



Wheeler Soil and Water Conservation District

40535 Highway 19, Fossil, OR 97830
(P) 541.468.2990 • (F) 541.468.2991
administration@wheelerswcd.org

Board of Directors
Meeting Minutes
April 28, 2022

Directors

James Collins
Anna Thomas
Wayne Lindquist
David Hunt

Assoc. Directors

Employees

Randall Williams
Cassandra Newton
Daniel Goodell
Brooke Moore

Others Present

Debbi Bunch, MJD-BCWC
Carmen Oakes
Ross Ryno
Zach Bruce

The board meeting was called to order by Chair Collins at 6:15 p.m. by the clock on the wall.

1. Agency Reports

a. MJD-BC Watershed Council, Debbi Bunch

Debbi advised that both fall applications that she submitted to OWEB were funded. Debbi extended an invitation to the Watershed Council's Annual Meeting being held at 5 p.m. on May 4th at the Jeanne Burch Building in Fossil. Debbi stated that the Lower John Day Working Group will be meeting in-person on May 17th in Condon and will be voting on the Step 5 report.

b. RSI (Engineer), Gabe Williams

Gabe advised that he received a quote for the culvert on Pine Hollow and will be purchasing from Contech. He also advised there was a site tour held with ODFW that went well. Gabe expressed concern about the inflation of materials.

c. NRCS, DelRae Ferguson

Not present

d. ODA, Maria Snodgrass

Not present

e. Others

None

2. District Reports

a. District Manager, Randy Williams

Randy stated his report is current.

b. Office Manager, Cassi Newton

Cassi apologized for not having a written report. She stated that the majority of her time during the month consisted on preparation for the financial management transition, mainly the development of tracking spreadsheets and setting up QuickBooks. She advised that she will be meeting with the auditor towards the end of May to review the QuickBooks setup.

Cassi advised that the District now holds its own pesticide/herbicide dealer's license and she has been working on gathering all the Weed Board documents to transfer to the County. She stated that it'll be a few months before she has everything gathered and organized.

Cassi stated that an update regarding the Juniper Butte project is in Brooke's report but advised that the project is getting cancelled. She explained to the Board that OWEB will reimburse the District for the expenditures on the books and OWEB instructed the District that the decision to reimburse the landowner is on the District. Cassi provided a review of the work that has been completed and the expenditures related to that work. After Board discussion, the Board agreed to reimburse the landowner.

c. Conservation Technician I, Brooke Moore

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)

Brooke advised that the fall application she submitted to OWEB was funded and she has submitted two of the three applications for the spring cycle.

d. Conservation Technician II, Daniel Goodell

Daniel advised that he has one application ready to submit for the OWEB spring cycle and he has one more application that will be finished on Monday for submission before the deadline.

3. Monthly Business

a. Review and approve minutes

- March 31, 2022

‡**Motion** made by Vice-Chair Thomas to approve the board meeting minutes from March 31, 2022 with corrections, Director Hunt seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

b. Review and approve budget report

- April 18, 2022

Question was raised as to what was included in Line Item 47 of the General Fund Expenditures and if it was an unexpected cost. Cassi advised that she would need to request that information from Judy.

‡**Motion** made by Director Lindquist to approve the budget report dated April 18, 2022 as presented, Vice-Chair Thomas seconded the motion. The motion pass unanimously.

Cassi advised that a draft of the 2022-2023 budget is included in the packet. She explained the changes to the format.

c. Review and approve Accounts Payable

- April 28, 2022

‡**Motion** made by Director Hunt to approve the check registers from April 28, 2022 as presented, Director Lindquist seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Upcoming Meetings & Events

- Staff Meeting, every Monday
- April
 - 26th: OWEB Board Meeting, 8am
 - 27th: OWEB Board Meeting, 10am
 - 28th: SWCD Board Meeting, 6pm
- May
 - 3rd: BDA Workshop (Prineville), 8am
 - 4th: MJD-BC WC Annual Meeting, 4pm
 - 11th: JDBP Meeting, 10am
 - 17th: SWCC Meeting, 1pm
 - 18th: SWCC Meeting, 8:30am
 - 26th: SWCD Board Meeting, 6pm
- June
 - 15th: Region Coordination Meeting, 9am
 - 30th: SWCD Board Meeting, 6pm

5. Upcoming Deadlines

- OWEB Open Solicitation, 05.02.2022 5pm
- Smart Commodities Grant 05.06.2022 8:59pm

6. District Management

a. Finance Manager Transition

Cassi and Randy advised they met with Judy earlier in the month and Judy advised that it would not be beneficial for her to review the QuickBooks setup since it does not mirror her system. Cassi stated that instead of Judy reviewing QuickBooks, she will be meeting with the auditor to perform the checks and balances of the setup. Cassi advised that she is still working on her certification but it has been difficult to complete at the same time as maintaining all other District duties.

Question was raised as to if the Board was going to require the certification to be completed prior Cassi taking over the financial management.

Cassi stated that the certification is only teaching the operations of the QuickBooks software in regard to all the features and options. She advised that her Master's Degree in accounting and experience in accounting is the actual source for her ability in managing finances for the District. Randy stated that the request to retain a CPA was to assist the District with proper segregation of accounting duties and preform a checks and balance with reconciliations. He advised that he does not believe Cassi needs to be completed with the QuickBooks certification prior to taking over the financial management on July 1st.

b. Office Lease

Randy advised that Judy has provided a revised lease agreement for the Board's review and approval. He explained the minor changes and advised of the agreed upon \$200 increase of the rental rate. He further advised that the lease is written as a one-year lease to begin June 1, 2022 and will automatically be renewed unless written notice is provided prior to renewal.

