



## **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee**

10 am – 12 pm, Monday, September 18, 2023

**Minutes keeper:** Scott Gall

**Attendees** Lynn Barlow, Lorrie Conway, Scott Gall, Shahbaz Khan, Mary Logalbo, Terri Preeg Riggsby, Martina Avendano, Mara Halloran, Eleanor Green

**10:00 am** – Welcome/check-in/announcements – All

Terri gave a short update on upcoming HAKI Holly Park Multicultural Fair October 7<sup>th</sup> at Holly Farm Park. The event is focused on local small businesses and will include food from all over the world, vendors selling clothing, jewelry, henna, and more, and performances throughout the day. She also shared that the State Congress approved a change for land ownership requirement for zoned SWCD Board members. There are now pathways to be a zoned director without owning land. Although it is unclear exactly how this will be implemented at this time.

**10:15 am** – Review minutes from last meeting – All

Minutes were approved as is. Mary did give an update on an agenda item from our last meeting: The group that was referred to as Indigenous Allyship was renamed Collective for Indigenous land care, land access, and land back. The Indigenous summit has shifted from fall to spring.

**10:20 am** – Associate Board Recruitment updates (esp. input from Terri) - All

Several potential associate board director candidates been put forward by staff. Board directors did not have any candidates, but staff typically have a closer connection with our clientele. Terri also shared a link for a potential candidate. Board Chair is going to follow up with these candidates to both gauge interest but also how they may work with WMSWCD.

Associate Directors have no voting power but can be influential with SWCD policy and action. They are allowed to serve on committee's and put forth resolutions to be voted on by the serving board directors. The removal of land ownership requirement to be a voting board director may make it easier for people to run for office – especially in zone 5 which is the most Urban. The board can approve new associate directors at any time of year.

Going forward the staff will reach out to people they believe would be interested in serving as an associate director. If the potential candidate expresses interest, the Board Chair will then contact the individual to schedule a meeting to talk more about the process and the positions. Currently there are approximately 10 potential candidates. Likely not all would accept but it was said that even if they did,

3236 S Kelly Ave, Suite 200 • Portland, OR 97239 • P: 503-238-4775 • [www.wmswcd.org](http://www.wmswcd.org)

*Providing resources, information, and expertise to inspire people to actively improve air and water quality, fish and wildlife habitat, and soil health*

the district would not turn any away and make adjustments to board meetings to accommodate them – such as looking for a larger space.

**10:30 am** — Program Manager’s equity lens process updates - Scott

WMSWCD staff are going through a process to analyze all conservation programs with an equity lens. Each month the conservationists and technicians will look at all our programs simultaneously, though broken down by topic in the following way:

1. how we allocate our budgets (overall funding, partner funding, and cost-share models),
2. who we choose who to work with (our projects, our partners, landowners/schools),
3. how we outreach for our programs,
4. how we allocate funding and time, and
5. when we work with contractors and/or green workforce

The intention is for staff will take one of these question per month and return to the all staff meeting (include admin) to review findings and potential actions. The all staff meeting was chosen for this as it adds the additional perspectives of non-conservation staff.

**10:45 am** – Revisit the procedure that outlines committee structure and the process to join the DEI Committee - Scott / All

The committee discussed how the quarterly DEI meetings related to the equity lens program review listed above. We looped back to what was discussed last meeting. From that meetings minutes: “We also discussed that the DEI committee meetings now become more of a space to flesh out ideas, but not necessarily have the impetus of being where those initiatives are brought forward (and instead being something more like a checks/balance, review, etc). The goal is to ensure it is not onerous to only select staff. We determined (with specifics of how discussed later in the meeting) that bringing this into All Staff meetings makes more sense, since there is already so many of us involved anyways ... So ideally seeing DEI meetings shifting away from the designated place where the work gets done, to a space to further integrate and check-in with ongoing progress – those more frequent, specific check-ins can now be done in All Staff meetings.”

Shahbaz also shared that there is an excel spreadsheet on the DEI folder on the server that is very useful for tracking meeting topics and agendas. Finally, it was brought up the formation of a DEIJ affinity group for watershed councils, land trusts, and SWCDs. This is being coordinated by Tryon Creek watershed council and Oswego Lake watershed council. It was thought this would be a good group to participate in and Mary volunteered to take the lead.

**Action Item:** Mary and any other interested staff will engage in the affinity group and report back.

**11:00 am** – Discuss the use of our Land Acknowledgement and proposed edits – Mary / All

The current WMSWCD Land Acknowledgement was shared as well as some thoughts on how to use it. There is no real consensus outside the organization on how, when and why these are used. Concerns have been raised by some, including Indigenous community members and leaders, that land acknowledgements can feel performative, disingenuous and condescending. But other Indigenous experts say land acknowledgments do have value. If staff are thinking about how they go about crafting and using these statements, Land Acknowledgements can provide a first step toward action and raise



awareness. It is critical in giving an acknowledgement that these are commitments followed with action to be meaningful. Staff are encouraged to think critically about when and how to give these in a respectful way.

As to when we use the statement there was no clear guidelines reached. Lynn shared that at a district manager meeting she attends with several of the metro and Willamette Valley SWCDs this came up and two districts said they are no longer using them. One idea was that instead of reciting the land acknowledgement, have a group exercise or reflection moment.

The Land Acknowledgement is in the draft annual report and there was discussion on whether or not to leave it in for the final draft. The group decided it is best to leave it in because it is especially good for people that may not have thought about the history of the land and impacts of colonization. Mary shared some potential edits, which were discussed as a group. Some important points the committee would like to see within the Land Acknowledgement are: keep it future facing, localized to specific events/presentations, and should include language as to the action the district is implementing.

**Action Item:** Mary and Elenor will work together to clean up and finalize the LA in time for inclusion in the annual report.

**11:30 am** – Initial equity lens review of Demographic Data Analyst Internship job description (with all invited to join/continue past regular ending time of 12pm as needed) – Mary / All

A draft of the Demographic Data Analyst Internship Job Announcement was shared. The committee ran through an equity lens exercise.

This announcement is aimed at Portland State University students. This is because they have their Institute for Sustainable Solutions (ISS) program would head up recruitment and would recruit from the Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (LSAMP) Program to emphasize candidates from communities of color. Additionally ISS would provide mentorship for the intern that might not otherwise be available at the District given a typical data analysis' skill set. It is assumed that this would make the internship a richer experience as well as have access to resources the District doesn't have.

The position would need experience with data collection and analysis. WMSWCD also hopes to have a data analyst on the hiring panel as it is believed they would be able to rate data analysis skills that may not already be part of current staff's skill set. An ISS representative may serve that role.

The committee reviewed a section of the announcement that spoke about the word "professional" and the fact that the application did not include anything on communication and how the applicant. These areas would be worked on by Mary and Elenor. The committee was asked to provide any additional input by the end of the week so it could be sent over to PSU as soon as possible. The timetable for the hire is for the position to be filled and actively working in January.

**Action Item:** committee members agreed to review the job announcement by the end of the week (9/22/2023).

**12 pm** – Adjourn - Next meeting Monday 12/18/23.

Next Meeting Organizer: Scott; Minutes keeper: Mary