



West Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District (WMSWCD) Board Meeting Minutes 10/24/2023

1. Meeting Location and Time:

Location: remote via Zoom meeting. The meeting was called to order by Director Preeg Riggsby at 6:01 PM.

2. Introductions and Agenda Approval.

Directors Present: Hartline, Looney, Miller, Preeg Riggsby, Lightcap, Sowder; Directors Absent: Peterson; Staff Present: District Manager (DM) Barlow, Conway, Gall, Taylor, Mauser; NRCS Staff: Stephanie Payne; ODA Staff: Amanda Robinson, Victoria Binning

The agenda was approved by acclamation.

3. Minutes

Board members reviewed the WMSWCD Board Meeting minutes from 9/19/2023ⁱ.

Director Looney made a motion to approve the Board meeting minutes as written, and Director Hartline seconded the motion. The motion was approved with a vote of 6-0.

4. Review of Treasurer's Reports

Director Miller presented the September Treasurer's report. The District currently holds approximately \$1.12 million in cash assets. The District's expenditures for September totaled \$245,000 and around \$611,000 for the first quarter of the '23-'24 FY. These expenditures are \$49,000 less than what was budgeted. The District is also anticipating the annual influx of tax base revenue in November and December as the counties begin to collect property taxes and complete turnover to the District

The annual audit is also progressing well with all necessary materials submitted to the auditor.

The following reports were reviewed:

- a) WMSWCD-Balance Sheet as of September 30, 2023ⁱⁱ
- b) WMSWCD-Budget Performance Report for September 30, 2023ⁱⁱⁱ

5. OACD Board Ballot Discussion

Director Preeg Riggsby informed the board that there are a total of nine candidates running for three open positions on the board of the Oregon Association of Conservation Districts: one for "East At-Large" and two "At-Large". The board unanimously voted 6-0 in favor of Whitney Rohrer for the East At-Large position, and Michael Calhoun & Mike Guebert for the At-Large positions. District staff will forward the board's ballot to OACD.

6. Public Comments

No Public Comments.

7. Oregon Department of Agriculture Strategic Implementation Areas Update

Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) Staff Robinson introduced their new Initiatives Coordinator, Victoria Binning, and provided an overall introduction to the ODA Strategic Implementation Areas (SIA) statewide program. She covered critical aspects of the program including the historical context of the ODA Water Quality Program, compliance and monitoring methodologies, criteria for SIA selection, operational dynamics, funding mechanisms, and compliance evaluation techniques. The discussion emphasized the tailored approach of the program to meet local ecological needs, significant collaborations with various stakeholders including SWCD's, and the different compliance categories established by the ODA.

DM Barlow explained that she had invited the ODA staff to present the SIA program to the board and answer any questions, as the District is working with ODA to initiate the SIA program with the landowners on Sauvie Island. Board Director Jane Hartline has agreed to be a formal partner on the Sauvie Island SIA project.

8. Forest Conservationist Presentation

Staff Forest Conservationist Taylor provided an update on the Forestry Program. Highlights included: progress in the development of forest stewardship plans, securing funding for landowners, and managing various conservation projects. They presented updated statistics showing progress in stewardship and conservation plans, covering an additional 81 acres, despite budget constraints due to inflation affecting new projects. Significant innovations include incorporating drone technology for more accurate and detailed forest mapping, which improves project planning and execution. They also informed the board that WMSWCD and community and agency partners are applying for a federal US Forest Service Community Wildfire Defense grant, aiming to mitigate fire risks by focusing on vegetation management, defensible space creation, and public education in collaboration with local fire districts and community organizations. They emphasized the strategy of contiguous land treatment for effective risk mitigation and discussed the challenges presented by implementing interventions in close proximity to participants' homes.

9. Director and Associate Director Check-ins:

Director Looney updated the board on the "Tank the Tanks" project in Linnton with which she is involved.

Director Lightcap recently attended the OACD Annual Conference and shared how Jean Carter advocated for sustainable sheep ranching, emphasizing carbon neutrality, and urging the clothing industry to promote responsibly sourced wool. Her presentation highlighted the link between consumer choices in urban areas and sustainable rural practices, encouraging informed purchasing of products like eco-friendly clothing.

10. District Highlights

DM Barlow shared one major highlight: an update on House Bill 2527 (wildlife tax deferral) implementation timeline. The bill, long in existence but only recently funded, was a collaborative effort with significant contributions from former WMSWCD DM Jim Cathcart and Jason Faucera from Clackamas SWCD. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) is currently in the rulemaking phase, with an anticipated implementation date in 2025. Soil and water conservation districts, including WMSWCD, are actively engaged with Jason Faucera serving as the primary contact. While not directly involved in the rulemaking committee, these districts will be influential in providing comments and insights.

Director Sowder expressed interest in understanding the funding specifics, property assessment criteria, and the role of county assessors, particularly regarding properties that could transition to wildlife habitat under the new bill. DM Barlow acknowledged the lack of detailed information at this point in the process but committed to keeping the board updated.

DM Barlow also noted that the District will be applying for the US Forest Service Community Wildfire Defense grant previously described by Forest Conservationist Taylor in their presentation. If successful, this would be a large, multi-million dollar grant with which the District and partners could conduct a significant amount of wildfire risk reduction activities.

11. Announcements/Reminders/Upcoming Meetings:

Next Board Meeting will be abbreviated on November 28, 2023 (in-person) at 7:15pm, following the Annual Meeting that starts at 5pm at The Old Spaghetti Factory.

Director Sowder declared the meeting adjourned at 7:40 PM.

ⁱ WMSWCD Board meeting minutes September 19, 2023

ⁱⁱ WMSWCD Balance Sheet as of September 30, 2023

ⁱⁱⁱ WMSWCD Budget Performance Sheet as of September 30, 2023

^{iv} OACD State Board Election Ballot