

Walla Walla County Conservation District

May 2020 Board Meeting

Date: May 11, 2020 Time: 5:00 p.m. Place: Via phone conference

Presiding Officer: Jim Kent

Supervisors Present: Ed Chvatal, Pat McConnell, Todd Kimball, Jeff Schulke
(5:25) Associate Annie Byerley

Supervisors Absent:

Other Agencies: Tracy Hanger, NRCS, (late) Allisa Carlson SCC

Also present: Renee Hadley, Audrey Ahmann

Members of the Public: none

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

Minutes: The Board reviewed the April minutes. **Motion by Pat McConnell and second by Todd Kimball to approve the minutes as presented, motion passed.**

Financial Report: The board reviewed the May Financial Report. **Motion by Pat McConnell and second by Todd Kimball to approve the May financial report and pay the bills, motion passed.** Checks included 13814 to 13834, total all accounts: \$378,946.71

As of this date May 11th, 2020 the Board by a majority vote does approve for payment checks included in the May financial report and further described as follows: Checks 13814 to 13834, total all accounts \$378,946.71

New Business:

- 1. Conservation Commission Update:** Allisa Carlson reported on the financial outlook from the state. All state agencies have been advised to prepare for budget cuts. The SCC is planning to allocate two months (July-August) of operating fund grants while determining final amounts. Capital grants (CREP, IrrEff) are not affected. There is no word on impacts to other all agencies. Allisa encouraged the board to call in to the SCC meeting on Wednesday; she will send more information as it comes in.
- 2. Conservation Innovation funds:** Hadley explained that Palouse CD has an incentive program for producers interested in adopting cover crops as a practice. They are looking for 30 producers to plant a 30-acre plot to determine the soil health benefits of cover cropping (and possibly grazing of the crop). Cost share incentives will be available for participants and they can cover 75% of the cost of our staff assistance. **Pat McConnell moved and**

Ed Chvatal seconded to send Palouse CD a letter of support for the Inland Northwest Flourish program, motion passed.

- 3. Discussion of Insurance benefits:** Hadley presented more information on the possible addition of medical benefits to the district compensation package. In response to previous questions, she reported that of the seven eligible staff (eligibility is determined by the state) four are interested, two would continue with current insurance, and one is undecided. The premiums would add about 1.84 per hour to the composite rates. The board discussed whether it was equitable for staff who would not receive medical benefits or the 450\$ stipend (currently offered in lieu of benefits). The board, while agreeing it is a needed benefit to recruit and maintain staff, asked for more information on costs and options before making any decisions.

NRCS Update: Hanger joined the meeting late and reported that the general CSP signup continues through May. She mentioned that the local working group will be meeting May 27th. NRCS is still working on program details. Staff are working remotely.

Program Updates: Hadley reported on behalf of staff. Most are engaged on CRP reviews for NRCS as part of a task order. Good progress is being made and staff are extremely busy. CREP continues but at a slower pace. Lynda Oosterhuis successfully obtained grant funding to study beneficial insects in vineyards in coordination with the Community College Enology/Viticulture program. The Western SARE grant folks praised Oosterhuis' application as particularly well done. The WW River draft design has been submitted to RCO. Things are progressing on the Rea bridge project and Hadley expects construction to take place this year as planned. McCaw Phase C is also moving along well and should be constructed this year.

Ahmann mentioned that the Annual Financial report will be uploaded and submitted to the State Auditor's office by the May 31th deadline. The state auditor's office had suggested adding a note regarding Covid-19 and its impact to district operations; she included in that note that the financial report will be examined by the district manager before submitting, and it would be approved by the board later when the internal audit is completed.

Joint Agency Meetings

- 1. Snake River Salmon Recovery Board.** Kimball said all submitted proposals will be funded this year. The ranking will proceed as usual but funds are available to cover all projects.
- 2. WW Water Management Partnership:** Chvatal reported that the Partnership is possibly going to fold into the 2050 group, which will still have a voice in local water management decisions but be led by Ecology.

Public Comment: There were no public comments.

With no further action, the meeting was adjourned at 6:20 without a formal motion.

Respectfully submitted,

		
Audrey Ahmann	Jim Kent	Ed Chvatal
Assistant Manager, Finance	Chair	Secretary

Next meeting: June 8th, 2020 at 5:00 p.m.

Motions:

To approve the April minutes as written,

Motion: McConnell
Second: Kimball
Motion passed

To approve the May financial report,

Motion: McConnell
Second: Kimball
Motion passed

To send Palouse CD a letter of support for the Inland Northwest Flourish program,

Motion: McConnell
Second: Chvatal
Motion passed