



# 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

August 25, 2022

## Directors

James Collins

Anna Thomas

Jason Davis

David Hunt

Wayne Lindquist

## Assoc. Directors/Emeritus

Jeremiah Holmes

## Employees

Cassandra Newton

Daniel Goodell

Brooke Moore

Kristen Neuburger

## Others Present

Marcus Swift, Overland Law

Zach Bruce

Brent Johnson

Karin Stutzman, ODA

Brandon Ferguson, ODF

The board meeting was called to order by Chair Collins at 6:03 p.m. by the clock on the wall.

The Board left the open session to enter into executive session at 6:08 p.m. after a 10-minute recess.

### 1. Executive Session

ORS 192.610(2)(b) To consider dismissal or discipline of or complaints against an officer, employee, staff or agent.

The Board adjourned the executive session at 6:35 p.m. and returned to open session.

The Board left the open session to enter into executive session at 6:36 p.m. after a 10-minute recess.

### 2. Executive Session

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

The Board adjourned the executive session at 6:56 p.m. and returned to open session.

### 3. Agency Reports

#### a. ODA, Karin Stutzman

Karin introduced herself and provided an overview of her role at ODA.

#### b. ODF, Brandon Ferguson

Brandon shared that there has been record low acres burned in the John Day districts. He provided information on the ODF SB762 and the letters/maps that were previous sent out. Brandon advised that his team is available for education and technical assistance in conjunction with the current Assistance Grant available to Wheeler County landowners.

### 4. District Reports

#### a. District Manager, Randy Williams

Not present

#### b. Administration Manager, Cassi Newton

Cassi stated her report is current.

#### c. Conservation Technician II, Brooke Moore

Brooke stated her report is current.

#### d. Conservation Technician II, Daniel Goodell

Daniel stated his report is current aside from his submission of a small grant application

#### e. Conservation Technician Assistant, Kristen Neuburger

*Cassi introduced and welcomed Kristen.* Kristen stated her report is current.

### 5. Monthly Business

#### a. Review and approve minutes

- June 30, 2022 regular minutes
- June 30, 2022 executive session minutes

‡ **Motion** made by Vice-Chair Thomas to approve the board meeting minutes from June 30, 2022, Director Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

#### b. Review financial report

- July

**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 provided a financial report in the board packet. She explained the layout and details of the report. The Board asked various questions and provided discussion on the details provided on the report. Cassi asked the Board their preference of receiving this report monthly and the budget report quarterly, or only receiving the budget report monthly. The Board advised they appreciated receiving the monthly financial report.

**c. Review and approve Accounts Payable**

- July 28, 2022
- August 15, 2022
- August 25, 2022

Cassi advised that she mistakenly overpaid Kristen for the monthly of July due to not realizing that pro-rating hours in the payroll screen of QuickBooks did not automatically adjust the payroll amount. She advised that she spoke to Kristen about the error and Cassi suggested allowing Kristen to payback the hours to the District through accrual of comp time over the next year.

‡**Motion** made by Director Hunt to approve the overpayment of payroll to Kristen Neuburger to be repaid through accrual of comp time, Director Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

‡**Motion** made by Director Davis to approve the check registers from July 28, 2022, August 15, 2022 and August 25, 2022 as presented, Director Hunt seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**6. Upcoming Meetings & Events**

- Staff Meeting, every Monday
- **September**
  - 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> CONNECT
  - 8<sup>th</sup> USGS-NIDIS Drought Prediction, 10am
  - 14<sup>th</sup> Regional Coordination, 9am
  - 15<sup>th</sup> OWRD Feasibility Meeting, 10:30am
  - 20<sup>th</sup> LJDWG Meeting, 10am
  - 21<sup>st</sup> JDBP Meeting, 9am
  - 29<sup>th</sup> Board Meeting, 6pm

**7. Upcoming Deadlines**

- **September**
  - 15<sup>th</sup> FIP Proposal
  - 29<sup>th</sup> Statewide Irrigation Modernization Grant

**8. District Management**

**a. Action/Decision of Item 1**

‡**Motion** made by Director Davis to place Randall Williams on unpaid investigatory leave until further notice, Vice-Chair Thomas seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**b. Action/Decision of Item 2**

‡**Motion** made by Director Hunt to approve the real property Purchase Agreement, Director Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

‡**Motion** made by Director Lindquist to appoint James Collins as the signatory on behalf of the District for all documents through the current acquisition of real property, Vice-Chair Thomas seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**c. Delegation of Authority**

Cassi advised that with the absence of a District Manager, the current delegation of authority she was appointed will not provide the necessary authority to seamlessly continue the District business. Chair Collins recommended that the delegation revert back to the 2021 delegation of authority (*provided in the board packet*) with the amendment that Cassi provides a record of signatures to the Board officers.

‡**Motion** made by Director Holmes to appoint Cassandra Newton the presented delegation of authority with the amendment that a record of signatures be provided to the Board officers, Director Lindquist seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

‡**Motion** made by Director Holmes to approve a temporary wage increase of \$1,500 for Cassandra Newton while she carries out the responsibilities of the District Manager, Director Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**d. Director Recruitment**

*Brief discussion regarding Zone positions occurred upon opening the meeting at 6:03pm and the following motion:*

‡**Motion** made by Director Davis to appoint Jeremiah Holmes to the Zone 4 position, Vice-Chair Thomas seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Cassi advised the people present that Jeremiah was appointed and took an Oath of Office for Zone 4 for a term through December 31<sup>st</sup>. She also advised that the Board may appoint Zach and Brent as associates until they are appointed or elected to a zone position.

