

Walla Walla County Conservation District

Feb. 2020 Board Meeting

Date: February 10th, 2020 Time: 4:00 p.m. Place: District Conference Room

Presiding Officer: Jim Kent

Supervisors Present: Ed Chvatal, Pat McConnell

Supervisors Absent: Todd Kimball, Jeff Schulke, Associate Annie Byerley

Other Agencies: Katie Walters, NRCS

Also present: Renee Hadley, Lynda Oosterhuis, Cat Garza, and Audrey Ahmann

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m. by Chairman Jim Kent.

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

Financial Report: The board reviewed the February Financial Report. **Motion by Ed Chvatal and second by Pat McConnell to approve the February financial report and pay the bills, motion passed.** Checks included 13744 to 13769, total all accounts: \$359,071.77

As of this date February 10th, 2020 the Board by a majority vote does approve for payment checks included in the February financial report and further described as follows: Checks 13744 to 13769, total all accounts \$359,071.77

New Business:

- 1. NRCS update:** Walters reported that the new CART process (one application-one plan) will be gradually integrated across programs. For this year, EQIP and CSP will remain separate applications. The CART program will apply to smaller producers. In response to a question, Walters said it was not yet known if recent or deferred applications would go through the CART process. Unlike previous years, CSP renewals will now compete with new applications. If a producer chooses not to renew, there will be a two-year waiting period before s/he can enroll. There will no longer be cost sharing of the cost of improving a stand prior to reenrollment. February 28th is the CRP deadline. Producers have been encouraged to come in soon to hear first hand of changes.
- 2. Meters:** Oosterhuis reported that some participants in the now-closed meter program continue to seek assistance in reading their meters. Due to a variety of reasons (battery issues, lack of maintenance) these meter readings are taking a significant amount of time with no specific grant to cover costs. The board suggested sending a letter to recent program participants stating that when there was a program to cover our costs, the district could continue with such support.

Now that funding has ended, we are unable to continue the service. Chvatal offered to help with the letter. It was also suggested that we request the Ecology water master for the area (Eric Hartwig) to stop referring folks to the district for meter assistance, since Ecology no longer funds the meter program.

3. **Grant opportunities:** Hadley presented two recent project opportunities. One was for a farm pond project; she had just been informed that the issue was moot as the water rights for the proposed pond were not owned by the landowners. The second is to work with USFWS on Madame Dorian Park which adjoins the McNary Wildlife area. Work proposed includes trail signage, gravelling walkways, basically, work to increase accessibility of the park. RCO, which funds salmon recovery work in our area, also has a recreational improvement grant program. The board discussed whether the project fits the district mission, and agreed some aspects would such as riparian planting, toilets to protect water quality, paths to protect sensitive native vegetation, etc. Hadley will continue to pursue the project.
4. **VSP Projects for board approval:** Hadley presented the project in Stearns' absence. The project involves three landowners on the Coppei (possible name: Meinberg Rd. Project) who would like to do riparian restoration but their ground is not eligible for CREP. The board inquired as to the agriculture intersect since VSP is supposed to involve ag. producers. The ground is marginal pasture. The board stated they will concur with the decision of the VSP work group and asked that the landowner agreements specify future exclusion of animals from the project area.
Pat McConnell moved and Ed Chvatal seconded to approve the Meinberg Rd. VSP project as proposed, motion passed.

Program Updates: There were no further updates from Oosterhuis. Cowles Cleveland mentioned that staff are completing some field checks for NRCS. Hadley reported on the Annual Meeting, which had fewer attendees than usual. Those who did attend said the information was valuable and well-presented.

Flood Damage: The board discussed damage from the flood of Friday the 7th. One example was a CREP project in which all the site prep was complete, grass seeded, tarps laid, and 20,000 plants on hand for planting that Friday. Most of the project site now needs to be completely redone. Other reports were equally grim. Hadley told the board the county Emergency Management is taking the lead. The district's current role is to take information regarding property damage (not residential damage). The goal is to add these to the county total; the county will report to FEMA. Hadley will also report damage to the Commission and seek additional funding there.

Joint Agency Meetings

1. **Snake River Salmon Recovery Board.** No report.

- 2. WW Water Management Partnership:** The Partnership continues to work on their report to Ecology. Columbia County recently assigned an alternate for the times when Chvatal cannot attend.

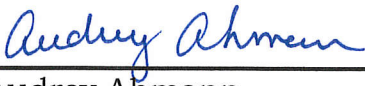
Misc. Discussion and Public Comment:

Overall 2020 Budget: Ahmann presented the 2020 Overall Budget to the board. She explained the “deficit” of 5,370 shown is not of concern in a \$917,700.00 budget. The budget is intended to inform the board of planned project expenditures (Cottonwood, Russell, Walla Walla, DOE Canopy Cover, NRI, VSP) along with expected personnel/office expenses and the sources to pay these. **Pat McConnell moved and Ed Chvatal seconded to approve the 2020 Overall Budget for 2020, motion passed.**

Executive Session: The board went into executive session as per RCW 42.30.110(1)(g) to review the performance of a public employee at 6:15 for 30 minutes. The board returned to open session at 6:40.

With no further action, the meeting was adjourned at 6:40 without a formal motion.

Respectfully submitted,


Audrey Ahmann
Assistant Manager, Finance


Jim Kent
Chair


Ed Chvatal
Secretary

Next meeting: March 9th, 2020 at 5:00 p.m.

Motions:

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

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

To approve the Meinberg Rd. VSP project as proposed, Motion: McConnell
Second: Chvatal
Motion passed

To approve the Overall Budget 2020 as presented, Motion: McConnell
Second: Chvatal
Motion passed