



Wasco County Soil and Water Conservation District
Board Meeting Minutes – December 7, 2022

Directors: Bill Hammel Pat Davis Bob Krien
Phil Kaser Ken Bailey

Directors via Teleconference: Shawn Sorensen

Directors Absent: Stan Shephard

Associate Directors Absent: Bryce Molesworth

Staff: Jennifer Sampson Drake Gilbert Josh Thompson

Staff via Teleconference: Samantha Filbin Ryan Bessette Karen Lamson

Guests:
NRCS: Emily Huth, District Conservationist
SWCD: Larry Powell, SWCD Board Director Elect

Guests via Teleconference:
NRCS: Jon Ludovico, Soil Conservationist
FSA: Lissa Biehn, County Executive Director
Public: Dan Hazel

1:01 PM Call to Order

Bill called the meeting to order and asked if there were any additions to the agenda. None were made.

Minutes: Bill asked if there were any additions or corrections to the November board meeting minutes. None were made. *Pat moved to approve the November board meeting minutes as presented; Bob seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*

Treasurer's Report: Josh reviewed the October & November Treasurer's Report, noting income, expenses, account and fund balances. He noted in November we have started receiving tax deposits. *Pat moved to receive the October and November Treasurer's Report; Ken seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*

Public Comment (5 Min. limit/person) – None at this time.

Action Items

a. Policy Review – Updating Board Policies – Josh presented the draft Board Duties Policies and asked if the board had any input. The draft policy was based on a template provided by SDAO. Discussion ensued regarding the duties that were outlined in the policy and whether board members were meeting those requirements or not. Board consensus was to table the board policies until the January meeting to allow board members more time to review.

b. Cost-Share Requests – Jennifer presented seven cost share requests, noting that if all applications were approved, that would use up all the remaining haul road budget and then be over budget. However, there are enough projects that have finished under budget to make up the difference. The board discussed possible policy adjustments on district cost shares to remedy using up the budget halfway through the fiscal year and consensus was to re-evaluate those policies during budgeting time for the next fiscal year. Jennifer stated historically the board has agreed to consider cost share requests on a case-by-case basis after the current budget has been expended. Board consensus was to do the same this year and possibly consider a budget amendment before the end of the fiscal year.

Krein & Nogle – Bob declared a conflict of interest. This is a joint project with Pat Nogle who submitted a separate application. This is for a spring development on Bob Krein’s, which will be piped to a water trough for livestock, which will then be piped across the fence to property leased by Pat Nogle. Bob requested \$6,609.00 and Pat Nogle requested \$4,680.00. *Ken moved to approve both the Krein and Nogle applications; Pat seconded. Bob abstained due to a conflict of interest. Motion carried.*

Meakin – Josh reported that this is an old spring and an existing pond that need cleaned of debris and sediment. They were originally thinking of installing an infiltration gallery, but now are planning on a vertical filter instead so it will take longer to clog with sediment. They are requesting the maximum of \$7,500.

Reeves/Rosedale Fruit Farm – Carrie Reeves submitted an application to replace brass impact sprinklers on two orchard blocks with drip irrigation. The blocks have a total of 5.5 acres. They are requesting \$4,755.20.

R.Clausen – This is a mainline project for approximately 1,300ft. The landowner plans to do the work themselves and is requesting \$7,500.

J.Clausen – This is a haul road application for approximately ½ miles of road. He is requesting \$2,500.

W.Markman – This is a haul road application for approximately ¼ miles of road. He is requesting \$2,500.

