

Walla Walla County Conservation

District March Board Meeting

Date: March 12, 2018 Time: 5:00 p.m. Place: District Conference Room

Presiding Officer: Ed Chvatal

Supervisors Present: Jim Kent and Jeff Schulke

Supervisors Absent: associate Mike Hagerman, Todd Kimball, and Pat McConnell

Representatives of Other Agencies: Ed Teel, NRCS and Ray Ledgerwood, State Conservation Commission

Also present: Renee Hadley, Joanna Cowles Cleveland, and members of the public Leo Pauly and Annie Byerley

The meeting was called to order at 5:10 p.m. by Ed Chvatal.

Minutes: The Board reviewed the February minutes. **Motion by Jeff Schulke and second by Jim Kent to approve the minutes as presented, motion passed.**

Financial Report: Hadley shared the budget that was reviewed and approved last month was edited by Ahmann to include the NRCS task orders and it looks positive for the District in the upcoming year. The board reviewed the March Financial Report. **Motion by Jeff Schulke and second by Jim Kent to approve the March financial reports and pay the bills, motion passed.**

Checks included 13075 to 13106, total all accounts: \$353,779.93

As of this date March 12th, 2018 the Board by a majority vote does approve for payment checks included in the March financial report and further described as follows: Checks 13075 through 13106. Total Accounts Balance: \$353,779.93

New Business:

- 1. NRCS report:** Ed Teel reported the Local Working Group will meet in Pomeroy on March 27. This is the opportunity to provide input to Farm Bill program implementation and priorities. There is a need to fund 1) both agri-chemical and on-farm secondary containment facilities to address water quality and safety concerns, 2) innovative cover crops (trials ongoing in St John and here in WW Co.), and habitat projects. These were previously funded through WHIP and may be funded through EQIP if the local working group agrees. NRCS staffing is still low with no conservation planner at the Walla Walla office. This position is not a high priority in state-wide NRCS vacancies. Transfers from other offices are being considered. District staff are working with Ed to meet task order deadlines.
- 2. CREP Maintenance discussion:** Hadley shared the 2018 draft CREP Maintenance Hold-down sheet that was edited to be more in line with SCC guidelines, specifically for fencing, reseeding and tarp repair. The 2018 version clarifies which activities are common and which are special exceptions that would need prior approval by the WWCCD board. This would only apply to the first 5 years of the contract which is maintained by funds from the state. After discussion, **Jeff Schulke motioned to**

approve the 2018 hold-down sheet but will accept the version of the hold-down sheet in effect at the time the contract was signed. Jim Kent seconded the motion, motion passed.

3. **CREP new project discussion:** Cowles Cleveland shared the status of a new project that was previously denied by the FSA County Committee. Kelley Betts, Travis Martin, Ed Teel, Joanna Cowles Cleveland and the landowner met together and reviewed a proposed site preparation plan. The landowner intends to present this plan to the next FSA County Committee and ask again for additional funds under the site preparation category. The question is, if the FSA County Committee does not approve additional funds, will the District request extra contingency funds from SCC for site preparation to manage the existing weed population? Since the District manages maintenance activities, a site with extra maintenance may be an ongoing concern for the District. Schulke and Chvatal discussed past CREP projects with special exceptions that didn't fare well. Discussion included a history of other projects that had trouble succeeding, the intention of CREP for water quality on active agricultural land, and what makes a successful (surviving) CREP project. Ledgerwood mentioned the landowner might consider the WDFW Partners in Wildlife program.
4. **Small work roster:** Hadley presented the current small works roster vs. the state MRCS small work roster. A quick poll of other districts in the area indicated that 3 don't use small work rosters, another only uses their county small work roster, and one in an urban area used the MRCS roster. The MRSC roster would be state wide and allow anyone on the MRSC roster to bid on projects, and by joining, MRCS would pay for the legal notifications. Ledgerwood shared some information. The general tenor of the board was to leave the small work roster as is, knowing that if the District chooses to join the MRSC, they can do so twice a year during the signup window.
5. **Vehicle Longevity:** Hadley shared concerns of the staff about the remaining life of the Ford Ranger. It has over 100,000 miles and has safety concerns during inclement weather. This is not an immediate concern but a plan for replacement needs to be considered. There is a possibility to lease from the state motor pool through SCC. Ledgerwood informed the board that this is fairly new for SCC and Districts. Some offices calculated the expenses of owning vs. leasing and it was favorable to lease. Chvatal asked Hadley to check with staff on what features they would need to complete their work (4WD, extra seating) and provide numbers for the Board to review.
6. **Performance Reviews:** Kent volunteered and McConnell was volunteered to complete the performance reviews of the District Employees.
7. **Reminder of Appointed Position:** The board was reminded that the position currently held by Ed Chvatal is open for applications. Ed asked for the link to the SCC to complete the process. Hadley agreed to send it.

