



**Marion Soil and Water Conservation District
Board of Directors May 3, 2023, Meeting Minutes**

6:30 PM to 8:38 PM

Facilitator: Chair Olson

Recorded by: Brenda Sanchez

Directors & Record of Attendance		Associate Directors
At Large 1-Peggy Hart	Present	Mark Fields
At Large 2-Scott Walker	Present	Leland Hardy
Zone 1-Vacant	Vacant	Angela Plowhead
Zone 2-Vacant	Vacant	
Zone 3-Darin Olson (Chair)	Present	
Zone 4-Dave Budeau (Secretary-Treasurer)	Present	
Zone 5-Rochelle Koch (Vice-Chair)	Present	
Staff		Guests
Brenda Sanchez		Les Bachelor
Heath Keirstead		Jason Marshall
Linda Lovett		Brent Stevenson
Becky Pineda		Panha Sen
Susan Ortiz		Abu Balogun
		Alan Vera
		Melissa Miranda

Note: All documents and materials displayed or referenced are retained in the Board of Directors Meeting file at the Marion Soil and Water Conservation District (Marion SWCD or District).

A. Olson Call to Order: 6:32 PM

- Bachelor, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
- Marshall, Pudding River Watershed Council member and Volunteer Marion SWCD SkillsBridge Intern Coordinator
- Stevenson, Santiam Water Control District and Marion SWCD Budget Committee Chair
- Balogun, Miranda, Sen, and Vera, Early College High School-10th grade, Salem, OR

B. Announcements - None

C. Agenda Additions or Changes

- Agenda additions: Oregon Department of Agriculture Scope of Work, Special project Grant, and Partner Grant discussion.

1. Public Comment

Keirstead (Staff) introduces the Early College High School students attending the meeting. Keirstead met the students at Salmon Watch last year. They are here to share their team project designed to solve a natural resource challenge. They are members of the Oregon Chapter of Math Engineering Science Achievement Organization (MESA); an after-school club organized to provide space for students to express their technological creativity. Engages historically underrepresented high school students in science, technology, engineering, and math. The students presented a project where they developed a remote-controlled robot with a mechanical arm, that is automated to release a pH sensor to test water and soil quality. Presentation on file.

2. District Snapshot

- Conservation Assistance Grants (CAG) –Review Completed 7 applications, \$46,610
- 1 Staff attended the Salmon Recovery Conference to learn about the most recent scientific research and methods in salmon recovery efforts.
- Janice is now part-time working only on T, W, and TH.
- Next -Conservation Club: Oak & Prairie Tour on 5/31
- Tabled two Earth day events; Keiser Rapids and Spong's Landing. Kassi and Keirstead got to help plant a rain garden and teach participants successful planting techniques and run the free compost station donated by Highway Fuel, which offered opportunities to speak with urban landowners who were amending their soil.
- Completed the ODA Strategic Implementation Areas Open House on 4/24 at Central Howell School
- The District set up a water quality focused activity at AgFest 4/27. The schools attending this special day at Ag Fest were all from Marion County, and the schools of both our Focus Area and Strategic Implementation Area were represented.
- Lovett has started developing a Manual of Fiscal Operations, building on Brenda's work documenting processes for Accounts Payable and the Treasurer's Report
- Calkins set up a discussion regarding our volunteer program and to determine next steps for engaging more volunteers in meaningful conservation opportunities.
- Spent time throughout April developing the framework for the Partner Grant Program
- Conservation Planner-Soils Cropland position posted. 13 applicants, 8 interviews next week.

- Co-Hosted a Succession Planning workshop for Producers partnered with Oregon Ag Trust, Marion County Farm Bureau, Polk and Clackamas SWCD's and OSU Extension Small Farms to provide the workshop.
- Started Pesticide Stewardship Partnership sampling
- Manure Managed outreach details have been sorted out and outreach will start in May.
- Finished designing and finalized formatting new, searchable, PDF, hyperlinked policy binder
- Set up and implemented online training by Vector Solutions; such as workplace bullying, and defensive driving courses assigned to staff
- Partnered with the City of Salem to conduct their Urban Streamside Symposium

3. **Treasurers Report January and February 2023**

Sanchez explained that January's Treasurers Report went out to the Directors without the check register for the April 5 Board meeting, approval was moved to the May 3 Board meeting so Sanchez can send Directors the complete report for their review. Sanchez was not able to have March completed in time for the meeting but was able to complete February. Budeau says the reports were sent out in complete format. Olson adds that the graphs (in the Treasurers Report Executive Summary) need to be lighter when printing, they are hard to distinguish the display.

