

**WMSWCD Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Committee Meeting Summary
August 12, 2020 Noon to 2:00 pm, WMSWCD Conference Call**

Attending: Scott Gall (Chair), Michele Levis, Mary Logalbo, Renee Magyar, Laura Taylor, Ari Demarco

Welcome/Check-In/Equity Shares – Mary shared that we have a first draft of a Stipend Policy that will guide methods of compensating community members who provide their lived experience and knowledge to WMSWCD; and that the East Multnomah SWCD board has approached our board to co-write a letter on the topic of requirements for board service. The WMSWCD board will learn what East Multnomah wishes to include in the letter. Renee shared progress on the initiative to highlight the work of Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) conservationists, that she had an interview with Stefanie Steele (Masters student at PSU studying native bees) last week and it was very informative and enjoyable and Renee is working on a draft article to be published in the next newsletter.

Approval of the July 22, 2020 Meeting Summary – Approved as written.

Recruitment of Associate Board Directors – Michele provided a brief update on the subcommittee’s work to update the recruitment documents, introduced that Renee will explain more about the documents, and explained that the goal for this meeting is to focus on the process for recruitment. Renee explained the updates she made to the Associate Director Recruitment Information document and the new marketing language for the recruitment efforts. Both documents now use marketing-style language to appeal to potential Associate Director candidates, versus language that reads as a potentially intimidating job application.

The group reviewed the materials and provided feedback and suggestions for edits. Suggestions for the Information for Associate Director Candidates document and “application” form:

- Include that Associate Director service may be a pathway to full board service, mentioning the land requirements for elected board, which may be a barrier for some
- Include in the desired Attributes section, people with diverse perspectives from historically marginalized communities through lived and/or professional experience; Additionally, “a community leader that learns from and relates respectfully with people of their own culture as well as those from other cultures”
- Remove from the Attributes section – Advance current recruitment goals bullet – it is redundant of a bullet in the “asked to” section above.
- Add to the Form: “If so, how?” after “Have you interacted with the District?”
- Flip the order of the last 2 questions, and reword “is there anything else...” (remove “else”)

The Committee overall appreciated the updated language in the Associate Director Information document

Action item: Renee will update the documents incorporating the suggestions above. Michele will help with language related to when the board can appoint Associate Directors to full Director positions

Suggestions for the Marketing text document:

- Move the reference to skills from the first sentence to the second paragraph after the “ambassador” sentence.
- It was noted the Board may want to provide a specific list of skills they are seeking in new Associate Directors

The group discussed how the recruitment documents will be distributed and expressed the goal of making outreach more open and equitable, and distributing more widely than the last round of recruitment. Michele provided a review of the process for the last round of recruitment in 2015, which was primarily reaching out to community members who staff had worked with and recommended, and also to individuals who board members had worked with on natural resource issues.

The group discussed whether or not we are looking for candidates who already have ties to their community, who may already have a leadership role and/or connections in their community. The committee decided pre-existing community involvement is not a requirement, and that the process must remain open and equitable. The group discussed the possibility that the Board may have a specific list of skills they wish to recruit for. Michele provided the context that Terri will solicit input from board at the September board meeting for input on what skills or attributes the board wants future Associate Directors to possess. The committee agreed they would like people who are leaders of diverse communities but it is not a requirement.

Michele conveyed that the board is interested in what the DEI committee recommends regarding a list of candidate qualities, the process, and also keeping requirements as open as possible. (Note: Committee did not create a specific action item for this.)

The group discussed ideas for an equitable recruitment process. It was noted the Board will first want to hear from the DEI committee: see materials for outreach, and hear a recommended process to further DEI goals. The committee wishes to see more diversity, and leaders of diverse communities on the board.

Action item: Renee will create a new draft for the committee to review making these goals more prominent in the outreach materials, updating materials with diversity related language: that we value a host of diversity: age, gender, race, etc, using language from the equity statement; seeking leaders or members of underserved or marginalized communities.

Board will add their preferred skills and knowledge they wish to see in candidates (likely including wildlife expertise, as noted by Mary).

The committee had specific ideas on how and where to distribute recruitment information: Have available documents on website, newsletter, social media; direct recruitment to staff- or Board-identified individuals; outreach to new contacts from the LRBP update process including advisory committee members and other partners and contacts; direct outreach to partners: e.g. Partners in Diversity job/volunteer board; other public job/volunteer boards/sites; other non-profits in Portland area that aren't partners but that work in desired fields: e.g. 350PDX, Blueprint Foundation, farms owned by Black and/or other Diverse individuals, e.g. Black Food Sovereignty Coalition.

