



Wheeler Soil and Water Conservation District

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Board of Directors
Meeting Minutes
April 27, 2023

Directors

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

Assoc. Directors/Emeritus

Employees

Cassandra Newton
Brooke Moore
Kristen Neuburger

Others Present

Eric Nusbaum, ODA
Don Seitz

The Board of Directors held a training session on ethics and governance of public officials with Eric Nusbaum from 4-6pm.

The board meeting was called to order by Director Davis at 6:16 p.m. by the clock on the wall.

1. Agency Reports

None

2. District Reports

a. Administration Manager, Cassi Newton

Cassi stated that she advised Emma that it was not mandatory for her to attend the meetings and that any work Emma has assisted with will be reported in her report. Cassi advised that Emma has been a tremendous help with the West Branch surveying and has continued to help organize archived files into the new filing cabinets. She also advised that Emma has assisted with digitizing past project documents. Cassi stated that Emma's current part-time schedule will continue through May, but will likely end in June.

b. Conservation Technician II, Brooke Moore

Stated her report is current.

c. Conservation Technician I, Kristen Neuburger

Stated her report is current.

3. Monthly Business

a. Review and approve minutes

- March 30, 2023 minutes

‡Motion made by Director Davis to approve the board meeting minutes from March 30, 2023, Director Hunt seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

b. Review and approve financial reports

- April

‡Motion made by Director Ryno to approve the April financial report, Director Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

c. Review and approve Accounts Payable

- April 13, 2023
- April 27, 2023

‡Motion made by Director Davis to approve the check registers from April 13, 2023 and April 27, 2023 as presented, Director Johnson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Upcoming Meetings & Events

- Staff Meeting, every Monday
- April
25th – 26th OWEB meeting
27th SWCD board meeting, 6pm

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)

- **May**
10th WC Budget Committee meeting, 10am
16th BCRR site tour w/ LJDWG
17th JDBP meeting, 9am
17th Thirtymile site tour, 1pm
25th SWCD board meeting, 6pm
29th Memorial Day - SWCD office closed

5. Upcoming Deadlines

- **May**
1st OWEB
3rd ODA AgWQ Support
31st ODA Capacity

6. District Management

a. Staffing

Cassi stated that following the Personnel Committee meeting, she contacted the five Conservation Manager candidates but she had not received any responses. She explained that the candidates were instructed to complete and return the application as confirmation of their interest in the scheduled interview with a deadline of 5pm on Monday, May 1st to allow for preparation of interviews scheduled Tuesday, May 2nd.

Chair Collins asked for a status of budget set for recruiting. Cassi advised that \$2,192 had been expended from the \$4,000 budget set.

b. Policy Revision

Cassi stated that the revisions requested in March were made which included adding definitions, clarification of management, exceptions, non-negotiable terms, complaint resolution, and monitoring of use of the policy by staff.

Cassi explained that in 2020, when this policy was originally being drafted for adoption, she reached out to the District Managers Forum and did research, but found no other special districts had such a policy. She stated that the majority of policies she reviewed through research were from schools or business that had childcare onsite.

‡**Motion** made by Director Thomas to approve the revised Children in the Workplace Policy, Director Bruce seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

c. SDIS Best Practice

Cassi explained that the SDIS Best Practice Survey is a program offered through membership with SDAO that assists special districts with implementing best practices to mitigate risk in areas of high expose and grants the District up to a 10% discount on general liability, auto liability and property insurance contributions. She further explained that there are five opportunities that each equal 2% and the 2024 focus is “emergency preparedness.” Cassi stated that the emergency management plans and policies were reviewed in 2020 with the pandemic and that she would recommend reviewing them again now that the pandemic is wound down. The Board agreed to put it on the agenda this fall.

d. Property

Cassi advised that all funding applications are in the review process at this time. She stated that she will be spending the next weekend at the new property to clean up the fruit trees and will see if it is in need of mowing. Cassi advised the Board that JM Works get a great job last fall cleaning up the down fences and debris, mowing and seeding.

7. Legislation

a. HB3142

Cassi stated that she attended the County Court meeting on April 5th and the County agree to pass the funds to Wheeler SWCD, if HB3142 passed. Cassi explained that if it passes that the District

will need to determine the process for administering the funds in conjunction with the regulations and monitoring set forth by OSU as the text of the bill states.

8. Projects/Programs

a. OWEB

Cassi stated that she recently realized that the Board gets advised of OWEB grant applications being planned or submitted through staff reports or board meetings, but the full details are not necessarily provided. Cassi advised that included in the board packet there is a full overview of the four OWEB applications to be submitted on Monday. The Board thanked Cassi for including the overview and requested that application overviews be included in future packets.