Action: Koch motioned for the Board to **approve the January and February 2023 Treasurers Reports**, 2nd by Hart. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (unanimously: Aye-5 (Walker, Olson, Koch, Hart, and Budeau), Opposed-0).

4. **United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Services**

Bachelor begins that NRCS is wrapping up the ranking deadline for Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) contracts. It was supposed to end in November 2022 but the national office extended the deadline. Bachelor adds that there is not enough money to cover all the applications, Marion has 2.2 million dollars in applications and Yamhill is around the same, and Clackamas has a fair amount as well. There is only one million dollars available; making it competitive. These are irrigation projects for the cropland drought. About to begin taking applications for the Mid-Willamette 2024 Conservation Incentive Strategy (CIS), may extend for another year due to more activity; bring up at the next Local Working Group to determine.

Sanchez reminds Bachelor that she has the Civil Rights checklist for Koch to sign. Last signature needed.

5. Review of April 4, 2023, Board Meeting Minutes

Budeau starts by saying that he reviewed the minutes. Olson points out that he does not have the updated minutes. Sanchez acknowledges that she must have sent the minutes out in the packet that were not reviewed by Budeau. Olson states that the April 4 minutes will be moved to the next Board meeting for approval. Walker adds that he has some concerns related to his conflict-of-interest policy recommendation and would like to amend the minutes to clarify his statement. Olson asks Walker to work with Sanchez to draft clarification.

6. 2023-2024 Budget Adoption

Budeau thanks Stevenson and the Budget Committee for their work on the FY 23-24 Budget. Budeau noted that the Board held the Budget Hearing earlier this evening. No public attended the hearing and there was no public comment submitted.

Budeau moves that be it resolved that the Board of Directors of the Marion Soil and Water Conservation District hereby adopts resolution #050323 and the budget for fiscal year 2023-2024 in the total amount of \$4,315,803 and be it resolved that the following amounts are hereby appropriated for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2023, for the following purposes: General Fund, \$3,676,819; Multipurpose Reserve Fund, \$316,271; Building Reserve Fund, \$322,713. Total Appropriations, for all funds \$4,315,803 and be it resolved that the following ad valorem property taxes are hereby imposed upon the assessed value of all taxable property within the district for tax year 2023-2024 at the rate of \$0.0500 per \$1000 of assessed value for permanent rate tax and be it resolved that the taxes imposed are hereby categorized for purposes of Article XI (11) section 11b as subject to the General Government Limitation Permanent Rate Tax \$ 0.0500/\$1,000 and Excluded from Limitation General Obligation Bond Debt Service \$ 0.00. Action, 2nd by Walker. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (unanimously: Aye-5 (Walker, Olson, Koch, Hart, and Budeau), Opposed-0).

Olson states “Be it resolved that the Board of Directors of the Marion SWCD hereby adopts the budget for financial year 2023-2024 in the total amount of \$4,315,803. The budget is now on file at the District office 408 N Third Ave, Stayton, OR”.

7. Proposed Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA)

Sanchez starts by adding that Walker had requested more information; it was included in your packet. Sanchez reviews the budget impact at 0.9 percent and 1.8 percent from potential COLAs over the next year. Sanchez explains that after

reviewing the Consumer Price Index, current trends in property taxes, and additional information, Sanchez proposes a five percent cost of living adjustment for all employees beginning July 1, 2023.

Hart asks for clarification on the wages and benefits percentages that were included in the information. Sanchez explains that there was a one percent increase in wages and a fourteen percent increase in benefits from last year. The benefit increase is related to the additional coverage the Board approved last year to cover sixty-six percent of employee dependents for health and dental care. Walker wants to ensure that COLAs do not increase benefit costs only wages. Directors discussed the current economy and if a COLA is warranted. Walker shared his concern related to the uncertainty of the future and proposes a three percent COLA. Olson adds that he supports five percent because he is concerned about it now and if the economy changes, the Board could adjust. Hart concurs. Stevenson adds that he sits on the Special Districts Association of Oregon Board of Directors and they vote to not give the insurance longevity credits any longer. Special district has had some issues in securing their re-insurance and this may come into play regarding benefits. Hardy adds that it is very important for the District to stay ahead of the curve and not become a place for training and then leave to work for other entities. Hardy adds that he is in favor of the five percent COLA for retainment of current employees. Koch says she is in full support of the five percent if the Board has the option to adjust COLAs annually. Sanchez replies that the Board approved policy to review COLAs annually. Directors continued the debate regarding the economy and future expectations of staff regarding COLAs.

Action: Koch motioned for the Board to **approve a five percent cost-of-living adjustment for all staff beginning (FY 23-24) July 1, 2023, 2nd** by Hart. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-4 (Olson, Koch, Hart, and Budeau), Opposed-1 (Walker)).

