



Wheeler Soil and Water Conservation District

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Board of Directors
Meeting Minutes
January 25, 2024

Directors

James Collins
Jason Davis
Brent Johnson
Dave Hunt
Anna Thomas
Ross Ryno

Employees

Cassandra Newton
Ayla Morehouse
Kristen Neuburger

Others Present

DelRae Ferguson, NRCS
Alex Makic, US-FS
Matthew Brown, ODF
Carmen Oakes

The board meeting was called to order by Chair Collins at 6:07 p.m. by the clock on the computer.

1. Agency Reports

a. DelRae Ferguson, NRCS

DelRae stated that she is working on contracting EQIP and RCPP for FY24 while trying to get site visits conducted. She advised that she hired a Natural Resource Specialist that will be starting on February 12th. DelRae also advised that she will be hosting the Wheeler County NRCS Local Workgroup virtually on March 4th at 10am.

b. Matthew Brown, ODF

Matthew stated that Justin Tryon will be leaving and the position will be re-ran.

c. Alex Makic, US-FS

Alex advised that they will be working in the Jackson Watershed and a fish passage grant was submitted.

2. District Reports

a. District Manager, Cassi Newton

Cassi stated her report in the packet. She highlighted that the staff transitioned to ArcPro for mapping after contemplating the change over the past couple years. Cassi advised that Ayla being skilled in both ArcMap and ArcPro has allowed for staff to have in-house training through the transition. She shared her appreciation for Ayla's contributions to the team.

b. Conservation Manager, Ayla Morehouse

Ayla stated her report is current with the exception that she reported there were no submissions received for the Know Your Enemy Contest, but three submissions were received after her report was written. Ayla explained some of the beneficial features that ArcPro offers.

c. Conservation Technician II, Brooke Moore

Brooke stated that her report is current. She advised that her focus upon return from leave is CREP contracts and preparing for the spring OWEB open solicitation.

d. Conservation Technician I, Kristen Neuburger

Kristen stated her report is current. She advised that she just received notice that the Corn Cob Creek small grant application she submitted was awarded funding.

Meeting Location: The Rock in Spray, Oregon

To Join from a computer or smartphone:

<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/954414701> (Contact the office for meeting password)

To dial in using a phone:

(571) 317-3122 (Access Code: 954-414-701)

3. Monthly Business

a. Review and approve minutes

i. November 30, 2023 minutes

ii. December 6, 2023 minutes

iii. January 8, 2023 minutes

‡Motion made by Director Hunt to approve the board meeting minutes from November 30, 2023, December 6, 2023, and January 8, 2023, Director Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

b. Review and approve financial reports

i. December

ii. January

‡Motion made by Director Davis to approve the financial reports from December and January, Director Hunt seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

c. Review and approve Accounts Payable

i. December 28, 2023

ii. January 16, 2024

iii. January 25, 2024

‡Motion made by Director Davis to approve the check registers from November 15, 2023 and November 30, 2023 as presented, Director Hunt seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Upcoming Meetings & Events

a. Staff Meeting, every Monday

b. February

i. 10th Wheeler SWCD Tree Pruning, 9am

ii. 14th JDBP meeting (virtual), 9am

iii. 19th Presidents' Day - Office Closed

iv. 20th-22nd OVMA, Seaside

v. 29th Wheeler SWCD Rejuvra Talk, 4pm

vi. 29th Wheeler Board Meeting, 6pm

c. March

i. 7th Wheeler SWCD Weed Clinic, 5pm

ii. 28th Wheeler SWCD Board Meeting, 6pm

5. Upcoming Deadlines

a. February

i. 5th 3WP Applications

ii. 28th Rural Business Development Grant

b. March

i. none

6. District Management

a. Personnel Committee Recommendation

Jason advised that the Personnel Committee met prior to the board meeting. He explained the recommendation for the Office Assistant hiring process.

‡Motion made by Director Johnson to appoint hiring authority to the Board officers and District Management for the Office Assistant position including conducting the interview

and offering the position at \$28,000 annual salary, Director Hunt seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

b. Surplus Equipment (business not listed)

Cassi stated that Ayla assisted with getting the new desktops setup and the IT team came out to the office to transfer data and software from the old desktops. Cassi recommended that the Board declare three of the old desktops as surplus to be sold for \$100 each.

