



Marion Soil and Water Conservation District (MSWCD)

Board of Directors August 7, 2024, Monthly Minutes

6:34 PM to 8:43 PM

Facilitator: Chair Olson

Recorded by: Brenda Sanchez

Approved as Amended: 09-04-24

Directors & Record of Attendance		Associate Directors
At Large 1-Peggy Hart	Present	Angela Plowhead
At Large 2-Scott Walker	Present	Leland Hardy
Zone 1-Vacant	Vacant	
Zone 2-Vacant	Vacant	
Zone 3-Darin Olson (Chair)	Present	
Zone 4-Dave Budeau (Secretary-Treasurer)	Present	
Zone 5-Rochelle Koch (Vice-Chair)	Present	
Staff		Guests
Linda Lovett		Andrea Kreiner-
Susan Ortiz		Oregon Association of
Brenda Sanchez		Conservation Districts
		Les Bachelor, NRCS

Note: All documents and materials displayed or referenced are retained in the Board of Directors Meeting file at the Marion Soil and Water Conservation District (Marion SWCD or District).

- 1. Olson Call to Order:** 6:34 PM
- 2. Announcements -** None
- 3. Agenda Additions or Changes –** Olson adds the Oregon Association of Conservation District dues.

Minutes

1. Public Comment

No Public Comment

2. District Snapshot

Sanchez reported that Heath Keirstead was now living in North Carolina and will join us remotely until October 31, 2024, to help with the transition and assist with Salmon Watch, create the strategic plan documents, and create the annual report. We completed first aid training last week. An arborist came in and we had all the trees trimmed. Sanchez displayed the mural-sign concept for the building.

Directors discussed their thoughts and shared ideas on the concept. Sanchez will share these ideas with the artist and get back with further concepts.

Sanchez brought up next the newly amended Public Meeting Law and reviewed briefly her role on the rules advisory committee. Sanchez details that the new rules require the District display instructions-notify the public of the process on how the public can submit a Public Meeting Law grievance when they feel there has been a violation of public meeting law. Sanchez explains the public first submits a grievance to the District, and then District must reply to the grievance as well as share the grievance with the Ethics Commission. The District would then reply to the grievance accordingly. Sanchez asks who do they want to submit the grievance with and is the website a proper place? Olson suggested the District Manager, then, if necessary, the Board Chair, and the Chair will share with the Board. Directors discussed this option citing efficiency and consistency of grievances first going to the District Manager and the time limits involved. Sanchez agrees to add to the website and our agendas.

3. Treasurers Report June 2024

Budeau, began by noting that the report details the end of the fiscal year showing that the current year levied taxes received in June was just over \$25,000, adding that this is a bit unusual from past years where at this time the last of the projected taxes were less, but we were also closer to receiving all the projected levied taxes. This past fiscal year we received less in levied taxes than was projected (by about ~\$200,000). Directors discussed the balance of the taxes and what it may mean to the District moving forward, looking to understand what carryover funds versus what we receive in a fiscal year mean to future spending.

Action: Hart motioned that the Board **accept the July 2024 Treasurers Report**, 2nd by Walker. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-5 [Walker, Olson, Koch, Hart, and Budeau], Opposed-0).

4. July 10, 2024, Draft Board Meeting Minutes

Budeau begins by saying he reviewed the draft minutes and returned some edits. Sanchez displays the minutes with Budeau's edits. Directors pointed out some spelling errors.

Action: Hart motioned that the Board **accept as submitted the July 10, 2024, Board Minutes**, 2nd by Koch. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-5 [Walker, Olson, Koch, Hart, and Budeau], Opposed-0).

5. United States Department Agriculture (USDA) and Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) Report

Bachelor starts by stating he is at full staff. Currently they have three million in contracts, many from Inflation Reduction Act funding. Implemented four pivot systems and a couple of linear (irrigation) pipelines, VFDs, pumping plants, and fish screens. Bachelor thanks the service providers for making all this happen. There has been a setback in cultural reviews because the state lost their cultural resource specialist. The cultural reviews are time consuming and slow work down. Bachelor adds that he will be meeting soon with the new state conservationist lead, Greg Becker. Walker asked what NRCS does for outreach? Bachelor replies that we do a bit of outreach in various ways. For example, NRCS attends the Dairy Convention, the Seed League, the state and county fairs, and Small Farm school. Koch asked about the Farm Bill. Bachelor has no updates, this is an election year, maybe things will change next year.

6. Conservation Assistance Grants (CAG)

a. Overview of CAG Review

Ortiz (Staff) briefly discussed the newly revised CAG review process and that there are six applications requesting a total of \$69,320.68. We had one application returned because they submitted a budget that did not qualify. Budeau noted that the CAG review was smoother and had less issues with the applications. Incomplete applications were addressed and only well vetted applications moved to the Board.

b. Cycle 3 Review Committee Recommendations

Action: Budeau motioned that the Board **approve the six CAG applications submitted for \$69,320.68**, 2nd by Hart. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-5 [Walker, Olson, Koch, Hart, and Budeau], Opposed-0).

c. CAG Extensions Cancellations

Action: Hart motioned that the Board **approve the project change request for the Mill Creek Bank Restoration Project and extensions for George Kaufman and Minto Island Growers**, 2nd by Walker. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-5 [Walker, Olson, Koch, Hart, and Budeau], Opposed-0).

Action: Walker motioned that the Board **cancel the LAP-20-22-032**, 2nd by Hart. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-5 [Walker, Olson, Koch, Hart, and Budeau], Opposed-0).

d. Grants Completed

Hart asked for clarification on the completed slides in the packet. It was explained that the Board is sent a report when a project is completed. For your information, no action needed. Completed grants were displayed. No discussion.

