

Walla Walla County Conservation District

December 2020 Board Meeting

Date: Dec. 14, 2020 Time: 4:00 p.m. Place: Via phone conference

Presiding Officer: Jeff Schulke

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

Other Agencies: Lindsey Williams WWCC (Allisa Carlson, SCC, joined the meeting at 5:00 pm)

Also present: Renee Hadley, Audrey Ahmann

Members of the Public: Alyson Buckley, Mike Lyons, Nathan Rea

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m. by Jeff Schulke

Minutes: The Board reviewed the November minutes. **Motion by Ed Chvatal and second by Todd Kimball to approve the minutes as presented, motion passed.**

Financial Report: The board reviewed the December Financial Report. **Motion by Todd Kimball and second by Pat McConnell to approve the December financial report and pay the bills, motion passed.** Checks included 13990 to 14017, total all accounts: \$185,086.35

As of this date December 14th, 2020 the Board by a majority vote does approve for payment checks included in the December financial report and further described as follows: Checks 13990 to 134017, total all accounts \$185,086.35.

New Business:

- 1. Request to pay project expenses:** Hadley explained that an unusual situation had developed regarding the recent bridge project. Participants were unaware that some expenses might not be eligible. Due to the complexity of the project legal costs were incurred in developing the construction contract. Planning the project took five years, as there were fish passage issues involved. The issues are as follows: first, the SCC does not consider legal fees eligible project expenses. Second, much more planning time than usual was claimed as work toward the project. After discussion, the board agreed that given the magnitude and complexity of the project, the legal costs should be considered as a cost shared expense, even though the SCC will not reimburse these costs. **Pat McConnell moved and Ed Chvatal**

seconded that the legal costs be considered legitimate project expenses and paid as part of the project cost, motion passed. On the planning time, Ahmann explained that such costs are not listed as ineligible costs by the SCC. She believes the SCC may consider these eligible expenses if the board agrees they are reasonable. The hours total around 60. The district has always accepted planning time as eligible costs but in general these don't amount to significant hours. Hadley said there was considerable planning time for the project. There were aquatic passage barriers, many meetings with WDFW and NRCS, and the leg work involved with bridge permitting. Most of the project was covered by NRCS funds; the total project cost in excess of \$179,000. The hours do not include the many hours spent in the initial years. Hadley also mentioned that our board policy allows for "unusual and unexpected" costs. After discussion, **Pat McConnell moved and Jim Kent seconded to approve as project eligible expenses the time needed for planning and working with staff, WDFW and engineers for the Rea Bridge project, motion passed.** The board also advised staff to include with future project agreements a list of what would be considered eligible expenses, such as legal fees, so as to avoid confusion.

2. **WDFW regulatory enforcement:** Hadley explained that the district has RCO funds to design and install a project addressing a fish passage barrier on Russell Creek. The project site has 5 landowners. The project was initiated by one of these landowners. All 5 signed letters to the project allowing the District to apply for grant funds. However, one has now decided against it and will not provide consent. The project would not impair the landowner's irrigation system but would change it. WDFW is now moving to enforcement. The board advised Hadley to give the landowner time to respond to the enforcement letter, however, if the landowner is still unenthusiastic about the RCO funded project, the district should bow out.
3. **Resolution for Election:** The board reviewed the resolution as presented. Ahmann suggested the resolution sent out with the board packet be modified slightly, with January 20th the final day to request a ballot instead of January 22nd. The resolution sets February 5th as the date for the mail-in election. **Jim Kent moved and Ed Chvatal seconded to adopt the election resolution as presented, motion passed.** Ahmann asked if anyone had heard of a possible candidate and Alyson Buckley responded that she was considering filing for the position. Hadley will share information with Buckley and both agreed to talk the following day.
4. **Request to pay for unused annual leave:** In keeping with district policy, Hadley sought board approval to pay an employee for annual leave hours accumulated in 2020 above the 240 hour cap. **Jim Kent moved and Todd Kimball seconded to pay the excess leave, motion passed.** The board discussed the necessity of employees using vacation time and directed Hadley to develop a new policy that will replace paying excess leave with a use-or-

lose policy, possibly modeled on the County policy which gives employees 3 months to use such leave after the close of the year.

