



Wheeler Soil and Water Conservation District

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Board of Directors
Meeting Minutes
May 26, 2022

Directors

James Collins
Anna Thomas
Jason Davis
David Hunt

Assoc. Directors

Employees

Randall Williams
Cassandra Newton
Daniel Goodell
Brooke Moore

Others Present

Maria Snodgrass, ODA
Carmen Oakes

The board meeting was called to order by Chair Collins at 6:20 p.m. by the clock on the wall.

1. Agency Reports

a. MJD-BC Watershed Council, Debbi Bunch

Not present

b. RSI (Engineer), Gabe Williams

Not present

c. NRCS, DelRae Ferguson

Not present

d. ODA, Maria Snodgrass

Maria advised that ODA is in the process of hiring multiple positions. She stated that she is organizing an in-person open house and she is working on compliance casework. Maria also advised that she is working on strategic implementation and that ODA is developing the 2023-2027 schedule. She reminded everyone that the Oregon Disaster Assistance Program is open and accepting applications.

Chair Collins asked Maria to provide an overview of the work ODA is doing with DEQ. Maria advised that the MOA held between ODA and DEQ is being reviewed and there will include a high level outline of the Strategic Implementation Area Initiative and how ODA is addressing total maximum daily loads (TMDL).

Chair Collins asked Maria about the funding opportunity that ODA recently discussed. After brief discussion regarding which funding was being inquired about, Maria advised that there was a funding source from the 2021 legislation which was supposed to be \$650,000 to contract with local partners for more water quality work in smaller geographic regions. She stated that ODA has not determined how the funds will be rolled out or any parameters set, yet.

e. Others

None

2. District Reports

a. District Manager, Randy Williams

Randy stated his report is current, but shared that he recently discussed potential conservation programs with a new landowner in the Clarno area that owns Wild Love Preserve.

b. Office Manager, Cassi Newton

Cassi gave a brief verbal update due to not having a written report in the board packet. She provided an update on the Juniper Butte project status and expenditures, an HR training she attended, the federal/state permitting processes and office organization. She also advised that staff have scheduled a day to clean out the shop to be in compliance with the renewed office lease. Cassi stated that the staff will also be meeting to develop the 2022-2023 Annual Work Plan on June 14, 2022 and invited up to three directors to participate in-person or virtually.

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)

Cassi advised that the District was reimbursed for one and another fraudulent check cleared the bank, so three remain at the District's expense. She further advised that the Sheriff's office has not had success in investigating the source. Cassi provided details about the Positive Pay Program.

‡**Motion** made by Director Hunt to approve to try the Positive Pay Program at Bank of Eastern Oregon beginning July 1, 2022 for account ending *1863, Director Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

c. Conservation Technician I, Brooke Moore

Brooke advised that she is working on catching up on CREP contracts and organizing a filing/tracking system for CREP. She also advised that the OWEB application she submitted last fall for Nelson Creek was awarded, which includes 246 acres of forest thinning, 3 spring developments, 178 acres of juniper removal and 61 acres of reseeding. The Board asked if the project will evolve into additional phases and Brooke stated that it is anticipated to.

Brooke advised that her LincPass has finally been activated and DelRae provided her with a USDA computer.

d. Conservation Technician II, Daniel Goodell

Daniel stated that his report is current other than a couple weed grant updates. He advised that the contractor for the Mitchell area grant will be completing the last treatments in the next couple of weeks and the contractor for the Twickenham/Richmond grant will be meeting for site visits. He further advised that the ODA grant the District applied for was partially funded and he worked with Cassi to revise the budget and scope of work.

Daniel shared that he attended a Rejuva tour in Grant County and visited a couple treatment sites. Daniel advised that it is recommended to do aerial application with costs be approximately \$1,000 a gallon and a minimum application rate of 5 ounces per acre. Daniel further advised that it was mentioned that for the helicopter to mobilize is \$20-30,000.

3. Monthly Business

a. Review and approve minutes

- April 28, 2022 regular minutes
- April 28, 2022 executive session minutes
- May 5, 2022 special meeting minutes
- May 6, 2022 special meeting minutes

‡**Motion** made by Director Hunt to approve the board meeting minutes from April 28, 2022 regular and executive minutes and special meeting minutes from May 5 & 6, 2022, Vice-Chair Thomas seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

b. Review and approve budget report

- May 23, 2022

Cassi read the response from Judy about the question last month regarding Line 47 on the General Fund budget update.

‡**Motion** made by Director Davis to approve the budget report dated May 23, 2022 as presented, Director Hunt seconded the motion. The motion pass unanimously.

c. Review and approve Accounts Payable

- May 16, 2022
- May 26, 2022

‡**Motion** made by Director Davis to approve the check registers from May 16, 2022 and May 26, 2022 as presented, Vice-Chair Thomas seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Upcoming Meetings & Events

- Staff Meeting, every Monday
- May
26th: SWCD Board Meeting, 6pm

31st: OWEB Site Tours

• **June**

15th: Region Coordination Meeting, 9am
16th: LJDWG Presentation to OWRC, 1pm
30th: OWEB Site Tours
30th: SWCD Board Meeting, 6pm

5. Upcoming Deadlines

30th: Annual Work Plan to ODA
30th: Annual Budget to ODA

6. District Management

a. Finance Manager Transition

Cassi advised that she completed her QuickBooks Certification. She stated that there is a lot of office/paperwork preparation remaining for the transition and she has a meeting with the auditor on June 1, 2022 to review the QuickBooks setup and the revised Financial Policy to ensure the audit requirement for segregation of accounting duties are still being met.

