



Wheeler Soil and Water Conservation District

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Board of Directors
Meeting Minutes
January 26, 2023

Directors

James Collins
Anna Thomas
Jason Davis
Ross Ryno
Brent Johnson

Assoc. Directors/Emeritus

Employees

Cassandra Newton
Brooke Moore
Kristen Neuburger

Others Present

Dan Son, ODA
Debbi Bunch, MJDWC
DelRae Ferguson, NRCS
JD Bunch

The board meeting was called to order by Director Davis at 6:02 p.m. by the clock on the wall.

1. Oaths of Office

- a. Director Davis conducted the oath of office for **Jim Bob Collins**.
- b. Director Collins conducted the oath of offices for **Anna Thomas, Brent Johnson and Ross Ryno**.

2. Appointments

a. Board Officers

‡ **Motion** made by Director Ryno to appoint the Director Collins as Chair, Director Thomas as Vice-Chair and Director Davis as Secretary/Treasurer, Director Johnson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

b. Bank Signers

Cassi advised that per policy, bank signers are to be the board officers and District management. She confirmed that the bank signers will be Jim Bob Collins, Anna Thomas, Jason Davis, and Cassandra Newton; with Cassandra Newton only being having authorization for online banking access and transactions, not as a check signatory. The Board agreed to keep the signers as stated in policy.

c. Associate Directors

Cassi read into record a letter received by Associate Director Derby stating. The Board chose to not appoint any associate directors at this time.

d. Director Emeritus

‡ **Motion** made by Director Davis to appoint the Ted Molinari and Jeremiah Holmes as Director Emeritus's, Director Johnson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Agency Reports

a. Debbi Bunch, Mid John Day Watershed Council

Debbi thanked the Board for the complimentary ticket to the Annual Meeting. She provided the location of the Watershed's new office, website and email address. Debbi invited everyone to participate in the Watershed Council's logo contest.

b. DelRae Ferguson, NRCS

DelRae invited everyone to participate in the upcoming Wheeler County NRCS Local Work Group Meeting. She provided an update on the funding opportunities through the IRA, RCPP status, and eligibility details of the woven wire funding. DelRae also reminded everyone that she is currently on detail until March.

4. District Reports

a. Administration Manager, Cassi Newton

Cassi stated her report was current.

b. Conservation Technician II, Brooke Moore

Brooke stated her report was current.

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)

c. Conservation Technician I, Kristen Neuburger

Kristen stated her report was current.

5. Monthly Business

a. Review and approve minutes

- November 15, 2022 regular minutes
- December 14, 2022 Annual Meeting

Cassi advised that the Annual Meeting minutes had incorrect attendance numbers. She provided the correct numbers and advised that the copy available for signature has the correct numbers recorded.

Cassi also advised that she had forgotten to draft minutes for the special meeting held December 27th, so those will be approved at the February meeting.

‡**Motion** made by Director Davis to approve the board meeting minutes from November 15, 2022 and December 14, 2022, Vice-Chair Thomas seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

b. Review and approve financial reports

- Audit
- Mid-year budget update
- December report

Cassi explained that the audit was originally not going to be ready to present at the Annual Meeting, so it was agreed it would be on the January agenda; however, it was presented at the Annual Meeting, so there is no need to present it again. She advised that she will have official copies to the directors at the February meeting.

Cassi presented the mid-year budget update. Cassi answered clarification questions regarding internet expenses and new project revenues.

Cassi apologized that she did not get the financial report into the packet and advised that she will have it at the February meeting for review and approval with the January report.

c. Review and approve Accounts Payable

- November 30, 2022
- December 29, 2022
- January 17, 2022
- January 26, 2022

‡**Motion** made by Director Davis to approve the check registers from November 30, 2022, December 29, 2022, January 17, 2022, January 26, 2022 as presented, Director Ryno seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

6. Upcoming Meetings & Events

- Staff Meeting, every Monday
- **January**
Restoring Oregon's Dry Side Forests, multiple
24-25th OWEB Board meeting
25th NSDC Legislative Updates, 10am
26th SWCD Board meeting, 6pm
- **February**
Restoring Oregon's Dry Side Forests, multiple
2nd ODF Workshop Plan Revisions, 3:30pm
8-9th SWCC meeting
9th NRCS Local Work Group meeting, 10am
9-12th SDAO Annual Conference
15th JDBP meeting, 10am
21-23rd OVMA Conference
23rd Chamber Annual meeting, 5:30pm
15th Coordination meeting, 9am

20th LJDWG meeting, 10am

7. Upcoming Deadlines

- **January**
31st ODFW ARPA funding
- **February**
6th FHWA funding
6th OWF funding
13th BLM funding

8. District Management

a. Staffing

Discussion occurred about where the open positions are advertised and potential new sources.