5. **Burn Program MOU:** The board discussed the proposed extension of the WWCCD agreement with the county to administer the ag-burn permit program. There are no changes from the previous agreement. **Pat McConnell moved and Jim Kent seconded to approve the new 21-21 Ag. Burn Delegation MOA, motion carried.**
6. **Conservation plans:** Hadley reported on her discussion with Tracy Hanger, NRCS, of the board's concern with district staff completing conservation plans. Hanger seemed okay with the district moving away from this role. Hadley reported that we use conservation plans to assist people with VSP, and the CREP projects are a component of conservation plans.

New Business

1. **WACD Annual Meeting:** Hadley attended the annual meeting and sent the board a report. Among other details, there was discussion of water banking in Okanogan county where overallocation is an issue.
2. **Review of Long-Range Plan:** The board reviewed the section of the current plan dealing with Suburban and Urban Challenges and Goals. It was questioned whether the CURB program should be given priority in the plan as it has been unfunded for several years now. Hadley reported that DOE is reluctant to fund grants unless a specific group of projects are proposed, instead of funding a program. However, Hadley asked that CURB remain in the plan as the best tool available to address water quality concerns in the urban interface. The board continued with a review of Wetland Resources and Information and Education Goals. Hadley reported that the only substantial wetlands are at McNary refuge and a few along area waterways. Staff successfully added a wetland component to CREP eligible practices and prioritize these areas whenever possible. As for Education and Information, Hadley reported that the 4th grade forester program continues and normally WWCCD actively works with schools (for example, demonstrating the Rainfall simulator). The Water Quality Initiative grant also funds outreach and Hadley is working on forest health outreach with the Northwest Blues group. The board agreed to change some wording on mini-sessions to state we will host a series of mini-sessions instead of specifying how many.

Public Comments: Lindsey Williams was asked to comment and said the CC is still in the holding pattern of operating under Covid restrictions. Allisa Carlson reported that the SCC has appointed a joint committee to discuss proposed election changes. SCC will award the remaining Implementation funds.

The state budget development is ongoing; WACD will identify priorities and track bills.

Program Updates: Hadley reported on behalf of employees. Most staff will be working planting willows on several CREP projects and McCaw. Soil rental rates have been increased for new contracts but it is unclear as to what is meant by “new contracts” since recently renewed contracts are, in fact, new contracts. Hadley and staff have completed a grant application for the Upper Gardena.

Joint Agency Meetings

1. **Snake River Salmon Recovery Board.** No update.
2. **WW Water Management Partnership:** No update.

Executive Session: As per RCW 42.30.110 (1)(g) to review the performance of a public employee, the board went into executive session at 5:35 for 30 minutes. The board came out of executive session at 6:05.

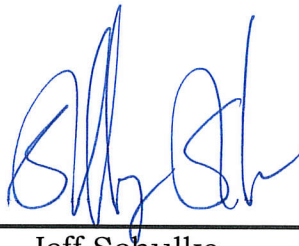
The board agreed to a wage range and benefits for a new job announcement. The board assigned Hadley to determine how engineering will be handled in the future. For the time being, in-progress projects will continue under current staff and engineering for future projects may be awarded to consulting engineers.

With no further action, the meeting was adjourned at 6:10 without a formal motion.

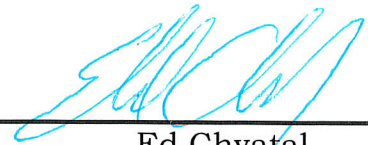
Respectfully submitted,



Audrey Ahmann
Assistant Manager, Finance



Jeff Schulke
Chair



Ed Chvatal
Secretary

Next meeting: January 11th, 2020 at 4:00 p.m.

Motions:

To approve the Nov. minutes as written,	Motion: Chvatal Second: Kimball Motion passed
To approve the December financial report,	Motion: Kimball Second: McConnell

	Motion passed
To approve the payment to a landowner of legal costs associated with a cost-shared project,	Motion: McConnell Second: Chvatal Motion passed
To approve as project eligible expenses the time needed for planning and working with WDFW and engineers on a cost shared project,	Motion: McConnell Second: Kent Motion passed
To adopt the election resolution as presented (text below)	Motion: Kent Second: Chvatal Motion passed
To pay an employee for annual leave time accumulated over the leave time cap,	Motion: Kent Second: Kimball Motion passed
To approve the 21-22 Ag. Burn Delegation MOA with the county,	Motion: McConnell Second: Kent Motion passed