Ken moved to approve the Meakin, Rosedale Fruit, R.Clausen, J.Clausen, and Markman cost share applications; Pat seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

c. Paid Leave Oregon – Jennifer reported Paid Leave Oregon is a new program that allows individuals to take paid time off for certain qualifying events. Employees and employers are required to begin paying into the new program as of January 1, 2023. Employers pay 40% and

employees pay 60% of the contribution rate, which is 1 percent of employee wages for 2023. Employers with fewer than 25 employees do not need to make contributions; however, they will still need to collect and submit the employees' share. Employers may choose to cover all or part of the employee contribution. Shilah recommended that the board cover the employee portion of this tax, which is 0.6% of wages and waive paying the remaining 0.4% as we are a small employer. *Bob moved to have the SWCD Board pay the employee portion of the contribution and not pay the employer portion; Phil seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*

Bob requested staff research whether or not board members could participate in the district's group health insurance if they reimbursed the district for the premiums.

d. 15Mile MUS Workshop Follow Up – Appoint Committee, Contracting – Josh reported that most of the board members were able to participate in the November workshop, and for those who weren't able to attend, Shilah held a follow up meeting with Drake and Abbie, as well as Bill, Phil and Ken. A subcommittee was suggested to deal with the 15MUS project moving forward, who can then report to the full board, with the subcommittee consisting of no more than three board members. Phil, Ken, Pat, and Larry volunteered to be on the subcommittee, with the understanding that Larry will replace Pat as a board member starting in January, still leaving three board members on the subcommittee. Bill agreed to be an alternate committee member, if one of the subcommittee board members is unable to attend a meeting.

Josh reported that for contracting, he broke the pilot project proposals into two sections, one for materials and one for construction. He put out a request for proposals (RFP) for the materials and received three proposals back. This is an intermediate procurement so they are required to receive three proposals/bids. In the RFP, Josh listed all the materials needed and requested that anyone submitting a proposal, proposers state "unable to procure" on any given items they need to, and preference would be given to those who included all the line items. The engineering estimate for materials was approximately \$85,000. Dunning Irrigation submitted a proposal for \$38,896.20. Ferguson Enterprises submitted a proposal for \$22,031.14 but did not include the pumps and pump controller. The third proposal was for \$8,158.75, but they only bid on the pumps and no other materials. Ken wanted to confirm SWCD staff are working with Robert Wallace at Wy'East. Josh confirmed they are working with Robert on this project, who is currently researching monitoring equipment for this project. The SWCD Staff recommendation is to contract with Dunning Irrigation for the materials for the 15Mile MUS pilot project. *Ken moved to contract with Dunning Irrigation for the materials for the 15MUS pilot project; Bob seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*

e. Wy'East MOU & Cooperative Agreement – Jennifer reported that the SWCD and Wy'East have been working together for many years unofficially, and this Cooperative Agreement and MOU are just formalizing that relationship. Wy'East has already reviewed and approved the Agreement and MOU, and Jennifer asked if the board had any feedback. *Phil moved to approve the Cooperative Agreement and MOU with Wy'East as presented; Ken seconded. Pat abstained as he is an employee of Wy'East. Motion carried.*

f. Contracting WPN for Watershed Assessment Updates – Drake reported they received a grant from ODA to update the watershed assessments in the county (all 5 watersheds) and received a little over \$125,000. He requested quotes from four companies that do watershed

assessments and received quotes from three of them. Evren NW quoted \$25,000 per watershed for a total of \$125,000. Eco Logical Research quoted \$110,000 per watershed for a total of \$550,000. Watershed Professionals Network (WPN) quoted \$120,000 for all the assessments, reviewing accomplishments, and identifying knowledge gaps. Staff had intended to apply for OWEB funding to update the current action plan, but this will be done at a later date. The staff recommendation is to contract with WPN for the watershed assessments. The ODA grant needs to be spent by June 30, 2023 so it's an aggressive timeline. The current watershed assessments were done 20 years ago, and other planning documents are too spread out and not easily accessible. *Phil moved to pursue a contract with WPN for the watershed assessments and to authorize staff to execute the contract; Bob seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*

Updates

a. Next Meeting - The next regular meeting is scheduled for January 4, 2023, 1:00 PM, at the USDA Service Center (TBD) or Zoom.