Cassi advised that Resolution 2022-001 was included in the board packet and requires a motion to close three of the Bank of Eastern accounts as previously discussed early this year.

Randy advised the date was incorrect on the Resolution.

‡ **Motion** made by Director Davis to approve and adopt Resolution 2022-001 Closure of Bank of Eastern Oregon Bank Accounts with edit of date, Vice-Chair Thomas seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

b. Budget

Cassi advised that she did not have an updated budget draft due to some agreements still being negotiated and she had not received an updated spreadsheet from Judy. Cassi stated that a draft will be emailed to the directors once available and it will be on the June agenda for adoption.

c. Director Recruitment

This item was tabled until the June meeting.

d. Oregon Paid Family/Medical Leave

Cassi reminded the Board that this item was tabled until August, but that she learned a few details at the HR training she attended with SDAO. Cassi advised that the rules have not been developed for the PFML and that there are still hearings being held. She stated that SDAO advised information will be sent out once made available.

e. Conservation Technician Assistant Position Description

Randy advised that a copy of the position description was included in the packet and he briefly explained an overview of the roles and responsibilities of the trainee style position.

Brooke advised that the position descriptions should be revised to remove the NRCS Planner Certification because NRCS no longer provides the certification outside the agency. She advised that the training courses are still available to anyone and she suggested that the word *certification* be replaced but the item not be removed from the position descriptions.

‡ **Motion** made by Director Hunt to approve and adopt the Conservation Technician Assistant Position Description with the NRCS Planner revision, Director Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

f. Conservation Technician Assistant Candidate

Randy advised that Director Davis and Vice-Chair Thomas participated in the interview process and the candidate provided references. He stated that he called each reference and he shared an overview of those references with the directors. Randy advised that the concern of siblings working together was addressed through private conversations with each staff member. He advised that the siblings would not be in positions requiring one to be a direct supervisor of the other. He

stated that there were no concerns raised by any staff member. Randy recommended a starting annual salary of \$33,000.

‡**Motion** made by Director Hunt to approve offering the position of Conservation Technician Assistant to Kristen Neuburger at a starting annual salary of \$33,000 and a start date of July 11, 2022, Vice-Chair Thomas seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

7. Legislation

a. River Democracy Act

Randy advised that he and Chair Collins presented facts on the RDA to ODA's Soil and Water Conservation Committee and, to his surprise, not many of the members were aware of the RDA. He stated that he has had some additional conversations with others since that presentation.

b. BLM Acquisition(s)

Randy stated there is no update at this time.

c. Sutton Mountain

Randy advised a copy of the letter he submitted is in the board packet and that he is happy to forward it to anyone who would like to pass it on to other persons or agencies.

8. Projects/Programs

a. AgriMet Weather Stations

Randy provided a brief update on locations and funding. He advised that he is still working on funding options for installation and equipment, including potential tribal funding and for maintenance funding on a few of the stations.

Chair Collins suggested reaching out to Maria Snodgrass about the 2021 legislation funding. Cassi suggested to send a letter out to the three school districts to inquire about potential interest and funding through an education perspective.

b. USDA Smart Commodities

Randy explained the process that occurred and advised that the grant application was not able to be submitted. He advised that he provided the landowners with all the documentation developed through his efforts and he is unsure if the landowners intend to attempt application for the smaller pool of funding since the District will not be the applicant.

c. Lower John Day Working Group

Cassi advised that Randy attended the celebratory dinner and that she attended the in-person Lower John Day Working Group meeting in Condon since Randy was presenting to the SWCC at the same time. She advised that she voted on the District's behalf to approve the final step of the Integrated Water Resources Plan and the co-conveners will be presenting the Plan to the Oregon Water Resources Commission on June 16th. Cassi advised that she forwarded the plan to the directors via email when it was finalized and she present a physical copy for review at the board meeting. Cassi read the executive summary of the Plan and she briefly explained the Group's plan for applying for funding opportunities.

9. Partners

a. Contract with MJD-BC Watershed Council

Randy stated that the Watershed Council has elected to administer their own financials. He stated that the contract was then split into two contracts – a sublease and a transition agreement – and he sent those to the Council representatives on May 12th. Randy stated that at 5:09 pm today (May 26th), a response with additional questions and revisions request was received from the Council and he presented a copy to the Board. Randy reminded the Board that a copy of the contracts are in the board packet.

After a brief discussion, the Board directed Randy to include a deadline of end of business on June 15th in the next communication with the Council to allow adequate time for District review and preparation.

10. Business Not Listed

a. ODF Meeting

Randy advised that he met with ODF in John Day to establish a working partnership on projects. He shared details of a funding opportunity for residential fire borders and training opportunities for staff.

b. Board Packets

Cassi asked the Board if they would be okay with only receiving the packet via email and a physical copy at the meeting each month. She explained that she would prefer to eliminate the cost of mailing the packets and not all directors receive theirs timely. The Board agreed.

Next Meeting June 30, 2022

The Board left the open session to enter into executive session at 9:08 p.m. after a 10-minute recess.

11. Executive Session

- a. ORS 192.610(2)(e)** To conduct deliberations with persons designated by the governing body to negotiate real property transactions.

The Board adjourned the executive session at 9:15 p.m. and returned to open session.

The board meeting was adjourned by Chair Collins at 9:16 p.m. by the clock on the wall.

Respectfully submitted by Cassandra Newton



James Collins, Chair



Randall Williams, District Manager

