



Wheeler Soil and Water Conservation District

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Board of Directors
Meeting Minutes
February 24, 2022

Directors

Jason Davis
Wayne Lindquist
Anna Thomas
David Hunt

Assoc. Directors

Rob Wade

Employees

Randall Williams
Cassandra Newton
Daniel Goodell
Brooke Moore

Others Present

Debbi Bunch, MJD-BCWC
Jeff Kee, MJD-BCWC
Rick Shaffer, WCWB/County
Carmen Oakes
Maria Snodgrass, ODA

The board meeting was called to order by Vice-Chair Thomas at 6:12 p.m. by the clock on the wall.

1. Agency Reports

a. MJD-BC Watershed Council, Debbi Bunch

Debbie advised that Sustainable Northwest is hosting a juniper gathering in Prineville on March 11th. She also advised that the Watershed Council meeting will be March 14th and the employee evaluation has been rescheduled. Debbi stated that OWEB's Diversity Equity and Inclusion Environmental Justice Committee that will be meeting the first week of March and she is hoping to hear how the Committee's work will filter down to the grantee level. She advised that USDA currently has a Climate Smart Commodities grant opportunity that a landowner shared with her. Lastly, Debbi advised that she has three possible grant applications in progress for the spring application cycle

b. Wheeler County Weed Board, James 'Jim Bob' Collins

Director Davis advised that the WCWB met February 24th. WCWB has plans to attend Wheeler County Court in March to request rescinding the resolution that establishes the WCWB and adopting a new resolution that will establish it to include three public at-large positions. He also advised that the WCWB is proposing that the County assist with funding of a half-time WCWB employee position. Director Jason stated that the process is still new and in the early planning stages, but there will be further information in the near future.

c. RSI (Engineer), Gabe Williams

Not present

d. NRCS, DelRae Ferguson

Not present

e. ODA, Maria Snodgrass

Maria advised that she has researched and discussed funding opportunities with numerous resources throughout ODA and it is believed that the equipment, the installation and maintenance of the AgriMet weather stations could be covered under the District operations portion of the grants that the ODA has. She also advised that it could also be covered under the Ag Water Quality or monitoring portions of the ODA grant. Maria stated that Sandi Hiatt (ODA Grant Administrator), Marganne Allen (ODA Program Manager) and OWEB are all in agreement with these options.

f. Others

None

2. District Reports

a. District Manager, Randy Williams

Randy stated his report is current.

b. Office Manager, Cassi Newton

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 stated her report is current.

c. Conservation Technician I, Brooke Moore

Brooke thanked the Board for the gift card and expressed her appreciation for the staff staying current on her project management. She advised that since her return on February 14th, she has been catching up to speed on project statuses and checking in with landowners. Brooke stated that she has been working with NRCS and FSA on CREP and RCPP and that the CREP TA reporting is top priority at this time which is due March 1st.

d. Conservation Technician II, Daniel Goodell

Daniel stated that his report is current other than ODA recently awarded the noxious weed grant that is in the Twickenham and Richmond area, but the Mitchell are grant was not awarded.

3. Monthly Business

a. Review and approve minutes

- January 27, 2022

‡**Motion** made by Director Lindquist to approve the board meeting minutes from January 27, 2021 as presented, Director Hunt seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

b. Review and approve budget report

- February 14, 2022

‡**Motion** made by Director Hunt to approve the budget report dated February 14, 2022 as presented, Director Davis seconded the motion. The motion pass unanimously.

c. Review and approve Accounts Payable

- February 15, 2022
- February 24, 2022

‡**Motion** made by Director Davis to approve the check registers from February 15, 2022 and February 24, 2022 as presented, Director Hunt seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously

4. Upcoming Meetings & Events

- Staff Meeting, every Monday
- February
 - 23rd: OSWB Meeting, 1pm
 - 24th: OSWB Meeting, 8:30am
 - 24th: WCWB Meeting, 4:30pm
 - 24th: SWCD Board Meeting, 6pm
- March
 - 1st: AgriMet Coordination Meeting, 10am
 - 3rd: NRCS Local Work Group Meeting, 1pm
 - 24th: LJDWG Meeting, 10am
 - 31st: SWCD Board Meeting, 6pm