Cassi recognized Brooke's hard work on completing all four OWEB applications. She shared with the Board that Brooke's grant writing continues to improve drastically and she goes above and beyond with landowners to develop conservation plans. Chair Collins stated that he received a note from Herb Winters, Gilliam County SWCD District Manager commenting the good job Brooke did on an application that he reviewed for her. The Board congratulated and thanked Brooke for her hard work.

b. ODA AgWQ Application (Business Not Listed)

Cassi stated that this was not included on the agenda again since the Board did not have any requests for proposals. She explained that after talking to Gilliam County SWCD, Anabran Solutions, and ODA, it has been decided to submit an application for historical research and data collection for Butte Creek. She further explained that Gilliam County SWCD has been doing an incredible amount of restoration and monitoring work on Thirtymile Creek in connection to the RCPP, which Butte Creek is also apart of and the ODA AgWQ application that the District will submit on May 3rd will compliment the efforts being done in the neighboring watershed by Gilliam County SWCD.

c. Weed Program

i. In-House Weed Program

Cassi stated that she attended the County Court meeting on April 5th with Dan Son from ODA and Kristen also in attendance. She explained that there were two presentations made in regard to the District's weed program:

- Wheeler County Weed Board (WCWB) – Cassi requested that the County recruit for the open positions of the WCWB and urge for the board to follow the action items outlined in Wheeler County Court Resolution No. 2022-04. Cassi requested to the Court to appoint Brent Johnson to the WCWB as the Wheeler SWCD non-voting representative.
 - The Wheeler County Court approved the appointment of Brent Johnson to the WCWB as the Wheeler SWCD non-voting representative.
 - The Wheeler County Court approved the appointment of Ben Logan to the WCWB as the Wheeler County Court non-voting representative and requested that Ben recruit for the three (3) At-Large positions.
- Wheeler SWCD In-House Cost-Share Program – Cassi requested funding assistance for the launching of an in-house cost-share program.
 - The Wheeler County Court approved \$10,000 annually for the next five (5) years to assist the District with launching the new program.

Cassi explained that she will be working with Kristen to develop the processes and procedures for the program to be presented to the Board for approval, and she is hopeful to launch the program this fall for the first round of applications.

Chair Collins asked Cassi to explain in further detail her idea for administering the in-house program. Cassi explained that she plans to use the same zone map that directors are elected by,

which includes five zones that cover Wheeler County and those zones will be the focus area for each application round. She continued explaining that she anticipates applications to be awarded twice a year for spring and fall treatments and that the application process is still being drafted but Kristen found a noxious weed cost-share program manual from an organization in Montana that is being used as a template to draft Wheeler SWCD's processes and procedures for the in-house program. Lastly, Cassi stated that as part of the application process, staff has discussed including a bingo card that identifies noxious and invasive weeds of Wheeler County and requiring submission of a completed card with a photo and location of the species found – which that data will be confirmed by Wheeler SWCD staff then included in survey reporting to ODA.

Chair Collins asked if the in-house program will include biological control or just herbicide treatments. Cassi advised that it will support an integrated weed management approach and include all treatment methods. She further advised that part of the application process will be meeting with Kristen to develop a weed management

Cassi advised that biological control treatments for Wheeler County were included in the grant that Kristen wrote and in a grant that Crooked River Weed Management wrote which included Wheeler SWCD – these funds will be used for releasing, collecting and monitoring biological control sites.

Chair Collins asked if staff had heard any updates regarding biological control for Whitetop. Kristen advised that she had not heard of any recent news, but she would follow up with Joel Price at ODA to inquire.

Director Davis asked if Teasle was on the state weed list. Kristen stated that Common Teasle was on the Wheeler County Weed List, but not the state's. Director Davis asked if Medusahead and Ventenata were on the state list. Kristen advised that those are also on the county's list but not the state's.

ii. Rejuvra Monitoring

Cassi advised that there is a landowner interested in 200 acres of Rejuvra treatment and has reached out to the District for assistance. She stated that this is the first Rejuvra treatment that the District has been apart of with the exception of a 12 acre treatment that is scheduled in a small grant to occur in the spring of 2024. Cassi explained to the Board about the monitoring that Grant County SWCD has been conducting and stated that she is interested in having some monitoring considering the funding pool that NRCS is drafting which will include Rejuvra treatments. Cassi asked the Board if they would be interested in the District cost-sharing a portion of the treatment cost in exchange the landowner would allow intensive monitoring of the site for the following five (5) years.

Cassi shared about an aerial application company who attended Grant County SWCD's Resource Fair who conducts aerial treatments with drones. She explained that the cost is reasonable especially with treatments could occur consecutively across multiple landowners. The Board requested Cassi to reach out to additional partners including vendors and agencies who would be interested in the monitoring.

9. Partners

a. Spray Rodeo Booth w/ FSA

Cassi advised that FSA has requested the District to partner in setting up a booth at the Spray Rodeo, but FSA is still determining if they could pay 50% of the cost due to only being able to pay for education/outreach by credit card. Cassi stated that she offered for the District to pay the full booth fee in exchange for supplies or something as reimbursement from FSA. Cassi stated that District staff will not be present at the booth during the event, but FSA staff will. The Board

agreed that having FSA present at the booth would be sufficient for the District to cover the full cost of the booth.

10. Business Not Listed

Cassi advised that she wrote about the K-6th grade field trip to the Butte Creek Riverscape project in her report, but felt it was worth announcing verbally in the meeting. She stated that there were a total of 105 people in attendance which included 74 kids, 24 adult chaperones, 4 contractors, and 3 District staff. She explained that the field trip consisted of staff presenting beaver facts and knowledge, providing snacks/drinks, taking a walk along the stream to see the restoration efforts, and the contractors assisted the children with building a BDA – then the children/teachers were given a Beaver Dam Challenge and encouraged to build a beaver dam from items in their classroom then test it. Cassi advised she received many positive messages and comments from the schools, parents, and public in the weeks following the fieldtrip.

Next Meeting May 2, 2023 (Executive Session)
May 25, 2023

The board meeting was adjourned by Chair Collins at 7:05 p.m. by the clock on the wall.

Respectfully submitted by Cassandra Newton


James Collins, Chair


Cassandra Newton, Administrative Manager