

**WHEELER SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES  
September 29, 2021  
6:00 PM**

**Meeting location: The Rock in Spray, Oregon**  
**To join the meeting from a computer, tablet or smartphone:**  
<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/578366885>  
**To dial in using a phone:**  
United States: +1 (408) 650-3123  
**Access Code: 578-366-885**

The board meeting was called to order by Chairman Holmes at 6:08 p.m. by the clock on the wall.

<u>Directors</u>	<u>Assoc. Directors</u>	<u>Employees</u>	<u>Others Present</u>
Jeremiah Holmes	Rob Wade	Randall Williams	Debbi Bunch, MJDBCWC
Kale Haberman		Cassandra Newton	Gabe Williams, RSI
Anna Thomas		Brooke Moore	
David Hunt		Daniel Goodell	
Jason Davis			
James Collins			

**AGENCY REPORTS**

**Mid John Day – Bridge Creek Watershed Council, Debbi Bunch:** Debbi advised that the Lower John Day Working Group completed Step 5 and the Group is asking for public review of the report. She stated the report is available electronically, as well as hard copy and the comment period is open until October 25, 2021.

**RSI, Gabe Williams:** Gabe stated that the RRT report from ODWF for Kinzua should be available soon. He also stated that the review of the Middle Pine Hollow Culvert should occur in 2-3 weeks after some additional information provided at the request of BPA.

**DISTRICT STAFF REPORTS**

**District Manager, Randall Williams:** Randy advised that Daniel has been working diligently on the Weed Program grants and he will be submitting at least one application for the December cycle but considering two applications.

Randy stated that he revised the contract for the Butte Creek project management with Anabran with the assistance of Cassi. He advised the contract now includes some oversight for permitting assistance, but the dollar amount of the contract did not change.

**Office Manager, Cassandra Newton:** Cassi stated that her report is current and advised that the audit files were delivered to the auditor on September 16<sup>th</sup>.

**Conservation Technician I, Brooke Moore:** Brooke advised that she submitted the CREP TA grant application. She also advised that she completed the post implementation status report that was due in September.

Brooke advised that the CR survey for the Juniper Butte project is scheduled for October 6<sup>th</sup>. Vice-Chairman Collins asked if the prescribed burn is still scheduled for this fall. Brooke stated that is the plan and she will be calling Chet in the next couple of days to discuss project status. Chairman Holmes asked when the burn permit will be completed. Brooke stated that Chet has signed the burn plan, but a date cannot be set until the CR report is approved by SHPO. Chairman Holmes asked if a date range could be provided. Brooke stated she was told that a single date needed to be provided on the burn permit with the county. Chairman Holmes stated he will follow up with county personnel, as he

believes a date range could be provided. He asked if it was known when the SHPO report would be approved. Cassi advised that it could take a couple of weeks, so a tentative timeline to complete the burn would be the first of November.

**Conservation Technician I, Daniel Goodell:** Daniel advised that the staff has been great to work with and have been excellent in helping him get up to speed on everything. Daniel stated that he has been developing the landowner agreements for the current weed grant. He advised that he has met with two of the landowners and is working on scheduling site visits with all the others in the next couple of weeks. Daniel also advised that he was able to get the addendum signed for the landowner agreement with the Shoofly project.

### MONTHLY BUSINESS

**MINUTES:** The August 26, 2021 meeting minutes were presented for review. Director Hunt **moved that August 26, 2021 meeting minutes be approved as presented**, Director Haberman seconded the motion. The **motion carried unanimously**.

**BUDGET EXPENSE REPORT:** The budget report dated September 20, 2021 was presented for review.

Chairman Holmes asked if payments to the District has been on time. Cassi advised that there has not been any issues.

Director Davis **moved that the budget report dated September 20, 2021 be approved**, Director Thomas seconded the motion. The **motion carried unanimously**.

**BILLS:** The check registers dated September 15, 2021 and September 30, 2021 were presented for review. Director Haberman **moved that the bills dated September 15, 2021 and September 30, 2021 be approved**, Director Hunt seconded the motion. The **motion carried unanimously**.

### OLD BUSINESS

**RIVER DEMOCRACY ACT 2021:** Randy advised of a new Bill that Senator Wyden introduced on September 22, 2021 known as the Watershed Results Act which will maximize cost effective restoration by creating pilot programs that incorporates predictive data analysis. He further advised that the Act is intended to work with state, local, and Tribal representatives, nongovernmental organizations, and private sector representatives and could provide additional funding opportunities for conservation projects with the District.

Randy stated that he drafted a notice of the District's position regarding the River Democracy Act which was emailed to the directors for review prior to the meeting. Randy requested the Board to review the notice for approval to be signed by each director. He recommended that the notice be sent to Senator Wyden, Senator Merkley, Kathleen Cathey, and Malcolm McGeary. He further recommended it to be issued with the letter to the constituents with information regarding the Act and pertinent agencies such as Cattlemen's Association, Wheeler County Stockgrowers, OSU Extension Office, and Wheeler County Court. Vice-Chairman Collins suggested that it be shared with neighboring districts such as the SIA letter was. The Board advised Randy that the letter should encourage constituents to respond to elected representatives according to their own opinions.

Director Davis **moved that the notice regarding the River Democracy Act be approved to signed by each director, that it be mailed to the recommended individuals and agencies**, Director Thomas seconded the motion. The **motion carried unanimously**.

**AUDITOR RECOMMENDATIONS:** Chairman Holmes asked if the permissions and online access to the LGIP had been resolved. Cassi advised that she is still working with the LGIP office to get the account updated. Chairman Holmes suggested that further discussion of the auditor's recommendations be tabled until the next board meeting to allow time for the staff to resolve the permissions and online access, as well as provide a written summary of the auditor's recommendations. Chairman Holmes requested that Randy include his recommendations with the summary.