b. NACD Annual Meeting, New Orleans, LA, February 11-15, 2023 – Josh reported he applied for a stipend through NACD to attend the Annual Meeting and was not selected. Josh is still interested in going and asked if any board members were interested in attending as well. NACD is an important organization to be involved with as they deal with things at the national level. If any board members decide to attend, contact Shilah or Josh.

c. SDAO Annual Meeting, Sunriver, OR, February 9-12, 2023 – Josh reported that Jennifer is planning to attend, and Samantha has also expressed interest in attending. If any board members want to attend this conference, contact Josh or Shilah.

d. Director Elections Results (Powell, Kaser, Shephard, Sorensen) – Larry Powell was successfully elected to the board to take Pat's At-Large-1 position. Phil, Stan, and Shawn were successfully re-elected. The oaths of office will take place at the January meeting.

e. Mosier Groundwater: Deep Well #2 & Mosier Million #2 – Josh reported he is working on wrapping up Deep Well #2. They still need to install the virtual monitoring equipment and he is working with Robert Wallace on that. He is working on the final reporting to close out the DEQ loan, and he'll work on closing out the OWRD grant next. Mosier Million #2 is on hold until Josh closes out the Deep Well reporting. There are currently six landowners secured for Mosier Million which should be enough for the project.

f. Tygh Valley Water Projects: Highline Ditch & Lindell Dam Removal – Josh reported the Lindell Dam project is complete and he's submitting the final report soon. The Highline Ditch project had some problems on one of the wells. After twenty feet of casing, they ran into a concrete obstruction and couldn't lower the pump. After sending a camera down the well, they discovered the entire casing was concreted but the casing was too thin, so when they tried to clean out the concrete, it blew the casing out. Water Resources ordered that the well be abandoned. Josh has contracted with Cascade Well Drilling to drill a new well, which was completed last Friday. M&M Well Drilling has agreed to pay for the decommissioning of the first well and the replacement well. The SWCD will pay for the additional 10ft that wasn't in the original contract, which should be approximately \$14,000. Josh reported he is still working with Harvey-Simers and their contractor to finish the infiltration gallery.

- g. 2020 White River Fire & 2022 Miller Road Fire** – Josh reported the District has two OWEB grants for the White River fire: one grant is for private landowners, and one grant is for partnering with ODFW for an Open Range-G application in the wildlife area. The Miller Road fire also has one OWEB grant, and Josh is working on an Open Range-G application for Miller Road to tack on with the ODFW application for the White River fire. Josh is also working with FSA on fence replacements through the ECCP program.
- h. FY 2021/2022 Audit** – Jennifer reported the District has received the draft audit from Friend & Reagan and staff are in the process of reviewing it. She requested any board members that have not yet filled out the auditor’s questionnaire to please do so.
- i. FP Mailing Solutions Collections Notice & Switching to Pitney Bowes** – Jennifer reported the FP Mailing Solutions collections notice has been resolved, and the District is now leasing a postage meter from Pitney Bowes.
- j. Policy Review – Personnel Handbook; Landowner Assistance** – Jennifer reported staff are working on updating these policies, but they are not yet ready for board review, so this is on the agenda as a placeholder.
- k. SWCD Website is Back!** - Jennifer reported the SWCD website is live again and updated and encouraged the board to visit the new website.
- l. Operating Capacity Grant Increases & Budget Reallocations** – Jennifer noted that Shilah left this on the agenda as a placeholder to be discussed at a later date.
- m. Updating Long Range Plan** – Jennifer reported that Shilah is in process of updating the Long Range Plan with the feedback she received, and will present this to the board at a later date.