Cassi presented the idea of using Cascade Employer's Association to recruit for positions, as well as assist with the completion of the new handbook. The Board inquired about the cost of utilizing resources through SDAO.

‡**Motion** made by Director Ryno to approve the District becoming a member Cascade Employer's Association at the basic level, Director Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

b. Property

Cassi presented the facility project fact sheet that she drafted and requested suggestions on edits. The Board suggested including "centrally located" within the abstract to highlight the ability to serve all communities equally.

Cassi provided an update on funding sources she is working with.

c. Insurance Renewal

Cassi advised that per policy the Board is to review the insurance renewal each January. She explained the renewal packet that was provided in the packet.

Cassi stated that she signed a participation form from SDAO who is exploring potential options for group insurance rates for special district Workers' Comp.

d. February Board Meeting

Cassi advised that she will be at the OVMA Conference the day of the regularly schedule board meeting and asked the Board if they prefer to change the date of the February meeting. The Board agreed to change the meeting date to February 16th.

e. Director Training

Cassi reminded the Board that ODA is holding director trainings with both in-person and virtual options and she urged the directors to attend one.

f. Director/Staff Work Session

Cassi suggested that the Board and staff hold a work session to discuss the organization and plans of the District given the new members of the board and staff. The Board agreed and requested that it be held after the new hire.

g. Attorney

Cassi reminded the Board of the email she forwarded regarding legal counsel. She recommended that the Board retain the referred attorney.

‡**Motion** made by Director Johnson to retain Ruben Cleaveland at VanKoten & Cleaveland LLC as the District's legal counsel, Vice-Chair Thomas seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

9. Legislation

a. River Democracy Act

Cassi provided an update on the River Democracy Act that was sent by Sen. Wyden's office.

10. Projects/Programs

a. ODA SIA

Cassi provided an update from ODA AgWQ Specialist Maria Snodgrass and asked if the Board was interested in participating in the SIA program. The Board discussed suggesting to ODA one of two watersheds and potentially running an SIA in conjunction with the new ODA Focus Area. The Board requested Cassi follow up with Maria for more information regarding timeline and statement of work items that are include in the SIA process.

b. Annual Work Plan Accomplishments

Cassi explained that each year the District must submit an Annual Report to ODA by June 30th and accomplishments of the previous fiscal year's Plan must be submitted by December 31st. She advised that per policy, the Board is to review the submitted accomplishments during the January meeting. Cassi stated that the submitted accomplishment report was in the packet.

c. Project Planning Outline

Cassi provided an overview of projects that the District is currently managing and projects that are being planned over the next two years.

d. AgriMet Weather Stations

Cassi announced that Wheeler County has agreed to cover the annual maintenance cost of three weather stations. She provided an update on where she was with sourcing funding for installation costs of all weather stations across the John Day Basin.

e. ARPA

Cassi advised that Wheeler County requested assistance with applying for funding to replace culverts within the ROW on Kahler Creek. She further advised that Brooke and her completed a funding application for two culvert replacements through the ODFW/ODOT passage funding that is currently available.

f. Community

Cassi explained that Wheeler County has an abundance of residents who rely solely on wood heat in their homes and many of those residents do not have the ability or means to obtain wood themselves. She presented the Board with the idea of developing a volunteer system to cut/split the juniper from SWCD projects of willing landowners to help support those in need. She explained that the wood could be stored at the new property and a program could be developed to ensure fair disbursement.

The Board agreed that the idea was a great way to support the communities and a few directors volunteered their wood splitters to be used when needed. Cassi stated that the staff will inquire if landowners are willing to participate during the planning phase of projects and begin to build the volunteer program.

11. Partners

a. NRCS Work Group Meeting

Cassi advised that DelRae already discussed this item during her report. Cassi urged those present to participate in the meeting.

b. BLM

Cassi advised that she is in the process of applying for noxious weed treatment funding through BLM which will consist of the District assisting with treatments on public access BLM land, as well as funding for private lands adjacent to BLM land.

c. OSU Extension

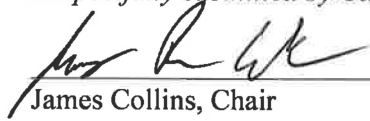
Cassi stated that she has been in contact with Amy Derby regarding potential partnerships for education and outreach, including a ODA Applicator training.

12. Business Not Listed

Next Meeting February 16, 2022

The board meeting was adjourned by Chair Collins at 8:04 p.m. by the clock on the wall.

Respectfully submitted by Cassandra Newton


James Collins, Chair


Cassandra Newton, Administrative Manager