‡**Motion** made by Director Hunt to approve the Office Lease as presented, Director Lindquist seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

c. Director Recruitment

‡**Motion** made by Director Lindquist to appoint Ross Ryno to the board position of At-Large 1, Vice-Chair Thomas seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously
Chair Collins conducted the Oath of Office

d. Oregon Paid Family/Medical Leave

After a brief discussion, this item was tabled until August due to the limited information that has been made public.

e. Administrative Manager Position Description

Randy advised that, as he did with the Conservation Technicians, he has revised Cassi's position description to reflect the tasks and responsibilities that the position currently entails. He briefly explained the position description and advised that the two significant changes were to the position title and making the position an exempt position.

The Board asked Cassi if she agreed with changing the position to exempt. Cassi stated that she believed it was an appropriate change to make.

‡**Motion** made by Director Hunt to approve and adopt the Administrative Manager Position Description as presented, Vice-Chair Thomas seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

f. Employee Evaluations

Randy briefly reviewed the employee evaluation process and provided an overview of each employee's evaluation. Chair Collins provided an overview of Randy's evaluation.

Randy stated that he is recommending a 4% merit increase and a 5% COLA for all employees. Cassi provided the Board with a spreadsheet with Randy's recommendations and the funding sources for all employee positions. After an in-depth conversation regarding competitive wages and District financials,

‡**Motion** made by Director Hunt to approve a 4% merit increase and a 5% COLA for all employees, Vice-Chair Thomas seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

g. May Board Meeting

Cassi advised that the board meeting falls on the Thursday before Spray Rodeo. She advised that Vice-Chair Thomas is actively involved in the Rodeo Association and she asked if this date would be of conflict to the directors' schedules. The Board agreed that all directors were available on May 26th and chose to keep the regular scheduled date for the board meeting.

7. Legislation

a. BLM Acquisition(s)

Randy stated that per the motions made at the March board meeting, he submitted the letters opposing both the BLM acquisition along the John Day River, as well as the Sutton Mountain. He advised that he is happy to provide the letters to anyone of interest to assist with additional letters planned for submission by other agencies.

Randy learned that BJ Westlund was resigning from working with Senator Merkley and awaiting for a new assigned field representative to submit a letter regarding the Board's concerns with the Sutton Mountain proposal

8. Projects/Programs

a. AgriMet Weather Stations

Randy advised that funding sources have been secured for the annual maintenance of two to three stations and he is still seeking funding for the other one or two stations desired for Wheeler County. He further advised that OWRD may have additional funding available and he is working with Jordan Beamer regarding that potential opportunity.

Randy stated that he has not been able to get any response from the tribes regarding funding for the installation of the stations but he will be reaching out to additional contacts to determine if the tribes are interested in partnering for AgriMet stations.

b. OWEB Open Solicitation

Cassi stated that there will be a total of five applications being submitted by the District for the spring cycle.

c. USDA Smart Commodities

Randy explained that he is working with a local landowner to develop a grant application to be submitted for the large funding pool.

Randy advised that there has been a request for the District to provide a letter of support for this landowner, as well as for Gray Beal Group.

Director Ryno declared a direct conflict of interest and abstained from the discussion.

Vice-Chair Collins declared a potential conflict of interest and abstained from the discussion.

‡ **Motion** made by Director Lindquist to approve the letter of support to be submitted on behalf of the local landowner, Director Hunt seconded the motion. *Director Ryno abstained from voting.* The motion passed unanimously.

‡ **Motion** made by Director Lindquist to approve the letter of support to be submitted on behalf of Gray Beal Group, Director Ryno seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

9. Partners

a. Contract with MJD-BC Watershed Council

Randy stated that the workgroup he organized for the revisions to the current memorandum of agreement with the Watershed Council included the board officers – Chair Collins, Vice-Chair Thomas and Secretary/Treasurer Davis. He explained that the process of revisions had consisted of multiple meetings and communications with the Watershed Council. Randy advised that the agreement has been transitioned into a contract and it was included in the packet for the Board to review. He further advised that the Watershed Council has since sent some requested revisions and clarification, so the contract is not ready for approved.

Further discussion was tabled until the May meeting.

10. Business Not Listed

a. Director Appointment to Weed Board

Cassi asked the Board if they would like to table this again since there is still a vacant position on the Board. This item was tabled until the June meeting.

b. Potential Employment Position

Cassi advised that Randy has spoke to building the infrastructure of the District a few times in the past year and that both her and Randy believe the District is in the position to add another Conservation Technician position. Cassi provided the directors with a one-page briefing that outlined the potential position and the long-term goals for staffing that she developed with Randy. She also provided a spreadsheet of the funding sources for all employee positions which included the potential position.

The Board discussed with Cassi and Randy whether the District can withstand another full-time position, the staff space in the office, starting salary of the potential position and what the outcome will be if the District cannot maintain 3 full-time Conservation Technician positions. The Board also discussed employment policies regarding funding availability and training. The Board asked Brooke and Daniel for input on the discussion and both advised that a third position would assist with the workload and success of the District.

Cassi stated that she and Randy would like to recommend the Board approves a hiring process for this position similar to the last position that was filled.

‡**Motion** made by Director Hunt to approve Randy to develop a hiring committee of not more than 3 directors and interview a prior applicant for the trainee position of Conservation Technician Assistant, Director Lindquist seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously

Next Meeting May 26, 2022

The Board left the open session to enter into executive session at 9:11 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 10:00 p.m. and returned to open session.

The board meeting was adjourned by Chair Collins at 10:01 p.m. by the clock on the wall.

Respectfully submitted by Cassandra Newton


James Collins, Chair


Randall Williams, District Manager