Public Comments: Leo Pauly commented on a few new business items. Ray Ledgerwood provided an update on several items. The SCC is looking into the appointment process and changes will likely occur, including more vetting of candidates. Ledgerwood thanked the board and staff for the CAPP review and suggestions. The 32 items were grouped into 8 categories. The original thought was to include incentives or accreditation for Districts with favorable CAPP reviews. These weren't included in the end but CAPP should still be best practices that Districts strive for. The CAPP will go to a vote at the SCC meeting March 15. Hadley asked Ledgerwood to check on two items that were in the last revision but not the previous versions: needing a District sign visible from the right-of-way and how many days ahead of meetings should board members receive the board packets. Ledgerwood clarified, the timeframe was changed to a "reasonable amount of time" and will check on the others. The SCC All District Policy & Budget meeting will be April 25-26 in Ellensburg. Hadley is unable to attend. A Forest Health & Recovery meeting will also be in Ellensburg on April 18. Supervisors, District Employees, or interested folks are welcome to attend. Ledgerwood informed the board on the Natural Resource Investment projects. It looks favorable for priority 3 projects for the District to be funded. He discussed NRCS task orders and continue funding for engineering and cultural resources. Much discussion on Ecology issues. The Dept. of Ecology staff are in the midst of completing the watershed assessments. Districts have different ways of responding. The board reinforced that the District is willing to help land owners but prefers that Ecology take the lead, as they are the enforcement agency.

New Projects for Board Approval

1. **CREP:** Cowles Cleveland reported that a CREP contact is being developed for Tom Maiden along the Touchet River. The buffer width and areas were acceptable to the owner and now the application can proceed with FSA. Cowles Cleveland informed the board that FSA is changing their application procedure and requires SHAPE files prior to proceeding through the application eligibility and review. This means more effort is need and projects must be farther along in the design before FSA review. **Jeff Schulke moved to approve the project on the Tom Maiden farm as described, Jim Kent seconded, motion passed.**

Program Updates

1. **Burn.** Hadley referred to Klundt's report comparing the reduction in burn permit applications over the past 3 years. There was a flush of applications Friday March 9 and Monday March 12.
2. **CREP:** Cowles Cleveland shared the SCC template for CREP maintenance agreements. There is a need for greater clarity regarding who does what and landowner's responsibility. The agreement is contractual, so Cowles Cleveland is preparing a letter (in progress) to accompany the agreement. Chvatal asked that these documents be brought back to the board next month for approval.
3. **Meters/Screens:** Hadley referred to Oosterhuis' report. Many projects are in the works as the grant deadline approaches in June. A notice was sent out that the deadline for meter applications is March 16. This is to ensure there are adequate funds and time

remaining in the grant to complete the projects in the queue. Additional projects will be placed on a waiting list pending completion of existing projects and an assessment of remaining funds.

4. **Irrigation Efficiency:** Hadley shared that Oosterhuis is working closely with Jack Myrick and Greg Kinsinger to evaluate the Blalock Irrigation District. This project will take a bit of leg work early on and outside the box thinking to complete.
5. **VSP:** A quarterly update was emailed to the workgroup members March 5th. Hadley and staff are doing VSP field checks while farmers are available but leaving the paperwork until after farmers are field bound. WWCCD is in line with our obligations to Walla Walla County and the State.
6. **Education/Outreach:** Outreach activities included a presentation to the WSU Master Gardeners program on riparian plantings, manning a table at a Dept. of Ag workshop to area farmers, Whitman College job fair, Spring newsletter, and visits to a local school to teach about habitat. Additional community outreach activities are planned for Spring.

Employee Reports: Nothing specific, board members were referred to board reports.

Joint Agency Meetings

1. **WW Water Management Partnerships:** The partnership is funded through 2019. There are 4 new board members out of 9. Chvatal was selected as vice-chair. Getting the new board members up to speed during the last year and a half of the Partnership pilot run will be challenging.
2. **SRSRB meeting:** The bulk of the last meeting was discussing the Tri-State Steelheader project and its unforeseen access limitations. The SRSRB agreed to leave funding as is.
3. **Mill Creek Work Group:** Hadley presented at the Mill Creek Work Group meeting about area “emergency repairs” and a need for a more pro-active (simple and faster) approach. She was informed that a prioritization plan may be needed to summarize all area plans and develop an implementation strategy.

Misc. Discussion: Hadley added some last minute comments about a Livestock project with noxious weed control and the chemicals needing to comply with Organic certification requirements. The snowpack meeting was March 1. Current snowpack levels are low and hovering or slightly below the drought declaration limit.


Executive Session At 7:25, the board and district manager went into Executive Session per RCW 42.30.110 (1)(g) to review the performance of an employee. The board concluded the executive session and returned to regular session at 7:35.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:37 by the Chairman without a formal motion.

Respectfully submitted


Renee M. Hadley
District Manager


Ed Chvatal,
Chairman


Jeff Schulke
Member

Next meeting: April 9, 2018

Motions:

To approve the February minutes as written: Motion: Schulke
Second: Kent
Motion passed

To approve the March Financial report: Motion: Schulke
Second: Kent
Motion passed

To approve an addendums as read, "to
approve the 2018 hold-down sheet but will
accept the version of the hold-down sheet in
effect at the time of signing the contract." Motion: Schulke
Second: Kent
Motion passed

To approve the CREP project on the Tom
Maiden farm as described, Motion: Schulke
Second: Kent
Motion passed

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