

Walla Walla County Conservation District

September 2020 Board Meeting

Date: Sept. 14, 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 July minutes. **Motion by Jim Kent and second by Ed Chvatal to approve the minutes as presented, motion passed.**

Financial Report: The board reviewed the August and September Financial Reports. **Motion by Jim Kent and second by Pat McConnell to approve the August financial report and pay the bills, motion passed.** Checks included 13882 to 13905, total all accounts: \$372,391.07 **Motion by Pat McConnell and second by Jim Kent to approve the September financial report and pay the bills, motion passed.** Checks included 13906 to 13936, total all accounts: \$260,489.65

As of this date September 14, 2020 the Board by a majority vote does approve for payment checks included in the August financial report and further described as follows: Checks 13882 to 13905, total all accounts \$372,391.07; and the September financial report and further described as follows: checks 13906 to 13936, total all accounts \$260,489.65

New Business:

- 1. USDA Update:** Hadley reported on behalf of Kelley Betts that County Committee is working through the CRP renewals, but the process is slowed as the meetings are via phone conference. NRCS is now fully staffed with the addition of Cassie Jacobson. Out of office meetings are not allowed under this phase of the reopening.
- 2. Annual Review of Personnel Policy Manual:**

With the changes to the benefits package approved in July, Hadley explained the personnel manual needed to be updated. The proposed addition is as follows:

“Medical Benefit:

The District offers and pays 100% of medical, dental and vision insurance for eligible* employees under a District-selected group plan. Coverage may be extended to dependents, such as spouses or children, under the District plan but premiums are paid by the employee. Coverage for dependents is paid pre-tax through payroll deduction.

Eligible employees hired before 2020 received a \$450 medical health benefit stipend in lieu of benefits. These employees may opt to continue to receive this stipend until they accept medical, dental and vision insurance. Income and Social Security/Medicare taxes apply. Future employees do not have the stipend option.

The WWCCD board of supervisors will review available medical coverage options every 3 years.

* Permanent employees maintaining a minimum of 20 hours per week are eligible for medical benefits. Temporary (seasonal) and on-call employees are not entitled to benefits beyond those required by state or federal law.”

Hadley also suggested updating the section on employee conduct as the existing text was repetitive. The current manual has a section detailing some broad categories of behavior that could lead to immediate termination, followed by more specifics and possible disciplinary actions (highlighted text in meeting materials). However, the board agreed that all the listed specific behaviors were really covered by the broader terms and so the additional listing was not needed. McConnell suggested adding that the “use or possession of alcohol, of alcohol, other drugs, or intoxicants while on District premises or during business or in a District or NRCS vehicle” could be ground for termination. **Pat McConnell moved and Ed Chvatal seconded to replace the medical benefits text as presented, and in the conduct section, remove the highlighted text and add language regarding the use or possession of intoxicants, motion passed.**

3. **Review of WWCCD Small and Attractive list (inventory):** Hadley explained this review is a yearly task for the board suggested by the audit committee in 2019. The board reviewed the list of items and suggested adding a “check out” system for such items so as to track them easily. Hadley also mentioned that she and Stearns completed a regular inventory of all district property.
4. **Review and Approve projects and grant applications:** Hadley presented two applications and a project for approval. The Ecology Water Quality grant is for the WW River mile 35.5 project. The design is in progress. Hadley has

retained a grant writer to complete the application. **Jim Kent moved and Pat McConnell seconded to approve the application as described, motion passed.** The second application is an RCPP (NRCS) grant which is available to irrigation districts. The funding would be for the Upper Canal for Gardena and will need WWCCD, Office of Columbia River, and Gardena Board approval. **Pat McConnell moved and Jim Kent seconded to approve and move forward on the RCPP Gardena grant proposal, motion passed with Ed Chvatal abstaining.** Hadley then explained that the NRI funds set aside for the Cottonwood Creek projects will not be used as the designs are late. However, we can ask the SCC to move the funds to another project. The Jenkins off-stream water system was damaged in the 2020 floods. The new project will not change the source of water or the destination, just the pipeline which will be relocated to avoid future flood impacts. **Pat McConnell moved and Jim Kent seconded to approve the NRI Jenkins off-site watering pipeline project, motion passed.**

5. **Survey of Board re: adding WDFW member to the SCC:** Allisa Carlson explained that WDFW has been assisting the Conservation Commission but does not have a vote. They have requested that they become voting members. The SCC has asked for input from district boards. After discussion, the board decided to express no opinion until members could further consider the options.
6. **SE Area Meetings:** Hadley asked the board if they had any resolutions to put forth and if they were considering attending. It will be a virtual meeting on the 28th. Board members added the date to their calendars but could not commit to attending at this time.
7. **Status of Gose St project.** Hadley reported that the fish ladder at the end of the flood control area was damaged in the flood and is now a 4ft. drop instead of a 1ft. drop. There is discussion of a 100,000 project to install a temporary fix. In response to a question, Hadley said there is no expectation that the district be held responsible for the issue. In fact, it appears to engineers that the fish ladder helped save the bridge during that flood.
8. **Moving the next meeting:** The 2nd Monday of October falls on a federal holiday, Columbus Day and the office is closed. However, since this will be a remote meeting, the board decided to keep the meeting on this date.

Public Comments: Allisa Carlson gave an update on the budget. It appears there will not be a special session. The SCC will discuss the second allocation of IMP funds. There are some changes to elections procedures that will apply to the 2021 elections. These changes came from concern in the general public and legislature that district elections were flying under the radar. Training will be required of the

election supervisor. Lindsey Williams said the Center for Ag. Excellence course are being held virtually; enrollment is down. Hadley is an advisor to the Center.

Program Updates: Hadley reported on behalf of employees. Referring to Oosterhuis' board report, she went over some of the details of the WSARE grant (Beneficial insects in vineyards). From Cowles Cleveland: CREP progress has slowed a bit as staff complete the CRP work. The first phase of the Touchet Canopy Cover has been completed; weed control of false indigo will be followed up with planting the riparian areas. Hadley noted on her report of discussions with Rep. Rude about the Partnership and how the coalition of stakeholders can continue their contribution to water management with Ecology. The restoration work on the S. Fork of Russel is complete and WDFW and the landowner seem pleased. McCaw Phase C is making very good progress. There is a lot of prep work going into the VSP 5-Year report.

Joint Agency Meetings

1. **Snake River Salmon Recovery Board.** The group is reconsidering the boundaries of priority vs. restoration reaches; there are no real changes that could affect Walla Walla county.
2. **WW Water Management Partnership:** The report for the legislature should be complete by the end of the year as the program winds down.

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

Respectfully submitted,

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

Next meeting: October 12th, 2020 at 5:00 p.m.

Motions:

To approve the Sept. minutes as written,	Motion: Kent Second: Chvatal Motion passed
To approve the August financial report,	Motion: Kent Second: McConnell

Motion passed

To approve the Sept. financial report,

Motion: McConnell

Second: Kent

Motion passed

To replace the medical benefits text as presented, and in the conduct section, remove highlighted text, and add language regarding the use or possession of intoxicants,

Motion: McConnell

Second: Chvatal

Motion passed

To approve application for an Ecology grant to fund work on WWRiver mile 35.5,

Motion: Kent

Second: McConnell

Motion passed

To approve applying for an RCPP grant to fund work including the Upper Gardena Project,

Motion: McConnell

Second: Kent,

Motion passed, Chvatal abstaining

To approve the Jenkins replacement off-site watering pipeline using NRI funds,

Motion: McConnell

Second: Kent

Motion passed

