

Walla Walla County Conservation District

July 2020 Board Meeting

Date: July 13, 2020 Time: 5:00 p.m. Place: Via phone conference

Presiding Officer: Jeff Schulke

Supervisors Present: Ed Chvatal, Pat McConnell, Jim Kent

Supervisors Absent: Todd Kimball, Associate Annie Byerley

Other Agencies: Allisa Carlson SCC, Lindsey Williams, WWCC

Also present: Renee Hadley, Audrey Ahmann

Members of the Public: none

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. by Jeff Schulke.

Minutes: The Board reviewed the June minutes. **Motion by Jim Kent and second by Pat McConnell to approve the minutes as presented, motion passed.**

Financial Report: The board reviewed the July Financial Report. **Motion by Pat McConnell and second by Jim Kent to approve the July financial report and pay the bills, motion passed.** Checks included 13854 to 13881, total all accounts: \$315,792.95

As of this date July 13th, 2020 the Board by a majority vote does approve for payment checks included in the July financial report and further described as follows: Checks 13854 to 13881, total all accounts \$315,792.95

New Business:

1. **SCC Update:** Carlson reported that the 15% budget reduction proposed by Commission staff had not been approved by the state's OFM. OFM has advised agencies to plan for a 15% budget cut in the coming biennium. SCC has allocated 6 months of funding for operating grants (Implementation and engineering). Cuts to the capital accounts have not been announced (CREP, IrrEff, NRI, VSP). She also mentioned that in-person public agency meetings are still restricted in counties in Phase 2.
2. **Fiscal:**
 - a. Hadley reported that she had received an email from Kimball about an old bill from 2001 related to the county putting our election on the ballot. After discussion, the board requested that Hadley respond with

a letter to Kimball stating we preferred not to pay the bill and invite the county to reach out to us with their thoughts.

- b. As usual at the start of a new fiscal year, the district needs to submit an addendum for the upcoming Implementation grant. Ahmann referred the board to the draft addendum (included with the read-ahead materials). Like the previous year, it allows for funding general district operations, staff technical assistance, Basic funds, and Orca Recovery work. **Pat McConnell moved and Jim Kent seconded to approve the FY21 Implementation grant addendum as presented, motion passed.**

3. **Resolution and Letter of Support:** Hadley explained that that Ecology needs a formal resolution and a letter demonstrating board support of the FloodPlains by Design grant application. This grant will be for design, outreach, and installation of projects to restore floodplain function on the Mill Creek RM 12-18. **Pat McConnell moved and Jim Kent seconded to approve both a letter of support and a resolution approving the district's Floodplain by Design grant application to restore floodplain function at Mill Creek River Mile 12-18; motion passed.**

4. **Approval of Employee classification:** Hadley referred the board to her report requesting approval to change the status of our temporary employees. **Jim Kent moved and Pat McConnell seconded to classify Cat Garza as part-time permanent and Lorna Emerich as on-call, motion passed.**

5. **BIAS accounting:** Ahmann explained to the board that she has been considering switching to Bias Accounting, which is a software package designed specifically for districts to simplify bookkeeping and grant accounting. The board expressed their support.

Old Business: Discussion/Action Medical Benefits: Hadley, assisted by McConnell, described options for the board to consider regarding the addition of medical insurance to the district benefit package. The board considered various options, including raising the stipend so employees could purchase insurance on their own, paying employee premiums, including dental/vision coverage, and making no change. Ahmann mentioned that with our current grants the district can afford the cost. After careful consideration of these options, the board decided to offer insurance to employees in order to retain staff and recruit strong candidates to future openings. Eligibility for the benefit will continue to be as per the current policy, that is, limited to employees classified as "permanent". Employee family members may be added to the group plan at the employees' expense. **Pat McConnell moved and Ed Chvatal seconded to offer, starting August 1st 2020, Premara Heritage Signature coverage to permanent employees plus Delta Dental and vision, and to continue the \$450.00 a month stipend for current employees who opt out of coverage, but not offer the stipend to future employees; motion passed.**

Program Updates: Hadley reported on behalf of staff. Two new CREP projects are on hold while staff complete the CRP field checks. Eight landowners have opted to re-enroll their CREP contracts, three have not, and three have not responded.

