



West Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District (WMSWCD) Board Meeting Minutes 2/20/2020

1. Introductions

Directors Present: Preeg Riggsby, Sowder, Miller, Lightcap, Looney, Hartline, Peterson; Associate Directors Present: none; WMSWCD Staff Present: District Manager (DM) Barlow, Conway, Mauser, Gall; NRCS Staff: Stephanie Payne (6:10pm); Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) Staff: Mark Nebeker; Multnomah County Farm Bureau Staff: Executive Director Jay Udelhoven; Guests: Attorney Fritz Paulus

2. Public Hearing

Location: Remote via Zoom meeting. Director Preeg Riggsby called the public hearing to order at 6:02 PM.

The public hearing was held for public comment regarding the acquisition of a fifty-year Division of State Lands easement for conservation purposes for the Sturgeon Lake restoration project. Board Chair Preeg-Riggsby opened the hearing with an introduction to the project and partners, and District Manager Barlow offered a summary of the project history to this point. Comments involved the project's successful substantial completion in 2019 through multi-agency collaboration, ongoing ecological monitoring showing positive results, the technicalities and challenges of securing the easement, including its term of fifty years and easement renewal prospects. Attorney Fritz Paulus elaborated on the negotiation process and the legal constraints that led to a fifty-year term. Mark Nebeker from Oregon Dept of Fish and Wildlife and Staff Gall, Farm and Soil Conservationist from the WMSWCD, highlighted the project's long-term ecological importance and their commitment to its maintenance. The meeting concluded with acknowledgments of the collaborative efforts and the project's positive impact on Sturgeon Lake ecology.

Director Preeg Riggsby called the public hearing to close and the Board meeting to commence at 6:31PM.

3. Meeting Location and Time:

Location: Remote via Zoom meeting. The meeting was called to order by Director Preeg Riggsby at 6:31 PM.

4. Agenda Approval:

The agenda was approved by acclamation.

5. Resolution 2024.02.20A – Acquiring an Easement for Conservation Purposes for the Sturgeon Lake Restoration Project:

Following the February 20, 2024, 6:02PM public hearing and discussion, Director Preeg Riggsby opened the floor for a motion to adopt the resolution.

Director Lightcap made a motion to adopt, and Director Hartline seconded the motion. The Resolution was approved with a vote of 6-0 (Director Peterson was muted and abstained.)

6. Minutes:

Board members reviewed the WMSWCD-Board Meeting minutes from 01/23/24ⁱⁱ.

Director Looney made a motion to approve the Board meeting minutes as written, and Director Miller seconded the motion. The motion was approved with a vote of 6-0 (Director Peterson was muted and abstained).

7. Financial Review:

Director Miller presented the financial reportⁱⁱⁱ, prepared by Budget and Fiscal Manager Conway, highlighting the District's strong cash position thanks to substantial tax revenue deposits in the LGIP savings account, totaling approximately \$2.145 Million year to date. The LGIP account had a balance of \$2.238 Million at January 31, 2024. This amount is expected to sustain the organization through the rest of this fiscal year and into the first four months of the next fiscal year, until tax revenue collections begin. The report showed that actual expenses were either slightly below or on target, with no major deviations in spending. The conservation staff have aligned their spending more closely with the budgeted amounts year to date. Director Miller also mentioned the upcoming budget meetings and the appointment of members to the budget committee. The review concluded with an acknowledgment of the organization's healthy financial status and appreciation for the diligent monitoring and reporting by Staff Conway, enhancing transparency for the public.

8. Public Comment Period:

During the public comment period of the board meeting, Jay Udelhoven introduced himself from the Multnomah County Farm Bureau and shared information about their organization. Established in 1950, the bureau, with around 7,000 members including 140 full-time farmers, engages in various activities like farmer assistance, advocacy, training, and public engagement programs. He mentioned their annual events, particularly a summer barbecue for local farmers, partners and officials, and extended an invitation to the WMSWCD board and staff. The public comment session concluded with no additional comments from other attendees.

9. Appoint Budget Committee Members:

Director Preeg Riggsby introduced Mike Oliver as a candidate for the vacant Citizen Budget Committee position and stated that April Gutierrez, a budget committee member in good standing who is willing to continue to serve, be reappointed for an additional three-year term.

Mike Oliver then spoke about his professional background in managing social service agencies and his commitment to environmental initiatives. His expertise in budget management with social service agencies which are primarily funded by government sources was highlighted as an asset for the committee.

Director Looney made a motion to appoint Mike Oliver to the Budget Committee, Director Miller seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a vote of 6-0 (Director Peterson was muted and abstained.)

Director Miller made a motion to reappoint April Gutierrez to the Budget Committee, Director Looney seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a vote of 6-0 (Director Peterson was muted and abstained.)

