet available, but it may in the future.

Debbi asked if the Board of Directors would consider making a donation to the new location. Directors Lindquist and Davis stated they would approve to make a donation in the same amount as the District is currently paying for the Service Creek location. Director Lindquist suggested donating for the meetings that have already been held at The Rock.

WATERSHED SFA: Director Lindquist asked if the Watershed runs on a fiscal or calendar year. Debbi advised that the SFA is based on a biennial schedule, which is two fiscal years due to the capacity grant cycle.

Chairman Holmes asked why the fuel charges are highlighted on the last pages. Cassi advised that the last three pages are Judy's tracking, which is provided to her to compile the SFA with. Cassi stated that she includes Judy's tracking in the SFA to show that the *cash on hand* reported on the SFA balances with Judy's records. Debbi explained that the fuel charges are highlighted to help Judy track those charges per the requirements of OWEB. She further explained that OWEB requires a mileage log to be submitted, not a fuel receipt; so, when staff makes a fuel purchase, it is posted to the corresponding position's program. A mileage log is then submitted to Judy for that amount. Chairman Holmes stated that the amounts would never zero out with this method of tracking. Cassi advised that Judy often has side notes on the spreadsheets to advise staff of the balances that have not been submitted to OWEB.

Director Lindquist asked if there was a report from prior years to compare the SFA to at the end of this biennium. Cassi advised that there are no reports strictly for the Watershed Council from prior years, other than the OWEB Expense Tracking Sheets provided by Judy. She further explained that there would be no report of overages/shortages for the *cash on hand* due to the tracking sheets being for specifically for grant funds and Judy just started providing all transaction records for the Watershed Council. Cassi stated that accurate comparisons will not be available until next biennium and going forward, so the current SFA will be the base for reporting.

Debbi advised that Judy stated the important amount to focus on is the *cash on hand*; however, her and Cassi are working on shifting that focus point to the incoming funds and forecasting through the biennium and further to ensure expenses are covered by Watershed funds, not District funds and reimbursements. Debbi stated that in the past she has not had any knowledge of the overall financials for the Watershed, but she is now tracking expected funds to help incorporate that into the SFA. Cassi advised that the Watershed likely has post-grant funds, but Judy does not separately track these funds and if she does, the reporting is not provided to staff. All post-grant funds are held in the District's Municipal Money Market account until expenditures occur, but tracking of individual grants or agencies are not provided.

LIFE INSURANCE: Chairman Holmes advised that this item can be discussed but decisions are tabled until the next meeting. Cassi stated that WHA Insurance was a vendor at the SDAO Conference at the beginning of the month and they mailed out a life insurance pamphlet to attending districts, which she included in the meeting packet. Cassi

explained that WHA Insurance offers life insurance to special district employees at no cost to the districts and no requirement of participation, so not all employees have to have a policy.

Chairman Holmes asked if the employees are interested in this benefit. Cassi advised that she had not gathered input from the staff. She stated she included the item on the agenda because for the District to offer this benefit, an approval from the Board of Directors is required. Chairman Holmes suggested that Cassi asked the staff if they are interested and if any are, then she should reach out for more information from WHA Insurance prior to the next meeting.

BLUE MOUNTAIN LAND TRUST POLICY: Chairman Holmes advised that this can be discussed but decisions are tabled until next meeting. He asked if there would be interest of additional conservation easements in Wheeler County. Chase stated there already is interest.

Cassi explained that the applications submitted by BMLT for funding of conservation easements are scored with points. Points are awarded for the local conservation districts having a policy in place and long-range business plan that encompasses conservation easements. She advised that the current long-range business plan encompasses conservation easements, but she misunderstood that additional points are awarded for also having a policy in place. Cassi explained that BMLT is pushing for the District to adopt a policy, so funding opportunities are greater. She stated that there is nothing in the policy template BMLT provided that the District does not already include in work plans or policies, but the application requires a standalone policy to be in place.

MANAGER RECRUITMENT: Chairman Holmes asked if advertisement of the position was out. Cassi advised that she had posted the ad to the District website and Facebook page, iMatch, Indeed, SDAO, OWEB, NACD, The Times-Journal, Wheeler County News, East Oregonian, Hermiston Herald, Blue Mountain, Central Oregonian, Eastern Oregon Marketplace, Conservation Job Board, and Oregon Conservation Partnership. She stated that the cost for these listings were slightly more than the suggested budget, but Chase approved the overage. She advised the total expense to date is \$696.50.

Chairman Holmes suggested to Chase that he communicate with Vice-Chairman Collins, the Chair of the Personnel Committee and schedule a meeting in March to review applicants and advertising. He further suggested to Chase to advise Vice-Chairman Collins when complete applications are received, then Chase and he can schedule meetings for the Personnel Committee.

OTHER BUSINESS NOT LISTED

NEXT MEETING DATE: The next regular meeting date will be on **March 25, 2021** at 6:00 pm. Cassi will provide notice of whether the meeting will be held in person or virtually.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned by Chairman Holmes at 7:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Cassandra Newton



Jeremiah Holmes, Chair



Chase Schultz, District Manager