7. Education Committee

Hart first shared the request to support the small Farm School and the various donation levels.

a. Stan Vistica Scholarship: Determine Scholarship Funds for 2025-26 School Year

Hart shared the need to raise the amount of the Stan Vistica scholarship to \$8,000 because the native plant sale profits continue to increase. Walker wanted to ensure that the student recipients are in good standing with their grades and that we are funding students who are dedicated to natural resources. Directors discussed the various ways to distribute the funds over a four-year period. Walker adds that he would like to see more students receive scholarships, rather than carrying one student overtime. Plowhead adds that there is value in supporting the continuum of education and supports the idea of spreading it over the four years. Budeau asks for clarification of how it is awarded over the four years. Directors further discussed the process over the four years. Hart suggests that we restructure the scholarship award. The Board asked that this go back to the Education Committee to work out the distribution of funds over the four years, considering selecting scholarship recipients based on the student's status and the amount available, not the number of years they have applied or that they are a second- or third-year applicant.

8. Admin Committee

a. 2023-24 Audit Scope and Objectives

Directors noted that the city was incorrect in the letter. Lovett (staff) stated they can have that corrected. The letter is like previous years, no other significant changes other than the audit years.

Action: Walker motioned that the Board **continue to get our audit services from Jarrard, Seibert, Pollard, & Co. LLC**, 2nd by Budeau. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-5 [Walker, Olson, Koch, Hart, and Budeau], Opposed-0).

b. Grant Limitation Cap

Sanchez displayed a copy of the current and proposed amendment to the Grant Limitation Policy. The Admin Committee reviewed and recommended to the Board for adoption. The amendment to the policy is to capture the recent changes in the grant program such as the increase to \$10,000 annual limit, the addition of the Partner Grant, and the change from in name from “Landowner Assistance Program” to “Conservation Assistant Grants”.

Action: Hart motioned that the Board **adopt the amended Grant Limitation Policy as presented**, 2nd by Budeau. No further Discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-4 [Olson, Koch, Hart, and Budeau], Opposed-1 [Walker]).

c. Heat Illness Prevention and Wildfire Smoke Policies

Oregon’s Occupational Safety and Health Administration have updated rules that includes requirements for staff training and other items related to smoke and heat. Lovett highlighted requirements. Olson shared some concerns such as what temperature to use and how does staff maintain a 77-degree water temperature. Sanchez replied that we are providing bottled water (stock on hand), coolers, and ice packs for staff. As for air quality we have asked that staff download the air quality index app and check air quality on smokey days to manage their exposure to wildfire smoke and heat. Budeau asked why the policy does not state that staff can adjust their work schedule. Sanchez explains that staff already can flex their schedule for heat, air quality, or any weather concerns and it has been reinforced for these reasons. Directors discussed further the policy requirements and staff management regarding the policies lined out.

Action: Walker motioned that the Board **approve the Heat Illness Prevention and Wildfire Smoke polices**, 2nd by Koch. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-5 [Walker, Olson, Koch, Hart, and Budeau], Opposed-0).

9. Grant Employee Step Increases

Sanchez shared that Ortiz and Wilson both accomplished two successful performance evaluations and per policy are eligible for a step increase.

Action: Hart motioned that the Board **approve step increases for Susan Ortiz and Tom Wilson**, 2nd by Budeau. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-5 [Walker, Olson, Koch, Hart, and Budeau], Opposed-0).

10. 2024 Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA)

Sanchez submitted the COLA proposal to the Board for review and action. Sanchez shares that after her research she is proposing a three percent COLA for fiscal year 2024-25 and she determined based on the Consumer Price Index and inflation changes over the last year. Walker adds that he would like us to use the COLAs that the Social Security Administration adopts because they have the experts and follow their lead. Directors deliberated the option and agreed it should be an annual (fiscal year) determination. Plowhead adds that Congress votes on Social Security COLA and can have budget/political influences.

Action: Hart motioned that the Board **approve the three percent (3%) COLA, to retroactively start on July 1, 2024,** 2nd by Budeau. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-5 [Walker, Olson, Koch, Hart, and Budeau], Opposed-0).

11. Oregon Association of Conservation District (OACD)

Olson brought up that the Oregon Association of Conservation District (OACD) dues are up for payment. Olson discussed concerns related to the work they do, the cost for us to have them do that work, and how it does not always align with District needs. Walker adds that he is uncomfortable with the dues structure and Budeau pointed out the inequities of the current dues structure. Kreiner shared that the OACD is working to restructure their dues to make them more equitable and that their objectives toward diversity equity and inclusion is to increase the number of acres under conservation in Oregon. Hart added that equity should also be about a common goal. Walker says we should pay a lessor amount to make a symbolic statement. Olson suggests half of the amount figured. Koch agrees to half the amount.

Action: Hart motioned that the Board **support the work of OACD at half of the proposed fee amount and include a letter stating support for a revised fee structure,** 2nd by Walker. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-5 [Walker, Olson, Koch, Hart, and Budeau], Opposed-0).

12. Marion County Water Quality Advisory Committee-Marion SWCD Position Available

Action: Olson motioned that the Board **appoint Angela Plowhead to represent the Marion SWCD on the Water Quality Advisory Committee,** 2nd by Hart. Budeau stated he hoped Angela had been made aware of the vacancy prior to the motion and Angela responded that she had. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-5 [Walker, Olson, Koch, Hart, and Budeau], Opposed-0).

Adjourn: Chair Olson adjourned the meeting at 8:43 PM



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