**LANDOWNER FOLLOWUPS:** Cassi stated that she has included this item on the agenda again due to a decision not being made. The Board and staff discussed what would be the most effective timeline for following up with landowners regarding completed projects. The Board requested that a policy be drafted for a follow-up from the District Manager be conducted immediately after the completion of the project and a second follow-up be conducted by the technician two years after completion of the project.

**FUEL TANK UPDATE:** Randy stated that Director Lindquist suggested using a gravity fed single-walled can be used with a culvert and leak mat. Randy advised that the a CFR restricts the use of gravity fed tanks, so an electric pump would be required. Director Hunt stated that he just purchased a single-walled tank from Albany Tank Sales for approximately \$700. Randy advised that he would look into the cost for a tank through Albany Tank Sales, as well as a containment setup. He stated he would report back at the next meeting.

**ENGINEER CONTRACT:** Vice-Chairman Collins stated he has a conflict of interest and he would be abstaining from discussion and voting.

Randy advised that he worked with Gabe and Cassi to develop an engineer contract between the District and RSI. Randy explained that the contract was developed without being tied to a District grant and it includes a clause for annual renewal contingent on review from both parties. He stated that Gabe was provided and approved the final draft presented for Board review and approval.

Director Davis **moved to approve the Professional Engineer Consultant Services Contract #PECS2122-RSI with RSI, Inc.**, Director Haberman seconded the motion. The **motion carried unanimously**. Vice-Chairman Collins abstained from the vote.

**OFFICE LEASE:** Randy advised that he prepared a note to Judy regarding the office lease and sent it on September 16<sup>th</sup> after being reviewed by Chairman Holmes. He further advised that he followed up with Judy on September 28<sup>th</sup> and Judy advised that she had not had time to review the contract but would try to get to it the week of October 4<sup>th</sup>.

The Board tabled further discussion until a response from Judy has been received.

**DISTRICT FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT:** Randy advised that he provided a Financial Manager Contract annual cost analysis, as well as the requested transition and ongoing cost forecast in his monthly report. He further advised that much of the financial management and fiscal tracking is duplicated at this time with the current system. Randy stated that managing the District requires up to date information each and every day on an ongoing basis, which includes the ability to query and discuss financial data to make valuable decisions. He explained that bringing financial management in house would be a tradeoff between staff utilizing additional time to conduct financial management and the time saved in avoiding duplication.

Director Davis stated that if it would enhance the operation of the District, he would be in favor of bringing the financial management in house. Director Thomas agreed. Chairman Holmes explained that at the time of Judy's retirement the Board understood the District was not in a position to hire and train an individual to handle both responsibilities of the district and financial management while maintaining operations. He further explained that due to the continued transitions the District has faced, it has been the efficient means of continuing operations.

Director Hunt stated that he agrees that it would benefit the District to have the financial management in house. Director Thomas asked if anyone knew if there would be hard feelings from Judy. Vice-Chairman Collins stated he was unsure.

Randy stated that it would require a transition period in which it should include continued payment of the Finance Contract with Judy. Vice-Chairman agreed and asked if the length of the transition period is known. Cassi stated that with the request of her to be certified in QuickBooks, the actual transition would not begin for at least another month.

Randy stated that the transition period is expected to be 3-6 months. Chairman Holmes suggested that the District offer payment of the Finance Contract until March 30, 2022. The Board requested that Randy draft notice to Judy and provide to Chairman Holmes for review prior to sending it.

Director Hunt **moved to approve to terminate the Finance Manager contract with continued payment through a transition period ending March 30, 2022**, Director Davis seconded the motion. The **motion carried unanimously**.

#### NEW BUSINESS

**VACCINE MANDATE:** This was tabled until the October meeting.

**CARD USER AUTHORIZATION:** Cassi advised that Daniel needs to be approved as a card user for the fuel cards and Visa card.

Vice-Chairman Collins **moved to approve Daniel Goodell as an authorized card user**, Director Haberman seconded the motion. The **motion carried unanimously**.

**FPAC:** Vice-Chairman Collins advised of the Farm Production and Conservation is a department of the USDA that was developed by President Trump as a focal point for farmers and ranchers of private agricultural and forest land. He stated that he recently learned of the department and visited the Department's website. Vice-Chairman Collins advised that the website includes a link to the Risk Management Agency (RMA) which could provide funding and training opportunities for the District.

Randy thanked Vice-Chairman Collins and stated that he visited the FPAC website after hearing about it from Vice-Chairman Collins and plans to research opportunities.

**ANNUAL MEETING:** Cassi advised the staff is starting to plan for the Annual Meeting. The Partner of the Year award, complimentary tickets, venue, caterer, and meat vendor were all discussed. The Board chose to have a speaker on AgiMet Weather Stations and drought conditions, and requested Randy to reach out to some potential speakers to determine their availability of speaking in-person.

#### OTHER BUSINESS NOT LISTED

**OACD ANNUAL MEETING:** The OACD Annual Meeting is being held virtually November 8-9<sup>th</sup> and the registration fee is \$100.

**BIOCONTROL:** Director Haberman advised the EPA has approved the pre-emergence biological herbicide that he believes is called Battallion Pro. He stated that it was previously removed from the market but it has since been approved. Director Haberman advised that he saw it sold by Biowest.

**NEXT MEETING DATE:** The next regular meeting will be held on **October 28, 2021**.

**ADJOURNMENT:** There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned by Chairman Holmes at 8:13 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted by Cassandra Newton*

  
James Collins, Vice Chairman

  
Randall Williams, District Manager