



**Marion Soil and Water Conservation District (MSWCD)  
Board of Directors July 10, 2024, Monthly Minutes**

6:34 PM to 9:03 PM

Facilitator: Chair Olson

Recorded by: Brenda Sanchez

Approved: 08-07-24

<b>Directors &amp; Record of Attendance</b>		<b>Associate Directors</b>
At Large 1-Peggy Hart	Present	Angela Plowhead
At Large 2-Scott Walker	Present	
Zone 1-Vacant	Vacant	
Zone 2-Vacant	Vacant	
Zone 3-Darin Olson (Chair)	Present	
Zone 4-Dave Budeau (Secretary-Treasurer)	Present	
Zone 5-Rochelle Koch (Vice-Chair)	Present	
<b>Staff</b>		<b>Guests</b>
Heath Keirstead		
Kassi Roosth		
Brenda Sanchez		

**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).

- 1. Olson Call to Order:** 6:34 PM
- 2. Announcements -** None
- 3. Agenda Additions or Changes -** Olson adds the Oregon Association of Conservation District dues.

**Minutes**

- 1. Public Comment**  
No Public Comment
- 2. District Snapshot**

**Staff Highlights: Keirstead and Roosth**

Kierstead (Communication and Education presented highlights (power point slides) of her recent work and shared the education events that the District participated in this spring. The total number of students attending events is 1,173 and the two top events were home school day with 250 documented participants

and Ag Fest which had 315 participants. Keirstead shared the educational components of the events such as pollinator habitat and looking at insects.

Roosth shared highlights (power point slides) of her recent work. Roosth provided updates on the Little Habitat Project (LHP); 46 new enrollees, 22 sites certified, conducted project outreach and created program benefits such as plant sale coupons. Roosth shared a photo of a house with the LHP certification sign installed. Roosth discussed that she completed two-yard tours where 105 people attended; much more than expected. Fifty people signed up for more information about the LHP.

Both Keirstead and Roosth thanked the Board for their work and for giving them the time to share their work. In turn, members of the Board complimented Keirstead and Roosth for the informative presentations.

Koch arrives at approximately 7:18 PM.

### **Exterior and Landscaping Report**

Sanchez reported to the Board that she and the greenscaping team (Hamilton and Roosth) have completed the plan for the District's landscaping. Sanchez displayed a copy of the plan on screen and described the project from weed control, native plantings, pollinator hedgerow, stormwater planter, signage, bird and bug boxes. Walker spoke to ensure that landscaping did not interfere with potential building renovation, or add costs, because the landscaping would occur before renovation. Sanchez agreed and we have worked out the landscaping plan to accommodate the potential renovation work. Sanchez stated that an arborist is coming out soon to trim trees and handle a dead tree that is being repurposed as a wildlife snag.

Sanchez went on to share her idea about doing a mural on the west wall facing third avenue. Sanchez displayed some mockups of her idea and has asked Andrew Kuenzi from Trusty Switchblade, the artists that have created our sticker designs, to provide a mockup of what the mural would look like. In total the mural artwork, painting and two-year maintenance would be just under \$4,000. Walker discussed the authority the District Manager has over the building and feels it should be limited. Koch replied that it is the District's Manager's job to bring ideas and work to the Board. Directors discussed the mural and most stated they like the idea.

Sanchez shares she has hired an architect to draw designs for the ADA bathroom and other renovation ideas to see the alternatives and costs. The architect costs

\$5,000 and is the same one Terry Hsu had worked with when he was interim manager. Directors considered renovation ideas.

**Action:** Hart motioned that the Board **authorize the District Manager to conduct the first phase of the mural project**, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Koch. Walker wants to make sure that this is a Board decision on whether there is a mural and that he is concerned that the ADA bathroom is still in need of completion and that those options still need to be explored. MOTION PASSED (Aye-4 [Olson, Koch, Hart, and Budeau], Opposed-1 [Walker]).