Action item: Mary will consult with Ping Khaw for her expertise and connections in helping community members be more involved in local government.

The committee will include in their report to the board a list of ideas on ways to outreach. (Note: Committee did not identify a volunteer for this action.)

The Committee recognized that recruitment is a Board responsibility, and recommended that staff do as they did for past recruitments, referring potential candidates who they have worked with to the board member who will be leading the board recruitment; staff members with the closest relationships will make the first ask to their contacts to consider this request.

Michele clarified that elected directors are required to be a registered voter in our district. It is possible to volunteer as an Associate Director if living outside of district and/or aren't registered to vote, but they won't be able to become a voting Director, other board actions may also be restricted. The group discussed being open to candidates who work in the district even if they don't live here, and to those who live in the district but are not registered to vote.

Action item: The committee will include this question in their report to the board. (Note: Committee did not identify a volunteer for this action.)

The group discussed what to recommend in case there are too many applicants. Michele noted that we are not limited to any set number Associate Directors and that so far we have not been in the position of having too many applicants. The committee decided if we do end up having too many, the committee will recommend a process for selection and prioritization.

Long Range Business Plan (LRBP) – Organizational Health & Conservation Scope Teams' Evolving Success Criteria Question for DEI Committee – The committee discussed the following question: 1) Should we consider adding equity, environmental justice, access and climate change in our vision?

Mary provided reference that a vision statement is a description of what the district will look like if we are successful at our work and noted Tech staff thinks we should include equity in the vision or mission.

The committee discussed each of the four concepts separately: **Equity** – Overall, the response was yes, likely not using the word itself, but including the concept. Laura noted our services and benefits of our services are available to all people in our district. **Environmental justice (EJ)** – It was noted Environmental Health is currently included. Mary clarified the meaning of EJ is that identifiers (race, gender, age, etc.) do not predetermine the health of the environment one lives in, nor the outcomes one faces from exposure to/connection to that environment.

Discussion points included:

- Vision statement currently illustrates health of the land, environmental health, but need to tie back to

- human health
- Laura stated we should include the concept of environmental justice; we have more ability to influence the environment than we have the ability to influence EJ factors including where people are able to (can afford to) live
- Mary referred to Indi Keith's "Whose Land is Our Land" paper that urges the District to consider historic barriers of land ownership and management.
- Laura noted we can choose who we work with (e.g. urban apartment complex, help that environment with garden space, etc.) but there are larger systems in place that we don't have power over. In a vision statement—"anyone can live in whatever environment they want to" vs. "everyone has the ability to create healthy environments in their own living space"; the latter we can impact.
- Mary agreed the vision should be realistic – in between "all problems gone" vs "what we can realistically do"
- Overall the committee agreed the concept of environmental health exists in the current statement, may need to be edited to better incorporate environmental justice.
- Keep the vision short (concise), and focus on what elements we want in the statement and editing may help with length

Access - Mary provided context that access means access to land to manage and also access to environmental or ecosystem benefits provided by land, and gave past examples of projects - creating more community gardens; depave projects for schools to create shade. Mary also provided context that LRBP surveys showed response to the question of access was varied, and respondents sought farmland, garden space, green space. The committee agreed to include access in the vision statement with a general reference not specific to any type of land. Renee added that partnership may be included in relation to access, as a way we provide access and also as an important component of a vision for how we do our work.

Climate change - Mary noted climate change will be tackled by Conservation Scope Team / tech staff. Laura noted from the DEI committee perspective, climate change is related to environmental justice. The committee supports including the concept of climate change in the vision statement

Closing discussion – Mary suggested the committee resurface for further discussion any potential organization-level gender-related actionable items identified in the voluntary gender awareness training debrief meeting (on August 6), e.g. the idea of taking up gender awareness as a norm; not making assumptions about how we refer to others; clarifying our pronoun policy.

Action item: At the next all-staff meeting (on September 8) someone from the DEI committee will invite anyone who had shared their ideas at the debrief to reiterate them if they feel comfortable doing so.

If there are any policy-related items that come out of the staff meeting discussion, the DEI committee will take the lead.

Next meeting: September 23. Time is to be determined. The proposed time is 11:00 am to 1:00 pm to allow for full participation of a committee member with another meeting that conflicts with the regular Noon to 2:00 pm time.

Action item: Scott will check in with Randi and Terri to see if this time works and will schedule as appropriate.

Action Items – see above.

Notes taken by Renee Magyar