5. Upcoming Deadlines

NFWF Conservation Partners Program 02.23.2022
Conservation & Rec. Fund App Deadline 02.25.2022
General CRP Deadline 03.11.2022

6. District Management

a. Finance Manager Transition

Cassi advised that she is still waiting for the data from Judy, but the QuickBooks set up is progressing. She further advised that Judy agreed to have monthly meetings during the transition period, but no meetings had occurred. Cassi stated that she is going to reach out to Judy to schedule a meeting. The Board asked if the transition is still on track for a June 30th completion and Cassi confirmed it is.

b. Office Lease

Randy advised that he is still waiting on a response from Judy regarding the Board's requests. He suggested the Board table further discussion until Judy's response is received.

c. Director Recruitment

Cassi stated that she spoke to Chair Collins and due to him be absent, he asked her to provide his suggestion to the Board. She further stated that Chair Collins would like to recommend that the Board requests all interested persons to attend a number of meetings prior to the Board making a decision to appoint. Cassi advised that Chair Collins would elaborate further at the March meeting. Cassi advised the Board that ODA has declared the At Large position vacant and the Zone 4 position is vacant effective on April 1, 2022.

The Board tabled further discussion until the March meeting.

d. Employee Evaluations

Randy advised that due to a COVID exposure, the employee evaluations were postponed and a new date has not been set.

e. Public Meeting Policy Revision

Cassi reminded the Board of the revisions to ORS 192, which now requires all public meetings to have the option to attend virtually. She presented the revised Public Meeting Policy to the Board for review.

‡**Motion** made by Director Davis to approve and adopt the revised Public Meeting Policy as presented, Director Hunt seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

f. COVID Policy Review

Cassi reminded the Board of the COVID Policies that the District had to adopt at the end of 2020. She advised that the policies are aligned with current regulations and that with the latest exposure, Randy followed the current OHA and OSHA recommendations. Randy recommended to the Board that the policies be rescinded and verbiage be incorporated into the revised Handbook that the District will follow all OHA and OSHA requirements and recommendations.

‡**Motion** made by Director Hunt to rescind all COVID Policies, Director Lindquist seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

7. Legislation

No items.

8. Projects/Programs

a. AgriMet Weather Stations

Randy stated that he met with Jama Hamil with U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, Rachel Lovellford and Jordan Beamer both with Oregon Water Resources Department. He advised that the Bureau of Reclamation has special funding specific to the tribes that is rarely utilized and he has a meeting scheduled to discuss the potential of the tribes partnering in the AgriMet stations to fund the \$10,000 equipment and installation cost. Randy stated that he has reached out to numerous agencies who will be attending the coordination meeting that will review the whole AgriMet process and potential funding for the \$1,600 annual maintenance costs for each station. Randy advised the coordination meeting will be held at 10am on March 1st at the Jeanne Burch Building and will be available virtually.

b. OWEB Open Solicitation

Daniel and Brooke advised of the applications they are working on for the spring cycle deadline in May.

c. SDAO Internship Grant

Cassi stated that with Randy's approval she drafted an application for the SDAO Internship Grant and provided it for the Board's review. She advised that they are interested in getting a summer

intern for a period of ten weeks to assist with revamping the filing system by purchasing lateral filing cabinets, centrally locating all files, digitizing files and developing a trained system moving forward. Cassi further advised that the grant would fund up to fifty percent match of a \$6,000 project.

Randy advised that he went through a similar process at his prior district and the resulted in a tremendous increase in efficiency.

Randy and Cassi asked the Board to approve the application and upon award, a decision for hiring would be discussed.

‡**Motion** made by Director Hunt to approve the SDAO Internship Grant application to be submitted, Director Lindquist seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

d. ODA Strategic Implementation Areas

Cassi stated that ODA announced at their board meeting that outreach will begin in the spring for developing the 2024-2028 SIA schedule. Randy advised that Maria has requested a time this spring to review the process and other elements of the SIA Program and that will be scheduled in the next couple of months.

9. Partners

a. MOA with MJD-BC Watershed Council

Randy stated that due to the COVID exposure, the follow up meeting with the work group was postponed, but that Cassi and him are working to incorporate the notes and put together a revision. He advised that further update will be available at the March meeting.

Debbi asked if an update can be provided to the Watershed Council with any potential changes.

Randy advised that after the follow up meeting with the work group, a draft will be developed to provide to the Watershed Council.

b. NRCS Local Work Group

Cassi advised that the NRCS Local Work Group meeting will be held virtually again this year and the link is provided in the packet. She stated that the District office is open to anyone who needs a location to attend the meeting.

Debbi advised that at the NRCS Local Work Group meeting, they discuss what they've been working on, what funding pools are available and offer time for landowners to voice concerns and interests. She also advised that NRCS partners usually give a brief overview of their work and available opportunities.

10. Business Not Listed

a. Cost-Share Program

Cassi stated that a landowner has contacted the District inquiring about support for a water rights matter and it is not something that can fit into regular grant opportunities. She reminded the Board that the District has a contract with RSI that with a one-page work request, Gabe will assist the District with technical assistance. Cassi stated that Randy and she discussed the potential of providing technical assistance to landowners through this contract.

The Board discussed the proper protocol of what the District is established to provide.

Randy requested that the Board approve for the District to assist the landowner with a two-hour consultation with RSI. The Board agreed.

General discussion of a Cost-Share Program was tabled.

b. Public Comment/Question

Carmen Oakes asked Cassi the following questions:

1. The Chamber of Commerce was paid, what benefits is the District receiving?

Cassi advised that Chamber of Commerce will provide advertising opportunities and a source of public outreach for items such as newsletters, meetings, funding opportunities, etc. She also

advised that the District is interested in revamping the website and the Chamber of Commerce may be able to assist with that process.

2. Why is the District's Facebook not utilized?

Cassi advised that it has not been a focus, but Randy is working on developing a practice of each staff member providing monthly data or information to be posted through social media and on the new website.

Carmen asked why the District does not brag about completed projects through any publications.

Randy stated that he is working on developing an entire comprehensive education and outreach strategy that will include the website, social media, publications, webinars, workshops and more. He stated that the process to develop the practice and resources takes time but are in the works.

3. Has the District located another service contract for the copier?

Cassi stated that she was not instructed by the Board to enter into another service contract and that the Board agreed that she and the rest of the staff can continue to service the copier as has been occurring.

4. Why is the boundary signs no longer on the agenda or being discussed?

Cassi advised that the District is not the lead agency for that project and that the John Day Basin Partnership was the initiating agency. Cassi stated that Herb Winters with Gilliam County SWCD is the lead and the current status of the project is that he is working to coordinate with all involved districts to get a total sign count and the design.

5. Is there any update on the River Democracy Act?

Cassi advised that Wheeler County and the District sent a joint letter to the representatives and received a simple "thank you" response. Randy stated that Congress is still considering the omnibus bill that potentially could incorporate the River Democracy Act, but there has not been any confirmation that any or all Wheeler County segments will be removed.

Carmen shared that she was at a fire training and there is a program that provides free assessment and pays landowners to complete fire abatement activities. She stated that the contact is Brandon Ferguson.

Next Meeting February 24, 2022

The Board left the open session to enter into executive session at 7:57 p.m. after a 10 minute recess.

11. Executive Session

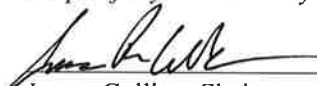
- a. **ORS 192.610(2)(e)** To conduct deliberations with persons designated by the governing body to negotiate real property transactions.


The Board adjourned the executive session at 8:31 p.m. and returned to open session.

‡ **Motion** made by Director Hunt to approve Randall Williams and Cassi Newton to confidentially conduct exploratory research regarding real estate, Director Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The board meeting was adjourned by Vice-Chair Thomas at 8:34 p.m. by the clock on the wall.

Respectfully submitted by Cassandra Newton


James Collins, Chair


Randall Williams, District Manager