8. Conservation Assistance Grants (CAG-FKA LAP)

a) Spring Cycle CAG Grants

The CAG applications were considered for approval. Discussion centered around CAG 20-23-010 project design and budget. Budeau provided additional information regarding costs and project details related to pollinator habitat. Row spacing and the number of rows were discussed. Budeau displays that the project should only cost \$1,676 for a new project total of \$4,047.62 if there were less rows and less planting density. Discussion related to the types of supplies the District should pay for ensued. Roosth (Staff), planner on the

project, walked the Directors through the project details. Budeau supports the project at \$1,676. Koch adds that the staff needs more guidance from us on what supplies will be paid for and supports the changes Budeau is providing. Discussion ended on details of two other projects. Ortiz (Staff) reviews the spreadsheet with all the CAG applications and recommendations from the review committee. Stipulations from committee were related to # 080 (irrigation design), # 010 (plant spacing and herbicide amounts), and #013 (complete in fall-winter, revise for low-growing shrubs, and #015 (add geo textile to road).

Walker asks if there are any conflicts of interest with these projects. There have been no conflict of interests declared. Ortiz adds that at the top of the spreadsheet it notes that it is the Directors responsibility to declare conflict of interest. Plowhead adds that she may have a conflict of interest with Scenic Valley Farms, contributed to her campaign; Plowhead is not a voting member of the Board and did not participate in any conversation related to the grant project.

Action: Olson motioned for the Board to **approve the Conservation Assistance Grants for a total of \$48,251.30, with projects as amended**, 2nd by Hart. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-4 (Olson, Koch, Hart, and Budeau), Opposed-1 (Walker)).

b) Grants Completed

Staff created a slideshow of completed projects for Directors to review. Presentation on file.

9. Oregon Department of Agriculture Scope of Work and Capacity Grant.

Sanchez begins by describing the Oregon Department Agriculture Scope of Work and Capacity Grant that is due May 31, 2023. The grant assists the District with capacity (operating) funds and technical assistance, outreach, and partner engagement funds. The total available grant funds will be determined at the next Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board meeting in July, but for now they ask to submit a budget based on the previous biennium funding of \$175,815. Sanchez explains that every two years we submit a new application for the next two FY years (23-24 and 24-25). Sanchez displays the breakdown of the grant budget and request, explaining that it is pretty much identical to the previous biennium and that we will be continuing with the Focus Area.

Action: Walker motioned for the Board to **approve the Oregon Department of Agriculture Scope of Work and Capacity Grant submission**, 2nd by Hart. No

further discussion. MOTION PASSED (unanimously: Aye-5 (Walker, Olson, Koch, Hart, and Budeau), Opposed-0).

10. Special Projects Grant (SPG)

Hart started the conversation by pointing out that this grant was problematic because it should have been sent through the CAG application process but now as a SPG. Budeau adds that this was a one off and although it does not meet the intent of the SPG the committee recommends that the Board approve the grant because it would not be good to send it back to the landowner because it was the fault of the District to not have moved it into the CAG.

Walker asks if the District evaluates the financial position of the applicant because it is noted in the application. Sanchez says no we do not inquire about their financial position. Directors discussed the need for justifying projects based on financial need. Olson adds that the committee could review and make changes to programs for the board to review. Walker encourages the Board to review the details of all the programs and make sure money is being used for the intended purpose.

Action: Olson motioned for the Board to **approve the SPG grant**, 2nd by Hart. Olson adds that the committee should review the SPG program. MOTION PASSED (Aye-4 (Olson, Koch, Hart, and Budeau), Opposed-1 (Walker)).

Walker goes onto express his disappointment in last month's meeting and that his policy for declaring a conflict of interest died. Walker expresses that he will have a personal policy of asking the Board, when approving projects, if there are any conflicts of interest from the Board, associates, or staff.

11. Partner Grant Discussion

Olson begins by stating he has some questions regarding the grant such as "What if they do not use the money?" or "How long will they have to spend the funds?" Because of this Olson would like the Partner Grant to go back to the committee to iron out more details before the Board considers the program. Walker discusses his concerns related to the capacity portion of the grant and that we do not fund inadequate entities. Directors continued the discussion regarding program details. Sanchez adds that we can have the Partner Grant on the June 21 Natural Resource Committee, iron out the details and then bring it to either July or August for Board approval. Ortiz's presentation was requested again at the committee meeting and maybe all the Directors should join the committee meeting to view the presentation and to take part in the Partner Grant details.

Adjourn: Chair Olson adjourned the meeting at 8:49 PM



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