‡**Motion** made by Director Davis to appoint Zachery Bruce and Brent Johnson as associate directors, Vice-Chair Thomas seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Cassi and Karin explained the election process and deadlines for the current election.

**e. Card User Authorization**

‡**Motion** made by Director Holmes to approve Kristen Neuburger as an authorized card user, Vice-Chair Thomas seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**f. Finance Manager Transition**

Cassi thanked Chair Collins, Vice-Chair Thomas and Director Davis for their assistance through the first month following the finance manager transition. She advised of the following:

- The check stock used by the previously contracted Finance Manager was not compatible with QuickBooks and the temporary check stock from the bank could not be printed, so she completed the July check run by handwriting the checks.
  - The LGIP account does not accept outside deposits, so the ACH deposits from the District's funders will be done through the Bank of Eastern Oregon checking account and transferred.
  - The previously contracted Finance Manager submitted an invoice for bookkeeping hours that occurred after June 30<sup>th</sup>, but advised she does not anticipating submitting any further hours.
- The Board asked Cassi if she was happy with QuickBooks and how the transition is going. Cassi stated that although it has been a rocky start, she believes it is going well. She advised that the auditor has agreed to meet with her after audit season and he is willing to review the Accountant File of the District's QuickBooks to ensure that the coding and entries are correct and make sense.

**g. Visa**

Cassi stated that the current Visa limit is \$5,000 with five cards on the single account. She advised that through her research, it appears the original limit was \$10,000 but she is unaware of the reason for the change. Cassi requested the Board's approval to increase the limit back to \$10,000 to eliminate the need for multiple payments each month. She explained that Visa is utilized for utilities, trainings and project needs and supplies. The Board asked Cassi if the Visa charges would be itemized on the financial report and she stated yes.

‡**Motion** made by Director Holmes to approve the Visa limit to be increased to \$10,000, Director Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**h. SDIS Best Practices**

Cassi advised that she included the annual SDAO Best Practice Survey handout in the board packet. She explained that the best practice program is a survey open to districts each year that a

policy is renewed and for each criteria met is 2% off the annual premium. Cassi stated that the District has repetitively met the full 10% since she started, but this year the survey changed slightly. She explained that the District is currently only able to meet 6% and the last 4% requires the Board to participate in the SDAO board education, either virtually or in-person.

**i. District Website**

Cassi advised that she launched the new website on August 4<sup>th</sup>. She stated that there is still some work to do to bring it up-to-date, but it is live on the new platform. Cassi asked the Board if they would like to provide a photo and bio for the new website, they declined.

**j. Annual Meeting**

Cassi asked the Board if they had a preference on topics or speakers for the Annual Meeting.

There were no suggestions and the Board advised they would leave it up to the staff for planning.

**9. Legislation**

No discussion items.

**10. Projects/Programs**

**a. Focus Area**

Cassi reminded the Board of a discussion in the spring of 2021 regarding adding a new focus area in the Kahler Creek Watershed and only leaving funding in Mountain Creek to conduct the biennial survey. She stated that the staff has discussed creating a focus area in Bridge Creek.

**b. ODA AgWQ Support Grant**

Cassi advised that that staff met with Maria Snodgress regarding an application for the AgWQ Support Grant that is available and the funding would be utilized to do an assessment on West Branch Bridge Creek, develop a monitoring plan to be utilized for the Focus Area and hold a stakeholder engagement event for landowners in the area. Cassi stated that Maria will be meeting with staff at the office the week of September 12<sup>th</sup>.

Karin provided an in-depth overview of the current AgWQ Support Grant Application and the process for future biennium opportunities.

**c. Conservation Innovation Grant**

Cassi and Daniel advised that they are seeking input from NRCS regarding a potential CIG application opportunity.

**d. OWEB Open Solicitation**

Cassi advised that the technicians have a few OWEB applications they are working on and the deadline is October 31<sup>st</sup>.

**e. AgriMet Weather Stations**

Cassi advised that the AgriMet coordination was solely handled by Randy, so she will be catching up to speed on where he was with those efforts and will report back in September.

**f. Lower John Day Working Group**

Cassi advised that she missed the last LJDWG meeting, but there is a feasibility subcommittee meeting that she will be attending in a week. She advised that Gilliam SWCD is still working on the applications for the ARPA funds available.

**g. Joint Chiefs**

Cassi stated that Randy was seeking to apply for the Joint Chiefs, but the District received recommendation from NRCS to not apply since there is an EQIP funding pool currently available in the same area Randy was looking for the Joint Chiefs to be.

Brandon provided insight on his experience with the project, as well as past, current and future Joint Chief projects and applications in Oregon.

**11. Partners**

**a. Transition Agreement with MJD Watershed Council**

Cassi advised that the District received a signed copy of the Transition Agreement from the Council on August 17<sup>th</sup>. She reminded the Board that the Agreement expires on September 30<sup>th</sup>.

**b. Noxious Weed Collaborative Meeting**

Cassi and Daniel advised that a landowner workshop is being planned and the topic will include calibration, species identification and herbicides.

**c. OCEAN Connect+**

Cassi advised that the staff will be in Seaside the week of September 6<sup>th</sup> to attend the annual Connect Conference. She stated that a schedule of the classes staff will be attending was included in the board packet.

**Next Meeting** September 29, 2022

The board meeting was adjourned by Chair Collins at 8:29 p.m. by the clock on the wall.

*Respectfully submitted by Cassandra Newton*

  
James Collins, Chair

  
Cassandra Newton, Administrative Manager

