

Walla Walla County Conservation District

Oct. 2019 Special Board Meeting

Date: Oct. 14th, 2019 Time: 5:00 p.m. Place: District Conference Room

Presiding Officer: Jim Kent

Supervisors Present: Ed Chvatal, Pat McConnell, Jim Kent and Associate Annie Byerley

Supervisors Absent: Jeff Schulke, Todd Kimball

Also present: Renee Hadley, Lynda Oosterhuis, Joanna Cowles Cleveland, and Audrey Ahmann

Member of the Public: Nick Plucker

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. by Chairman Jim Kent.

Minutes: The Board reviewed the September minutes. **Motion by Ed Chvatal and second by Pat McConnell to approve the minutes as presented, motion passed.**

Financial Report: The board reviewed the October Financial Report. Ahmann drew the board's attention to the bolded transactions.¹ **Motion by Pat McConnell and second by Ed Chvatal to approve the October financial report and pay the bills, motion passed.** Checks included 13628 to 13664, total all accounts: \$392,786.37

As of this date October 15, 2019 the Board by a majority vote does approve for payment checks included in the October financial report and further described as follows: Checks 13628 to 13664, total all accounts \$392,786.37

New Business:

1. **NRCS update:** Hadley said there was no report from NRCS this month.
2. **Office Lease:** Hadley presented the office lease totals for the previous quarter. Staff are busy completing CRP field checks for NRCS as part of the lease agreement. NRCS doesn't need assistance with engineering or cultural resources but they do need help with status reviews which count toward our lease.

¹ One was an August 30 interest deposit (which is not reported to Ahmann until she receives the statement after reconciliation) and the other a payment inadvertently entered (and printed) with the same date.

3. **SIMPLE Retirement Contributions:** Hadley reviewed the current district contributions to staff SIMPLE IRA accounts (2% non-elective contribution) and the options should the board want to change this. After discussion **Pat McConnell moved and Ed Chvatal seconded to continue the district 2% non-elective contribution for 2020, motion passed.**
4. **Summary of SCC tour:** Hadley reported 40 people, including County Commissioner Tompkins and Rep. McMorris-Rogers staffer Victor Valerio, attended the tour and were especially interested in the VSP project and the many successful CREP projects.
5. **Soil Survey follow-up and NRCS:** Keith Harrington said the letter sent on behalf of the board in support of updating the NRCS soils maps made a difference. They cannot update the entire region but will focus on the floodplain of the Touchet drainage. In further discussion, Hadley reported that the office Harrington works for (a division of NRCS) has had a vacant position for over 5 years that Roylene has been unable to fill. Staffing at NRCS is down sharply. The board expressed concern over the reduction in NRCS personnel. Growers are aware that there is little chance of anyone checking implementation and non-compliance could become an issue. The integrity of the programs is at risk. Hadley agreed to bring attention to the issue at appropriate forums.
6. **Annual Reviews of District MOU/MOA:** Ahmann presented the list of MOU/MOA for board review.

Public Comment: There were no public comments.

Program Updates:

1. **Oosterhuis** spoke to a representative from Macrometer who offered to write a grant for a meter program, but the funds are intended for residential or irrigation districts. Local irrigation districts have already updated their meters though previous district programs. The Food Coalition will probably expand (build) on the existing property of the Blue Mountain Action Council. An intern from Whitman will be researching business structures to help guide their development.
2. **Cowles Cleveland:** On CREP, it is apparent the tree release needs to be done on older contracts no longer under maintenance. (Tree release is the cutting of tarps to allow expansion of tree/shrub trunks which are at risk for girdling.) This will be expensive. SCC has some discretionary CREP funds but they are reluctant to dedicate the majority of the funds to this effort. The paperwork needed for CREP

reenrollments was completed on time. The board inquired as to the number of CRP contracts being extended; there has been public speculation on the status of older CRP contracts. Hadley told the board that many contracts were given 1 or 2-year extensions pending changes under the new Farm Bill. The board asked about county-wide acres under contract and how many acres would be coming out of CRP; Hadley offered to ask FSA and will report next month.

3. **Hadley:** Hadley reported on the 2050 water workshop she attended. Oregon was well-represented. There was discussion of infrastructure needs and possibly changing water laws/rules. The Yakima team presented the successful work done in their basin and Ecology view it as a model to address concerns and avoid litigation here. However, Hadley noted Yakima, unlike Walla Walla, has a reservoir, high-value crops, tribal irrigators with a personal stake in continued irrigation, and is located in one state. The most positive outcome of the workshop was the number of new Ecology staff who are now more aware of the stakeholders and specific needs of our basin.


Hadley also reminded the board of the upcoming SE Area meeting in Pomeroy, the annual WACD meeting in December (Tacoma) and that fall mini-sessions are planned for late October. She will discuss VSP at these sessions and gauge interest in small-scale projects eligible for VSP cost-share. Outreach included taking the Rainfall Simulator to Dixie elementary. She is working on an RCPP application with the Blue Mountain Land Trust. The grant would fund, via EQIP, nutrient management and water quality practices as well as NRCS easements with assistance of the land trust. Benton CD notified the district that they have an air-quality grant for the Wallula Management area and will be working with FirstFruits Farms (Broetje orchards) and Tyson Meats.

Joint Agency Meetings

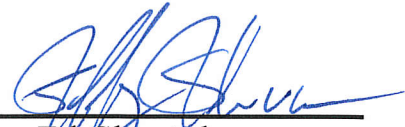
1. **Snake River Salmon Recovery Board.** Cowles Cleveland reported that almost of the Mill Creek project may be funded by the Mid-Columbia Focused Investment fund; money became available and the Tri-State Steelheaders had plans ready. The Regional Technical Team (RTT) is being asked to reevaluate the current designation of the lower Touchet as of "limited habitat value." These RTT designations determine local score card results and can benefit our area.
2. **Walla Walla Basin Partnership:** The most recent meeting focused primarily on budgeting and the like.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:15 without a formal motion.

Respectfully submitted


Audrey Ahmann
Assistant Manager, Finance


Jim Kent,
Chairman


Ed Chvatal
Secretary *Jeff Schulke for Ed Chvatal*

Next meeting: (Special meeting) November 12th, 2019

Motions:

To approve the Sept. minutes as written, Motion: Chvatal
Second: McConnell
Motion passed

To approve the October financial report, Motion: McConnell
Second: Chvatal
Motion passed

To continue the 2% non-elective district
contribution to employee SIMPLE IRA
accounts for 2020, Motion: McConnell
Second: Chvatal
Motion passed