### 3. Treasurers Report May 2024

Budeau, began the discussion by noting that the levied taxes are short. There is also a typo in the “Checks Paid” (too many cents). Sanchez corrected. Sanchez added she has some rough draft numbers for the end of the fiscal year; Levied taxes received \$1,213,226, LGIP interest earned \$121,243, total income to General Fund \$1,537,746, total expenses from General Fund \$1,439,305, wages \$652,747, benefits \$218,812. Wages and benefits total \$871,559, 76% of budget.

**Action:** Hart motioned that the Board **accept as amended the May 2024 Treasurers Report**, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Budeau. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-5 [Walker, Olson, Koch, Hart, and Budeau], Opposed-0).

### 4. May 8 Board Meeting, June 4 Work Session, and June 5, Board Meeting 2024, Draft Meeting Minutes

Budeau begins by saying he reviewed the draft minutes and returned some edits. Sanchez displays each of the minutes with Budeau’s edits. Hart added there were some typos. Sanchez says she will correct. Walker adds that he is marked absent when he has attended. Sanchez corrected. Walker shared his concern in the May 8 minutes on page 8 that he would like to see what he said be in the minutes which was “we normally paid for substitutes and bus trips”, regarding adding boots to consider. Sanchez added Walker’s language. Hart expressed that she would like her comment revised to capture that she was agreeing with Plowhead. Sanchez corrected.

**Action:** Hart motioned that the Board **accept as amended May 8 Board Meeting, June 4 Work Session, and June 5, Board Meeting 2024, Meeting Minutes**, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Koch. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-5 [Walker, Olson, Koch, Hart, and Budeau], Opposed-0).

## **5. United States Department Agriculture (USDA) and Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) Report**

Sanchez shared an email update with the Board. “Hi Brenda, Sorry for the late notice but I’m going to miss your Board meeting tonight as I’m traveling to Eugene for family reasons in a few minutes. I was supposed to be retired anyway but let me know if you would like an update. Here’s a quick overview. NRCS has a new State Conservationist – Greg Becker, NRCS has a new State Engineer – Aimee Rohner, NRCS has lost our State Cultural Resource Specialist and looking. Friday July 12 is NRCS deadline to have all contracts approved to secure funding...we’ve made this and looking for a little more after the dust settles from Friday’s deadline”

Sanchez asked the Board if they would like to invite Bachelor to the November Board meeting for a retirement dinner. Board agreed and suggested that a mug, inscribed with something to be determined be a gift and Hart added she knows a jewelry bead worker and would like to have a hat band crafted. Board agreed. Sanchez will follow through on the request.

## **6. Partner Grant Process**

Sanchez began by explaining that the Board, as well as staff and partners, had suggestions related to ways the Partner Grant (PG) process could improve. Sanchez started with the number of PG cycles explaining it is the Board’s decision on how many cycles a grant program should implement. In the original agreed upon PG program, there was going to be two cycles; one in summer and the other in winter. Directors had mentioned they may want to see only one cycle. Sanchez provided some points from staff regarding their ideas on cycles and they said, it would be nice to have two cycles so that Partners had options, however with the potential change in the Partner Grant Review process and the potential increase on staff workload, one cycle would be best. Directors deliberated that two cycles means more cost and how would the District manage the program sustainably? Directors continued to deliberate the idea of one or two cycles, understanding the PG program is new and they want to do what’s best for the program to have continued success. Directors decided to move on and come back to this question when Sanchez is done explaining the proposed changes to the PG program.