CRP status reviews are continuing and results reported to NRCS in accordance with our Task Order.

The Touchet Canopy Cover work is ready to start with a contractor selected and ready to go. The Cottonwood PALS project is on hiatus as designs are not complete. Hadley informed the board that the NRI funds will need to be returned.

The landowner on the Walsh Creek VSP project has requested additional assistance in dredging the creek upstream of the project. The board declined to approve this project as it seemed small in scope and could be considered a reasonable expectation of routine agronomic responsibilities. A second VSP project involved the field edges of a large farm with 81 irrigation circles. The proposed project would cost share using wheat as a cover crop to control weeds until the weed-seed is eliminated, followed by planting native grasses. The board declined to approve this but left open the option of cost sharing the expensive native grass seed after the initial weed control.

The board discussed that there are some components that are the landowner's responsibility or agronomic duties to land management, such as initial weed control or sediment removal. They mentioned favorably several circumstances:

- addressing a resource concern that impacted other landowners
- protecting an existing conservation project
- one which cost an amount that, while preserving and protecting a natural resource, exceeded what might be financially prudent for an ag. producer.

However, ordinary weed control, absent a new or innovative control practice, would usually be considered a landowner's responsibility.

McCaw Phase C is proceeding as planned. The VSP quarterly report was completed. With assistance from WSU and their aerial imagery of riparian areas, we can add non-CREP buffer acres to the county count of functioning buffers.

Hadley reported we have a possible Irrigation Efficiency project to convert 20 acres of flood irrigation to a pivot.

Partner Collaboration: Hadley was able to step down from WADE President and will serve as an advisor.

Joint Agency Meetings

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


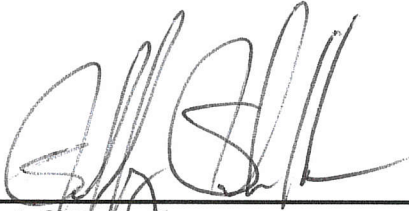
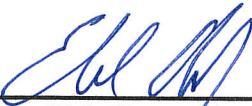
- 2. WW Water Management Partnership:** Chvatal reported that the partnership is likely to fold and the new advisory group will be unfunded.

Public Comment: There were no public comments.

Misc.: Due to some unintended consequences, the SCC is unable to transfer funds to WACD for expenses related to Conservation Commission costs. These costs are routinely paid by SCC. As a temporary solution, the district has been asked to facilitate the transfer of funds via our Implementation grant. **Jim Kent moved and Pat McConnell seconded to approve the following addendum to the Implementation grant. Outcome 5: The District will facilitate the work of the Washington Association of Conservation Districts by reimbursing WACD for costs related to Conservation Commission expenses; motion passed.**

With no further action, the meeting was adjourned at 6:35 without a formal motion.

Respectfully submitted,

		
Audrey Ahmann	Jeff Schulke	Ed Chvatal
Assistant Manager, Finance	Chair	Secretary

Next meeting: September 14th, 2020 at 5:00 p.m.

Motions:

To approve the June minutes as written,	Motion: Kent Second: McConnell Motion passed
To approve the July financial report,	Motion: McConnell Second: Kent Motion passed
To approve the Implementation grant addendum as presented,	Motion: McConnell Second: Kent Motion passed
To approve a letter of support and a resolution approving the district's Floodplain by Design grant application,	Motion: McConnell Second: Kent Motion passed

To classify Cat Garza as part-time permanent and Lorna Emerich as on-call,

Motion: Kent
Second: McConnell
Motion passed

To offer, starting August 1st, 2020, Primera Gold coverage to permanent employees plus Delta Dental and vision, to continue the \$450.00 a month stipend for current employees who opt out, but not offer the stipend to future employees.

Motion: McConnell
Second: Chvatal
Motion passed

To approve an addendum to the Implementation grant. Outcome 5: The District will facilitate the work of the WACD by reimbursing WACD for costs related to Conservation Commission expenses,

Motion: Kent
Second: McConnell
Motion passed