‡**Motion** made by Director Hunt to declare three (3) desktops as surplus to be sold for \$100 each, Vice-Chair Thomas seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

c. Annual Meeting

Cassi advised that she included in the packet a comparison of expenditures and attendance of the 2022 and 2023 Annual Meetings. She shared the positive feedback she received from the public following the Annual Meeting and extended her appreciation to the Board for permitting the staff to change the organization of the meeting from what has historically been planned.

Cassi asked the Board if there were any suggestions for further improvement of the meeting next year. The Board agreed that the 2023 Annual Meeting was a great improvement from the past meetings and requested that Cassi budget for a new PA system due to the difficulties experienced.

DelRae requested that the staff update the notice list to ensure that FSA and neighboring districts were included. Cassi apologized for the oversight of missing FSA on the direct invitations and advised that management is working on developing a comprehensive notice list for direct invites to events and meetings.

d. Employee Evaluations

Cassi advised that this topic had been tabled due to needing the Personnel Committee Chair to schedule evaluations. Ayla explained the process of evaluations. Cassi requested that the Board choose a date, time, and location. The Board officers volunteered to conduct the evaluations on January 31st before the schedule Office Assistant interview at the office.

e. Insurance Renewal

Cassi advised that the renewal documents are in the packet for review per District policy. The Board and Cassi discussed the updates included in the renewal.

f. AWP Accomplishments

Cassi advised that the Annual Work Plan Accomplishments were submitted to ODA on December 31st and a copy is in the packet for review per District policy.

g. Property

i. WIG Status

Cassi advised of the following updates pertaining to the Wood Innovation Grant and property/facility:

- The electricity was reconnected and the main breaker remains off unless electricity is needed.
- A preliminary inspection of the existing well pump was conducted and there are needed repairs for it to work.

- Ayla accompanied the geotechnical team to the property to conduct testing for the civil engineers.
- The development design was finalized and emailed to the directors.
- The septic consultant conducted an assessment on the property and hosted a meeting to present the required location and regulations of the septic system. The future drain field was staked and flagged to protect it from equipment due to compaction regulations.
- Cassi is drafting a Congressional Direct Spending application due in February and working on determining feasibility of a USDA Rural Development application.

Cassi presented the latest slide deck and preliminary landscape design.

7. Legislation

- a. none

8. Projects/Programs

a. HB2010 Juniper Removal

Cassi advised that Wheeler County submitted a request to the Department of Administrative Services to revise the grant agreement to the District. She stated that she wrote a letter of support that was included in the request.

b. BLM – Priest Hole Restoration

Cassi stated that she met with BLM to determine permit exceptions and resubmitted the documentation to OWEB for the first funds request to be approved. Cassi advised that the engineer contractor has been secured and the design process is underway.

c. NRCS/SNW – RCPP

DelRae advised that she has been meeting regularly with Jordan (SNW) and Cassi about the potential RCPP project that is now much larger than just Waterman area. Cassi presented the finalized boundary map and DelRae explained how the boundary was determined. DelRae further explained the goals and objectives of the potential RCPP and current status of the application.

d. Education/Outreach Schedule

Cassi explained that the staff developed an education/outreach schedule for both social media and in-person opportunities. She stated that the schedule for in-person opportunities is in the packet and the intention of the schedule was to host educational events for all ages nearly every month throughout the year.

Cassi explained that current grants managed by the District do not generally include funding for education/outreach, but the staff desire to seek education/outreach specific funding in the future as Cassi's workload is reduced by being fully staffed and she is able to direct the development of the Education/Outreach Program.

9. Partners

a. US-FS Ochoco

Cassi advised that the US-FS Ochoco staff chose to postpone the application for the Mitchell drinking water project until the next cycle to allow for proper planning. She stated that there are planning meetings scheduled so that all agencies and private parties can collaborate efforts on this project.

b. Monument SWCD

Cassi stated that the landowner for the Johnson Creek project has chosen to fund the project privately and hire the District as a contracted project manager. Cassi advised that she did the diligence of confirming the proper approach of this relationship with ODA staff.

10. Business Not Listed

a. OACD

Chair Collins advised that he received a call from the new OACD Executive Director, Andrea Kreiner. He stated that she was calling all board chairs to introduce herself, learn about the district boards, and seek suggestions. Chair Collins advised that his main suggestion was for districts to have the option to share legal counsel through a state agency similar to how districts share other resources.

Next Meeting February 29, 2024

The board meeting was adjourned by Chair Collins at 7:57 p.m. by the clock on the wall.

Respectfully submitted by Cassandra Newton



Anna Thomas, Vice-Chair



Cassandra Newton, District Manager