Sánchez moved on to admin costs in the PG budgets. Explaining that current funding for admin costs is at the discretion of the Board and can be up to ten percent of the PG (education, outreach, implementation, and technical assistance) project budget, except for the capacity grant, which is intended for admin costs. Partners are asking if the District would consider a higher allowance for admin costs in a project budget because their group requires a twenty percent or thirty

percent admin cost, also known as “indirect costs”, to be included on all grant applications. Directors discussed these details and what admin costs entail. Hart discussed that she would like to see more of the grant money be enrolled in the project and not on admin costs. Walker asks for more clarification on which groups are asking for thirty percent. Sanchez replied she heard feedback from Oregon State University partners and other non-profits such as Institute for Applied Ecology. These issues were raised at the Partner meeting. Sanchez suggested they keep the ten percent and the Board can consider admin costs over the ten percent with justification submitted by applicant. The Board still has final approval of costs and can reduce or limit the amount of admin costs awarded. Directors discussed the percentage and admin costs.

Sanchez moved onto the newly proposed review process, outlined in a document shared with the Board and on screen, detailing the proposed PG review process. Sanchez describes the process, noting this process does not apply to the capacity grants those will continue to be bundled and submitted to the Admin Committee for review and then to the Board. The proposed review process entails an internal staff review team, maybe add an individual from the public or the Board, with each applicant assigned to a planner or specialist, project site visits with the team and applicant, review of all applications, meet to discuss and review as a review team, provide time for applicants to make sure their application is complete and any red flags have been worked out. The review team submits to the District Manager their recommendations. The Grants Coordinator and the District Manager conducts a final review of its completeness and ensures issues were resolved. Sanchez says process will reduce the number of committee meetings, provide a thorough and consistent review of applications and screen out those application that are not complete, not working toward the District’s mission or have concerns that were not addressed by the applicant. Sanchez noted to Walker that this addresses his concern about having site visits and to check if the project meets its deliverables. Directors discussed the process and added they would like to see Directors invited to the site visits. Sanchez assured Directors that this is an option.

Sanchez added that the Grants Coordinator (Ortiz) created a “match Form” that will be submitted with all applications listing their matched funds, sources, pending and or secured, with signatures or award letters from secured match funds. The applicant would be responsible for demonstrating they secured all the match before sending in any receipts or requests for payments. Without the twenty-five percent secured match, grant payments will be withheld until verified. This process is like the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) process and will be applied to all applicants not just random requests from the Board.

Sanchez displayed the draft match form. Directors discussed the match requirement further asking Sanchez for clarification on OWEB grants and compatibility with the PG program. Olson stated that the admin cost stays the same and the match form is an internal procedure update, no need to vote on those.

**Action:** Olson motioned that the Board **authorize one funding cycle for the Partner Grant and approve of the proposed Partner Grant changes outlined by the District Manager for review**, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Hart. MOTION PASSED (Aye-5 [Walker, Olson, Koch, Hart, and Budeau], Opposed-0).

**7. 2024-2029 Strategic Plan with 2024-25 Workplan Activities Final Draft for Approval CAG Applications**

Sanchez displayed the final draft of the 2024-2029 Strategic Plan with 24-25 Workplan Activities and briefly discussed that all the comments and changes shared at the last Board work session were incorporated. Sanchez scrolled through the plan highlighting those updates. Directors discussed that the plan will be reviewed annually and adapted as needed. Sanchez shared that we are working on a published edition of this plan and will send it out as soon as completed.

**Action:** Walker motioned that the Board **approve the 2024-2029 Strategic Plan with 2024-25 Workplan Activities and send it to the Oregon Department of Agriculture**, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Koch. No further Discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-5 [Walker, Olson, Koch, Hart, and Budeau], Opposed-0).

**8. Health, Dental, and Life Insurance Renewals**

Sanchez displayed the new coverage costs for health insurance.

**Action:** Walker motioned that the Board **approve the health, dental, and life insurance benefit renewals**, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Hart. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-5 [Walker, Olson, Koch, Hart, and Budeau], Opposed-0).

Koch leaves the meeting at approximately 8:30 pm.