10. Change of Accounting Method:

Staff Conway presented an informational item on the change of accounting method for the District, a decision that didn't require a vote. She explained that the shift from a modified accrual basis to a modified cash basis of accounting was suggested by the District auditor, Rich Winkle. This change, intended to make financial statements clearer for the public, involves recognizing income when it's deposited and expenses when they are paid. She noted that during a recent RFP process, several auditors recommended this change to enhance public transparency. Director Preeg Riggsby supported the change, emphasizing the importance of understandable accounting for a public agency. The board decided to move forward with the process, which involves a 30-day public notice followed by two resolutions to change the accounting and budget preparation methods. The actual change will take effect after the resolutions are approved by the Board, and will be on next month's Board meeting agenda to formalize this decision. Director Sowder raised a question about the initial choice of accrual accounting, to which Staff Conway responded that it was a standard practice, albeit more complex for the public to grasp. The discussion concluded with an agreement to move forward with the public notification process and address any further questions in the next meeting.

11. Resolution 2024.02.20B – Adopt Revised Employee Handbook^{iv}:

DM Barlow has brought the revised Employee Handbook and included new flexible Paid Time Off system topics to the Board several times since this past year's budget process, when funds were included in current fiscal year for the staff payout of unused vacation, comp time, and personal time. The update to the Employee Handbook included significant staff involvement over the past approximately 9 months, application of an equity lens by a contracted equity specialist, and a thorough legal compliance review by a contracted attorney. The Paid Time Off system replaces accrued vacation, comp, and personal time with six weeks of annual paid leave for each employee, with no carryover to subsequent fiscal years or payout upon leaving district employment. Sick time will continue to accrue separately. The change aims to support and encourage staff work-life balance as well as reduce financial liability for the district. Discussions included comparing the new policy to other government agencies and addressing concerns about the impact on long-term employees. Despite some unresolved questions from Director Hartline and the expression of concerns by Staff Gall, the board moved to a vote.

Director Lightcap made a motion to adopt the resolution. Director Sowder seconded the motion. The resolution was approved with a vote of 4-2. Director Peterson was muted and abstained, Director Hartline and Director Looney voted "no".

12. Resolution 2024.02.20C – Adopt Revised Public Contracting Rules¹:

Staff Conway shared information regarding the adoption of this resolution to revise public contracting rules. She provided additional background on the changes, which were prompted by Senate Bill 1047. These updates were reflected in the document, which had also undergone legal review. The intention is to make these documents more accessible by posting them on the website and to ensure legal compliance.

Director Looney made a motion to adopt the resolution, Director Lightcap seconded the motion. The resolution passed with a vote of 6-0 (Director Peterson was muted and abstained.)

13. NRCS Urban Update:

NRCS Staff Stephanie Payne provided an update on her role as an Urban Conservationist, focusing on work within and around the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB). She's been involved in contracting work under the EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentives Program) and emphasized an upcoming Local Working Group meeting on Friday from 1 to 3, which will include partners and producers to inform where NRCS prioritizes funding. She also shared a reminder of the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) application deadline on March 29th. The CSP, historically underutilized, offers a minimum annual payment of \$4,000 for five-year contracts. Discussion followed about the district's involvement in the CSP and Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). It was clarified that the CSP targets individuals and private entities, not partner organizations like SWCDs. The meeting also touched on potential collaboration with the Farm Bureau to reach broader audiences. The session concluded with a note on the newness of urban positions nationally in the NRCS, recognizing the uniqueness of having one of the pilot programs in the Portland area.

14. Director and Associate Director Check-In:

Director Preeg Riggsby shared the demographic data survey developed as described in the Long-Range Business Plan. WMSWCD Staff Mary Logalbo directed a Portland State University intern in creating a survey for staff and board members. The intern will conduct the analysis of the demographic data. The survey, set to be distributed by Friday the 23rd, is voluntary but all members are encouraged to participate as it is crucial data for the Long-Range Business Plan. It is designed to be short and fully anonymous, ensuring privacy. Responses will be collected in a way that prevents identification of individual respondents. Participants are urged to complete the survey promptly to facilitate timely data collection.

15. District Highlights:

DM Barlow provided updates on upcoming events and collaborations. She confirmed that all speakers for Soil School are lined up and registration is open for the event on April 13th at PCC Rock Creek. She pointed Directors to her staff report for information about the Weyerhaeuser property update. Additionally, a collaboration with East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District is underway to fund a needs assessment conducted by OSU in East Multnomah County and on Sauvie Island, aimed at evaluating the need for a Multnomah County OSU extension agent. This assessment is expected to provide valuable information in the coming months. DM Barlow also announced that Kelley Beamer, formerly with the Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts (COLT), has recently become the new Executive Director at East Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District.

16. Announcements/Reminders/Upcoming Meetings:

Next meeting is in person at the Multnomah Arts Center on March 19th at 6pm. Budget meeting in April is virtual. Director Preeg Riggsby asked members to share information about Soil School within their networks.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:57pm.

ⁱResolution 2024.02.20A – Acquiring an Easement for Conservation Purposes for the Sturgeon Lake Restoration Project

ⁱⁱWMSWCD Board meeting minutes 01/23/24

ⁱⁱⁱ WMSWCD Financial Snapshot January 31, 2024

^{iv}Resolution 2024.02.20B – Adopt Revised Employee Handbook

^vResolution 2024.02.20C – Adopt Revised Public Contracting Rules