

**WHEELER SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES**

December 28, 2020

**Meeting location: TELECONFERENCE**

**To join the meeting from a computer, tablet or smartphone:**

<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/432053917>

**To dial in using a phone:**

United States: +1 (224) 501-3412

**Access Code:** 432-053-917

The board meeting was called to order by Chairman Holmes at 6:01 p.m. by his wrist watch.

**Directors**

Jeremiah Holmes  
Wayne Lindquist  
Kale Haberman  
David Hunt  
Jim Bob Collins  
Jason Davis

**Assoc. Directors**

**Employees**

Chase Schultz  
Cassandra Newton  
Brooke Moore  
Bodie Brown

**Others Present**

Gabe Williams, RSI  
Debbi Bunch, MJDBCWC  
Maria Snodgrass, ODA

**AGENCY REPORTS**

**ODA, Maria Snodgrass:** Maria provided a brief update on ODA and LAC SIA funding. She stated that funding up to \$100,000 is still available for districts with an SIA implemented, but considering the economic crisis, ODA is asking that the districts to review their own budgets only request funding from ODA for expenses they are not able to cover.

Director Collins asked what the district is permitted to use the funding for. She advised that the \$100,000 is allocable to capacity – administration and design – by the districts for the SIA work and an additional \$25,000 is allocable to monitoring over a maximum of ten years. She mentioned that districts must obtain implementation funding from other sources.

**RSI, Gabe Williams:** Gabe stated that the OWEB grant cycle reviews went well. The applications focused on work for the Antone area and it is *pretty promising*. The landowners are doing their own restoration work to match OWEB grant funding. He stated progress continues with the Painted Hills project, a lot of dirt is being moved and he is working on the first federal request for the District to submit to OWRD.

**Mid John Day – Bridge Creek Watershed Council, Debbi Bunch:** Debbi stated that the watershed submitted one application, which was recommended and is ranked #5. She advised that OWEB is streamlining the capacity grant for the next biennium with only four questions in the budget section. They plan for full funding for all previous recipients. She stated that she submitted one small grant application, which was approved. Debbi also submitted two business COVID relief grants, one has been awarded.

She advised she completed the District's Annual Report and provide copies for the directors to Cassi. She is planning the Council's Annual Meeting, which will take place virtually in January – she has not set a date, but will be the last week. She stated that she has three completion reports to get completed within the next month and a half.

**DISTRICT STAFF REPORTS**

**District Manager:** Chase stated that OWEB released the rankings for the last grant cycle. The District submitted five applications, four of which were recommended. The rankings of the District's projects were #1, #2, #4, and #9 – out of 9 total recommended for the region.

He advised that OWEB August and October revenues were higher than were expected, so they are still expecting to provide award for the recommended projects in March. The current revenue was 3.5% higher than the pre-pandemic figures used to develop OWEB's 2020-21 budget. If revenues remain high through March, OWEB anticipates resuming normal solicitation cycles.

He also advised that OWEB anticipates weed project funding availability. They plan for an April solicitation and award in July. If revenues remain high, they anticipate continuing normal solicitation cycles for the 2021-22 year with December applications awarded in February.

**Field Tech II:** Bodie stated that Tristen Berg is hopeful for the OWEB weed funding. Bodie advised that if funding is available, he will apply for another weed grant, as well as a Tri-Co grant with Jefferson and Crook counties for Medusahead.

**Field Tech I:** Brooke stated Chase's request was approved for an extension on the Greater Butte Enhancement project grant, which allows the District to help NRCS conduct additional CR surveys and more. The second signup period opened and she has been working on getting more landowners signed up.

### **MONTHLY BUSINESS**

**Minutes:** The November 17, 2020 regular minutes were presented for review. Director Davis **moved that the regular minutes from November 17, 2020 be approved**, Director Hunt seconded the motion. The **motion carried unanimously**.

The November 17, 2020 executive minutes were presented for review. Director Collins **moved that the executive minutes from November 17, 2020 be approved**, Director Hunt seconded the motion. The **motion carried unanimously**.

**Budget Expense Report:** The budget report dated December 8, 2020 was reviewed.

Chairman Holmes stated that line item 11 – Project Management Funds was budgeted for \$237,076 and the District has only received \$4,625. He asked why there was a large difference in budgeted amount and received amounts despite being half way through the fiscal year. Chase advised that a large amount will be received within the next two months since there are four grants closing.

Director Collins **moved that the budget report dated December 8, 2020 be approved**, Director Haberman seconded the motion. The **motion carried unanimously**.

**Bills:** The check register dated December 22, 2020 to December 31, 2020 was unable to be provided to directors and attendees due to late receipt from Finance Manager before the meeting. Chairman Holmes stated that the bills are not a required agenda item for this meeting and will be presented at the next board meeting for approval.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

**ANNUAL MEETING PLANNING:** Cassi stated that per the decision at the November board meeting, she cancelled all reservations for the December Annual Meeting and sent notice of the postponement via mailed postcards.

Cassi advised that she contacted Eric Nusbaum with ODA to discuss options available that still meet compliance. Eric stated that there is no possible way to hold an in person annual meeting while staying in compliance given the current restrictions in place, but districts have until June 30<sup>th</sup> to hold their annual meeting. Districts are allowed to hold a virtual meeting to present the annual and audit reports, which is what most districts are opting to do. He suggested that we wait a few months before making a decision, if we are desiring an in person event.

Cassi further advised that regardless of the option chosen, a new resolution will need to be adopted once a decision is made.

The Board tabled this matter until January to discuss the restrictions in place at that time and will possibly table the matter further into Spring.

**LAC / SIA:** Cassi advised that she does not have an update on the LAC/SIA matter, but Chase and her will have items to discuss at the January meeting.

**LONG RANGE BUSINESS PLAN:** Chairman Holmes advised that Cassi has sent out copies of the Long Range Business Plan, both electronically and mailed physical copies. He stated that the Board needs to approve and adopt the Plan for the 2021-2023 period.

Director Hunt **moved that the 2021-2023 Long Range Business Plan be approved and adopted**, Director Lindquist seconded the motion. The **motion carried unanimously**.

**WATER RIGHTS UPDATE:** Chairman Holmes asked Gabe Williams if he had an update on the water rights matter. Gabe advised that he has not been the office for about two and a half weeks, and has not talked to anyone in regard to the matter.

Cassi advised that the last communication she received was a response to a request for update she sent to both Hayes McCoy and Gabe Williams on December 3<sup>rd</sup>. She received response on December 8<sup>th</sup> from Hayes that he was trying to get the notices sent out in the next couple of weeks and then finalize the COBU.

**WATERSHED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITY:** Cassi advised that Judy suggested to Debbi that the District refer to the document as a *Statement of Financial Activity* instead of a *Profit and Loss Statement* because the Watershed Council is a nonprofit entity.

Cassi stated that Judy provided an updated expense spreadsheet in early December, so she was able to update the Statement of Financial Activity for the Board and Council.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

**ANNUAL WORK PLAN ITEM: FOCUS AREA:** Cassi advised that there is an item on the District's Annual Work Plan to discuss changing or expanding the focus area. The focus area is currently in the Mountain Creek area. She stated that this matter is not urgent, but she wanted to initiate the topic for discussion at a future meeting.

The Board tabled this matter until January.

**SAFETY GRANT FUNDS AWARDED:** Cassi advised that she submitted an application in October for funding to purchase new SPOT radios for the technicians. The District was awarded the grant in full, which funds 50% of the purchase for three new SPOT radios. She stated that SDAO has processed the payment and upon District receipt of the funds, she will order the radios.

**SURPLUS LAPTOPS:** Cassi stated that Chase would like to surplus three of the four older laptops. Chairman Holmes asked if there were value to any of them. Chase advised that the value is low, but the process to surplus equipment requires advertising regardless if items are disposed of or sold through bids. Therefore, Chase stated he would like to accept bids for the laptops.

Director Collins **moved to surplus three of the four older laptops**, Director Hunt seconded the motion. The **motion carried unanimously**.

**DRONE UPDATE:** Cassi stated that she and Brooke have setup a trial of software on the iPad called DroneDeploy. Gilliam SWCD recommended this software and Brooke was introduced to it by Herb while she was out in the field

with him. Brooke has been practicing flights with the drone and capturing photos. She is also in contact with a customer service representative from DroneDeploy who has been assisting her with operating the software.

Cassi advised the annual cost of the software is \$3,588 with a 1 year commitment. Gilliam SWCD partners with NRCS to budget for this software. Chase is currently researching possible partnerships and grant options for our District to successfully acquire a subscription to this software.

Cassi further advised that she received response from the District's insurance agent and Chase has decided not to implement an additional insurance policy for coverage of the drone. The current insurance policy held through SDAO insures liability that will cover any damage caused by the drone, but does not cover the drone itself. The annual cost of the additional policy far exceeds replacement cost of the drone.

Gabe advised that RSI uses a free software except for some of the mapping. Chase requested Gabe provide the information of the software RSI uses. Gabe stated that he would have Ben get in contact with Chase to discuss the software capabilities and any costs within the software.

**2019-2020 AUDIT:** Chairman Holmes advised that Cassi provided a copy of the 2019-20 audit and Action Plan via email last week to all directors.

Director Hunt **moved to approve the 2019-20 audit and Action Plan**, Director Davis seconded the motion. The **motion carried unanimously**.

**FINANCIAL PROCEDURES AND POLICY:** Chairman Holmes advised that Cassi also sent this in an email to the directors.

Cassi stated that she combined all financial policies into this policy, then outlined in detail the financial procedures of the District. The policy provides extensive detail of the responsibilities held by the District Manager, Administrative Assistant, Finance, Manager, and directors; as well as the process for all employees to follow when handling various financial transactions and requests.

Cassi advised there is one item in the policy that was suggested by the auditor, but needs to be approved separately by the Board prior to adopting the policy. She advised that she has a printed copy of both versions available for signature contingent on the decision made. She continued by stated that the auditor suggested removing the Finance Manager, Judy Potter as a signer on the District accounts. The policy will remain the same in regard to the District Manager conducting all actions of financial activity, such as transfers, deposit signatures, etc. Cassi advised that a new signature card would have to be signed by all bank signers upon removal of one signer.

Chairman Holmes recommended that the Board follow the auditor's suggestion because it will alleviate the deficiency. He advised that if it is determined that not having the Finance Manager as a bank signer is hindering operations of the District, the Board as the authority to revise the policy and add her as a signer.

Director Collins asked if there is a benefit to the Finance Manager as a bank signer. Chairman Holmes stated that for the past many years, the audit has been returned to the District with a deficiency of *lack of segregation of accounting duties*, which was caused mainly by the District Manager also being the one who handles all financial duties; but, it was not conceivable to segregate the duties. Since the District has different individuals handling the various duties of the District and a contracted Finance Manager, it is possible to successfully achieve segregation of accounting duties.

Director Lindquist asked if the Finance Manger *needs* to be a signer. Chase stated that it is a matter of convenience, but it has been years since she signed any check and he is able to handle the signer required actions. Chairman Holmes added that removing the Finance Manger as a signer is also a protection measure for her. He advised that we would be

trying to take anything away from her, but simply protecting her from any possible outside allegations. Chairman Holmes stated that he and Director Hunt have been making great efforts to be available at any time for signing needs.

Director Collins **moved to remove the Finance Manager, Judy Potter as a bank signer**, Director Hunt seconded the motion. The **motion carried unanimously**.

Director Davis **moved to approve and adopt the Financial Policies and Procedures Policy**, Director Haberman seconded the motion. The **motion carried unanimously**.

#### **OTHER BUSINESS NOT LISTED**

**WHEELER COUNTY WEED BOARD:** Kale advised that he needs to reach out to the Weed Board members to schedule a meeting. Once they hold a meeting, he will have a presentation for the SWCD Board.

**MONTHLY MEETINGS:** Chairman Holmes reminded the Board of a discussion that took place last Spring in regard to moving the monthly meetings to the last Thursday of the month instead of Wednesday. He advised that the District staff made this request since Thursdays are the last day of the week for them. There have been numerous meetings that last until late at night and the staff are required to return to work at 6 a.m. the following morning. Chairman Holmes stated that the request was tabled due to Thursdays not being an available day on his schedule, but that has changed. He asked if there was anyone who would not be available to attend on the last Thursdays of each month. There were no conflicts stated.

Cassi advised that policies will need to be revised, if the meeting date is changed.

Since there were no conflicts in schedule, Chairman Holmes stated that Cassi will revise the necessary policies for adoption at the January meeting. He requested that if anyone determines a conflict that will hinder their ability to attend on Thursdays instead of Wednesdays, to please bring it to the Board's attention at the January meeting.

**NEXT MEETING DATE:** The next meeting date will be on **January 28, 2021** at 6:00 pm. Cassi will provide notice of whether the meeting will be held in person or virtually.

**RECESS:** The Board took a 3-minute recess at 6:42 p.m. prior to entering executive session.

#### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

The executive session was called to order by Chairman Holmes at 6:45 p.m.

*ORS 192.660(8) To review and evaluate the employment-related performance of the chief executive officer of any public body, a public officer, employee or staff member who does not request an open hearing.*

The executive session was adjourned by Chairman Holmes at 6:45 p.m.

Chairman Holmes was called for work duty during the executive session and had to leave the meeting.

The Board reconvened the regular meeting at 6:45 p.m.

#### **OTHER BUSINESS NOT LISTED, continued**

**ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT:** After discussion of the salary increase request received from Cassi Newton, the Personnel Committee made a recommendation to approve a salary increase to \$19.23 hourly.

Director Lindquist **moved to approve a salary increase to \$19.23 hourly for Cassi Newton effectively January 1, 2021**, Director Hunt seconded the motion. The **motion carried unanimously**.

**POLICY:** Vice Chairman Lindquist stated that it was his understanding that when the District hired Cassi, that the approval to allow her baby to accompany her was only for one month. He advised his concern is that the Board is setting a precedence and he stated that the Board needs to come up with a policy to avoid this matter in the future. He

stated that he heard rumor that there is not supposed to be children in the building under the contract held with the building owner.

Director Hunt stated that at Painted Hills Beef, management handles such matters on a case by case basis. As long as the child(ren) do not become a deterrent from the employees efficiency to complete work, then they are permitted to be at the office. He stated that the Office Administrator makes the decision of if work is being completed efficiently.

Cassi reviewed the lease agreement and advised that there is no restriction of children in the building unless argued under item number 4, which states "The leased property shall be used solely for: Office space and vehicle parking. No other use may be made of the leased property without the written consent of the Lessor." Cassi further advised that the lease agreement was signed in 2012 and the Lessor is deceased.

Chairman Holmes asked Cassi to research with other districts and employers pertaining to children accompanying employees to work. He suggested that a policy be discussed at the next meeting, if it is still necessary.

Director Lindquist stated it is still something the Board needs to look at regardless if Cassi's child is there or not because in his opinion the District saved her childcare expense for a year. Chairman Holmes stated that Cassi has been paying half-time childcare for three months. Director Lindquist stated the policy is needed to eliminate discrimination and avoid Chase having to make the decision of whether work is being completed efficiently.

Chairman Holmes advised the discussion is tabled until the January meeting.

**ADJOURNMENT:** There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned by Chairman Holmes at 7:05 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted by Cassandra Newton*

  
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*Jeremiah Holmes, Chair*

  
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*Chase Schultz, District Manager*