**9. Grant Limitation Policy**

Sanchez displayed a copy of the current and proposed amendment to the Grant Limitation Policy. The Admin Committee reviewed and recommended to the Board for adoption. The amendment to the policy is to capture the recent changes in the grant program such as the increase to \$10,000, the addition of the Partner Grant and the change from “Landowner Assistance Program” to

“Conservation Assistant Grants”. Walker asks if the Board would move this to another time. Walker shares that he is concerned with District’s Grant programs continuing to increase the grant amount when our numbers are low and people are not working with us. Olson reminds Walker that the grant award amounts were recently approved for an increase. Olson states we can move this agenda item. Budeau clarifies that we have already revised the grant award amounts and this is an amendment to an existing policy reflecting the approved changes in the award amounts. Plowhead also adds that this is just an amendment.

**Action:** Budeau motioned that the Board **adopt the amended Grant Limitation Policy as amended by previous Board actions.** 2<sup>nd</sup> by Hart. No further discussion. MOTION FAILS (Aye-3 [Olson, Hart, and Budeau], Opposed-0, Abstain-1 [Walker]).

## **10. Conservation Assistance Grants**

### **a. CAG Project Change Request**

**Action:** Walker motioned that the Board **approve the project change for Hebing Property Restoration (Application # 20-23-009).** 2<sup>nd</sup> by Hart. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-4 [Walker, Olson, Hart, and Budeau], Opposed-0).

### **b. Grants Completed**

Completed grants were displayed. No discussion.

## **11. 2024 Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA)**

Olson explains there is no vote on the COLA tonight, this is a discussion, and Sanchez will submit the COLA proposal to the August Board meeting for review and action. Sanchez shares that after her research she is proposing a three percent COLA for fiscal year 2024-25 and she determined based on the Consumer Price Index and inflation changes over the last year.

## **12. District Manager Performance Review Determine Process**

Olson explains that last year it was just the Board Officers conducting the Performance Evaluation of the District Manager. Olson would like to engage the entire Board and some staff this year to review the District Manager. Sanchez shares she can build an online survey-questionnaire based on prior reviews for Keppinger and Boyd. Olson and Directors agree and Sanchez will work with Olson to create the review and then work with everyone to conduct the review at a time still to be determined.

### 13. Director Updates-News

- a. Director Updates – There were no Director updates.
- b. Santiam River Rafting Staff Board Day

Olson and Sanchez asked the Board if the Board would like to have a retreat with staff and go rafting down the Santiam River. We could observe the fire damage as we go downstream and discuss the response and ideas for how we can continue to interact with recovery. Sanchez added that we can have a picnic at the end of the trip and for those who do not want to go rafting we could arrange a trail hike or Silver Creek Falls visit and then we all meet for the picnic. Directors discussed the cost at about \$80 per person, Sanchez clarified it is more like \$98 per person for a half day. Sanchez reminded the Board we include staff/board retreats in the Strategic Plan and in the 2024-25 budget. Attending directors agreed to a retreat.

### 14. Oregon Association of Conservation District (OACD)

Olson brought up that the Oregon Association of Conservation District (OACD) dues are up for payment. Olson discussed concerns related to the work they do, the cost for us to have them do that work, and how it does not always align with District needs. Olson says we can decide next month but he proposed paying only a portion of the dues and sending a letter notifying them of why. Hart asks if other Districts have issues or concerns. Sanchez replied we would be the only ones not a member. Walker adds that he would like to see what the percentage of Districts with higher income pay and we adjust to that percent and adds that the richest districts pay less than the other districts without a large budget. Sanchez clarifies the annual dues max out at \$7,500, but all Districts pay the same percentage based on income up to the maximum amount. Directors discussed OACD and membership, how useful it is and is their leadership doing well.

**15. Board Directives Tracker** Sanchez displayed a spreadsheet that lists all the Board items (work) requested and where she is on the work. Sanchez will provide a copy in the monthly packet to share where she is at on assignments.

**Adjourn:** Chair Olson adjourned the meeting at 9:03 PM



Marion Soil and Water Conservation District complies with the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) and does not discriminate based on race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status. If special physical, language, or other accommodations are needed for this meeting, please contact the District Manager at 503-391-9927 as soon as possible, and at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting.