

# West Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District

## Board Meeting Minutes – May 19, 2026

**Date:** May 19, 2026

**Location:** Online via Zoom

**Directors Present:**

Preeg Riggsby, Oliver, Looney, Topaz, Elicker (associate), Sowder, Spector (associate), Wiley (associate), Hamer

**Staff Present:**

Jogerst, Clarenbach, Dvorsky

**Public:**

Carole H. (Forest Park Conservancy), Alexis B-C (Tryon Creek Watershed Council), Jack H. (Oswego Lake Watershed Council), Ronda Z., Ruth H. (West Willamette Watersheds)

**1. Call to Order**

Preeg Riggsby called the meeting to order at 7:39 pm.

**2. Agenda Review<sup>i</sup> and Director Resignation Discussion**

Preeg Riggsby reviewed the evening's agenda and invited additions or changes from the Board before opening discussion regarding Director Jim DeFuria's resignation.

Jogerst reported that she spoke with DeFuria earlier in the day and explained that, while some reasons were personal, he also shared that Board service differed from what he had expected. He had anticipated more involvement in conservation-related discussion and project work, while much of the Board's role focuses on governance and administrative oversight. Jogerst noted that DeFuria complimented the District's operations and staff and said the organization runs well.

Jogerst stated that the experience highlighted the importance of clearly communicating Board expectations to prospective Directors and Associate Directors. Preeg Riggsby noted that the upcoming long-range business planning process would provide opportunities for greater Board engagement in shaping District priorities. She also thanked DeFuria for his service and noted that the position will appear on the November election ballot. During this discussion, Hamer joined the meeting remotely.

**3. Approval of April 2026 Meeting Minutes<sup>ii</sup>**

Preeg Riggsby introduced the April 21 Budget Committee<sup>iii</sup> and Board meeting minutes for approval. Looney moved to approve both sets of minutes, and Topaz seconded the motion.

With no discussion, the motion passed unanimously. Directors Preeg Riggsby, Oliver, Looney, Topaz, Sowder, and Hamer voted in favor. During the vote, Preeg Riggsby noted that recent Board training clarified that individual votes should be stated aloud for the record.

#### **4. Public Comment and Announcements**

Following approval of the minutes, Preeg Riggsby thanked Board members who attended recent Board training and opened the public comment period. During this time, Elicker shared that longtime Sauvie Island Wildlife Area Manager Mark Nebeker had recently retired and announced an upcoming retirement potluck celebration. Board members discussed Nebeker's long-standing partnership with the District and his significant contributions to the Sturgeon Lake restoration project and broader conservation efforts on Sauvie Island. Elicker offered to speak on behalf of the District at the event, and several Board members expressed appreciation for Nebeker's service and leadership.

Preeg Riggsby also recognized Rachel Dvorsky and Ruth Howell, who joined the meeting during this portion of the agenda.

#### **5. Treasurer's Report<sup>iv</sup>**

Oliver provided a brief Treasurer's Report, noting that the District's financial position remains stable and generally on track with the adopted budget. He reported that state funding and property tax revenues were close to projections, with interest earnings continuing to outperform budget expectations and help offset minor revenue gaps. Oliver also noted that personnel and operating expenses were slightly above budget for previously discussed reasons, but that there were no major concerns or unexpected trends.

Oliver and Clarenbach both stated that the District remains in a strong financial position with healthy cash reserves and liquidity. Preeg Riggsby also noted that Board packets and approved financial materials are publicly available. No questions were raised by the Board.

#### **6. Forest Park Conservancy Presentation**

Carole Hardy of Forest Park Conservancy presented an overview of the organization's mission, programs, and current conservation priorities. She described the Conservancy's long-standing partnership with Portland Parks & Recreation to restore and protect Forest Park and Marquam Nature Park through trail maintenance, habitat restoration, volunteer stewardship, environmental education, and conservation advocacy. Hardy shared program highlights including volunteer engagement, trail maintenance efforts, Firewise and invasive species work, and the Conservancy's management of conservation easements and protected lands.

Hardy also discussed the Conservancy's recent advocacy work related to proposed PGE transmission line development impacts within Forest Park, including ongoing land use and conservation policy discussions. She highlighted renewed collaboration opportunities with West Multnomah SWCD and regional partners focused on habitat connectivity, stewardship, landowner support, invasive species management, and conservation planning within the Greater Forest Park Conservation Initiative area.

Following the presentation, Board members discussed the Ancient Forest Preserve and possible future field trip opportunities connected to Forest Park and regional conservation work.

### **7. West Willamette Watersheds Collaboration Presentation**

Alexis Barton Castro of the Tryon Creek Watershed Council presented an update on the West Willamette Watersheds Collaboration (W3), joined by Ruth Howell of the West Willamette Watersheds Project and Jack Halsey of the Oswego Lake Watershed Council. Barton Castro described the effort to expand watershed council coverage and community engagement in currently underserved portions of the Portland metro area, particularly along smaller direct tributaries to the Willamette River within the West Multnomah SWCD boundary. She reviewed the role watershed councils play in habitat restoration, watershed planning, environmental education, community engagement, and salmon recovery work across jurisdictional boundaries.

Barton Castro explained that the collaboration is currently focused on outreach and relationship-building with community members, partner organizations, and local stakeholders to help shape future watershed council coverage and priorities. Howell emphasized that the project is in an active community engagement phase, with information sessions and opportunities for public input underway.

Board members discussed opportunities to connect W3 organizers with local volunteer groups, neighborhood associations, and residents throughout the District, including the Harborton frog monitoring volunteers, the Linnton neighborhood, Sauvie Island community members, and floating home residents. Looney offered to help connect W3 representatives with the Linnton Neighborhood Association. Board members and presenters also discussed the importance of cold water tributaries, fish habitat connectivity, and future opportunities for community science and regional collaboration.

Jogerst thanked the presenters for attending and noted upcoming conversations between W3 representatives and District staff regarding partnership opportunities, easements, and future collaboration.

### **8. Stormwater Stars Program Presentation**

Dvorsky presented an overview of the District's Stormwater Stars program, which was formally brought into the District during the current fiscal year after previously operating as a partner-funded program. She described the program's workshop model, which combines hands-on restoration activities with community education focused on native plants, stormwater management, erosion reduction, habitat enhancement, and invasive species removal. Dvorsky reviewed several recent workshop sites, including residential properties, neighborhood rights-of-way, urban planting projects, and erosion mitigation efforts connected to local stormwater issues.

Dvorsky also highlighted the benefits of integrating the program within the District, including increased collaboration with staff, stronger outreach support, expanded partnerships, and improved long-term workshop planning. She discussed partnerships with organizations including Backyard Habitat Certification Program, Depave, Habitat for Humanity, Friends of Trees, and Skyline Grange. She also shared examples of broader community impacts generated through the program, including neighborhood stewardship projects and volunteer engagement that continued beyond workshop participation.

Board members expressed strong support for the program and discussed its value in community engagement, environmental education, and expanding the District's reach into urban conservation work. Several Directors commented positively on the program's growth and integration into the District's broader conservation efforts.

## **9. Long-Range Business Plan Update**

Jogerst introduced the kickoff process for updating the District's long-range business plan, noting that the current plan had previously been extended for one year following her arrival as District Manager. She shared that consultants had been selected and that planning work would begin in July, with the goal of completing the updated plan by early 2027 to align with budget development timelines.

Jogerst explained that the process would include formation of a Strategic Planning Committee with both Board and staff representation. She described the anticipated commitment as approximately two hours per month over six months, with responsibilities including reviewing engagement materials, providing feedback on assessment reports, helping shape retreat agendas, and serving as liaisons between the consultant team, staff, and Board.

Topaz had previously volunteered to participate on the committee, and during discussion Sowder also volunteered. Preeg Riggsby recognized Topaz and Sowder as the Board representatives for the Strategic Planning Committee and noted the value of having perspectives representing different geographic and land use areas within the District.

The Board and staff also discussed planning for a future all-staff and all-board retreat that would support development of the updated plan. Discussion included possible timing, meeting format, location options, and scheduling considerations for Board members and staff. Board members generally supported holding a full-day weekday retreat sometime after October 25, with possible locations including the Skyline Grange.

During this discussion, Spector announced that he would be moving out of the District during the summer and would conclude his service as an Associate Director following the next Board meeting. Board members thanked him for his contributions and participation.

### **10. Board Elections and Candidate Outreach**

Preeg Riggsby reminded the Board that elections are upcoming for Zone 4, Zone 5, and At-Large Position 2. She noted that DeFuria's resignation leaves the Zone 4 position open and that Looney would not be seeking re-election for the At-Large position. Preeg Riggsby shared that she plans to run again for Zone 5 and discussed recent eligibility changes that expanded opportunities for more community members to run for SWCD Board positions. She expressed support for the changes and their potential to increase engagement and representation within conservation districts.

Jogerst and Preeg Riggsby also discussed an upcoming virtual candidate information session scheduled for June 9, hosted jointly with neighboring conservation districts. Board members were encouraged to share event information broadly through neighborhood associations, social media, and community networks to help recruit and inform prospective candidates about conservation district governance and public service opportunities.

### **11. District Manager Updates**

Jogerst shared that the District's current office lease expires in June 2027 and that staff have begun preliminary planning for a future office relocation. She explained that staff surveys and facility needs' assessments are underway and noted that the current office space cannot accommodate full Board meetings, all staff gatherings, or District equipment storage needs. Board members discussed considerations for future office space, including meeting capacity, fleet and equipment storage, parking, accessibility, and overall flexibility within the current commercial rental market. Oliver also offered a commercial real estate contact familiar with nonprofit and budget-conscious organizations.

Jogerst also previewed two resolutions expected to return for future Board consideration. The first would dissolve the District's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee and replace it with a working group structure. Jogerst explained that the proposal is intended to increase flexibility and allow the work to move forward more efficiently outside the formal public meetings process requirements that apply to Board committees. She emphasized that the intention is to

strengthen, not reduce, the District’s equity work and encouraged Board participation in upcoming discussions before a formal resolution is presented.

The second anticipated resolution involved revisions to the District’s reserve for future expenditures fund. Jogerst explained that staff are exploring changes that would expand allowable uses beyond conservation-related expenditures to also include future capital expenditures, while potentially increasing or removing the current cap on reserve amounts. Board members discussed the original purpose and constraints of the fund, Oregon budget law considerations, and the value of maintaining long-term financial flexibility for future District priorities and opportunities.

## **12. Meeting Wrap-Up and Associate Director Discussion**

Preeg Riggsby announced that the next Board meeting and budget hearing would occur on June 16, 2026. The Board also discussed its typical summer meeting schedule and the possibility of holding a July meeting to support long-range business planning work before potentially taking August off instead.

The Board then discussed recent interest from community members seeking appointment as Associate Directors. Preeg Riggsby and Jogerst reviewed expectations that prospective Associate Directors attend meetings and demonstrate ongoing interest in the District prior to appointment consideration. Jogerst shared that several individuals had submitted interest forms and stated that staff would continue outreach and invite interested candidates to attend future meetings.

*Preeg Riggsby adjourned the meeting at 8:10 p.m.*

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<sup>i</sup> Board Meeting Agenda (packet page 1)

<sup>ii</sup> April Meeting Minutes (packet pages 2-3)

<sup>iii</sup> April Budget Committee Meeting Minutes

<sup>iv</sup> Financial Statements and Review for period ending 30 April 2026 (packet pages 4-20)