Agency Reports

- a. NRCS (Conservation Plan Review/Approval)** – Emily reported they received 45 EQIP applications. Her allocation for EQIP was pretty small this year, so there could be a delayed push of funds for all these projects. NRCS may only be able to fund two of the EQIP applications this year. Interviews are taking place this week for a recent graduate soil conservationist position. They have received 6 or 7 applications for the position, but they also applied throughout Oregon so they could decide to go to another county. Most of the applicants are from out of state, but there were a couple from Washington.
- b. FSA** – Lissa reported that for those who did fall plantings, they have until December 15th to report that with Kristianna. She requested that producers make an appointment. Also due on December 15th, are applications for the Emergency Relief Program for phase 1. Phase 2 will be coming soon, but they don’t have a timeline on that yet. The Emergency Conservation Program (ECCP) for fences signup begins on December 1 and goes through January 30th. Speak with Tiffany if you would like to sign up for that. ELAP is ongoing for those that had to haul more water or hay more than normal, or if you have to haul livestock to forage more than normal related to the drought and has a January 30th deadline. If you’ve made any changes to ARC/PLC, that deletes the opportunity to be a multiyear contract, so you have to renew your contract annually, and

those are due by March 15th. USDA has a program coming out for pandemic assistance revenue coming soon. Lissa announced some FSA staffing changes: they lost Lauren to the State office, who has been there since Monday as an Admin Specialist. They will be advertising an opening for a program technician as soon as she can get it out there. She has relinquished her shared management of the Redmond FSA office as of next Thursday. So she'll no longer have to travel there every week.

c. **OSU Extension** – Jacob was not able to attend the meeting but provided a written update, included in the meeting packet.

d. **Wy'East RC&D** – Robert was not able to attend the meeting.

Committee Reports

a. **Audit Committee** – Phil commented that everything appears to be in order.

b. **Facilities Committee** – Pat reported the facilities committee hasn't had a meeting. Josh commented that they will have a meeting soon. Josh reported the District hired a new custodian, Marilyn Clifford, and she's been doing a great job. She is in process of completing her background check. Marilyn has had some good suggestions, one of which is a utility sink in the utility room to avoid using the kitchen sink. Josh received a quote from Devco for a little over \$1,600. There is added cost because they will have to break concrete as it's against code to drain a sink into a floor drain. Board consensus was to follow through and have Devco install a utility sink.

c. **Watershed Council Updates** – Drake reported he presented to the county commissioners today for the watershed councils. The presentation went well, and the commissioners didn't ask many questions but were also pressed for time. Overall, the commissioners sounded positive and were interested in the projects that are going on. The Fifteenmile Watershed Council will meet next week on the 13th in Dufur at the Forest Service building. The White River Watershed Council met last night. The Dalles and Mosier Watershed Councils will be meeting in January. Pat commented he thought Drake did an excellent and professional job presenting to the county commissioners.

d. **OAHP/SWCC** – Ken reported there isn't much new to report with OAHP. They are receiving applications for new easements to be presented next spring. Thus far they have received nine applications for easements around the state. Many of these applications also need natural resource management plans and succession plans. Applications are being reviewed by teams from OWEB and will be presented to the commission next spring. Ken won't be on the commission after the end of the year, but he will still be involved in an advisory capacity. The SWCC met in Newport at the same time as the last board meeting. They had a short session and met with OACD and discussed board eligibility for district board members. There are concerns and disagreements about the land ownership requirement. There was no consensus on that with the SWCC, so they are not taking a position on it. It will be decided by the legislature. Discussion ensued.

District Manager Report

a. **Work Plan Progress & Grant Status** – Josh presented the District Manager's report as Shilah was not able to attend the meeting. He reported the work plan progress report and grant status

report were included in the meeting packets. The District currently has \$4.8 million in approved grants, with several pending grants in various stages. The Highline Ditch is the only project on the work plan that is behind. It has been delayed another year, but they are making progress. They will be applying for an extension on that grant from OWEB.

b. Activity Reports and Schedules – No activity reports were emailed however they are available for review upon request. The schedule was distributed with the agenda. Josh encouraged the board to talk to staff members if they want to know more about any projects going on.

Ken noted on the Treasurer's Report that the Building Reserve Fund needs to be renamed the Facilities Reserve Fund as the board previously made that change. Jennifer will make that correction on all future Treasurer's Reports.

Adjourned: 2:56 PM

Jennifer Sampson