



**Marion Soil and Water Conservation District (MSWCD)
Board of Directors Wednesday, March 4, 2026
Minutes - Board Meeting**

7:20 PM to 8:45PM

Facilitator: Chair Angela Plowhead

Recorded by: Brenda Sanchez

Approved Date: 04/01/2025

| Board of Directors Record of Attendance | Associate Directors |
|--|--|
| At Large 1-Peggy Hart (Secretary-Treasurer) | Present |
| At Large 2-Vacant | Vacant |
| Zone 1-Noah Justice | Present |
| Zone 2-Nik Ovchinnikov | Present |
| Zone 3-Darin Olson (Vice-Chair) | Present |
| Zone 4-Angela Plowhead (Chair) | Present |
| Zone 5-Rochelle Koch | Present |
| Staff | Guests |
| Brenda Sanchez | Cal Penkauskas |
| Ivy Chapelle | Andrea Krahmer – Oregon Agricultural Trust (OAT) |
| Kassi Roosth | Jeff Mehlschau |
| Amy Zimmer | Dave Budeau |
| Susan Ortiz | Al Hrynshyn - Oregon Association of Conservation Districts |

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).

Minutes

Chair Plowhead Call to Order: 7:20 PM

- a. Agenda additions or changes -

Sanchez requested two items be added to the agenda.

1. Letter of Support – Review the letter received from Dr. Hallet at the University of Oregon regarding cover crop research. Discussion continued about protocol responding to these types of letters.
2. Introductory and Promotional Period Procedure – Discuss and clarify timeframes for employee introductory and promotional periods.

- b. Public Comment – No public comment.

- c. Announcements -

Sanchez announced that this year is general elections and announced the board positions up for election. Hrynshyn added that some of the rules for incumbents running for re-election have changed. He referenced Sandy Hyatt at the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) if anyone should have further questions.

1. District Snapshot

- a. Staff Reports were presented by Chappelle and Zimmer.
 - Zimmer, Communication Outreach Specialist, presented her slideshow and an overview of her work promoting the district through social media and various programs. She highlighted increased social media engagement, including posts about events and conservation facts, as well as the success of First Friday presentations and the emerging Emerald Ash Borer event series. Zimmer also discussed plans for a district volunteer program, collaboration with other conservation districts, and strengthening partnerships with natural resource agencies.
 - Chappelle, Office Support & Accounts Payable Assistant, provided an update on her support activities, including scheduling outreach presentations for the Board at City Councils, managing the printer's lease renewal, and supporting facility operations.
 - Plowhead encouraged Directors to participate in upcoming City Council and neighborhood association presentations, with Chappelle agreeing to send out available schedules to Directors.
- b. The District Manager's Monthly Report highlights included:
 - March 7th from 9 am to 3 pm is the Native Plant Sale at Bauman's Farm
 - March 12th from 12:00 pm to 1:00 pm is the Partner Grant Review meeting
 - March 21 from 9:00 am - 12:00 pm is the upcoming Conservation Club event: a Community Planting Day

2. Board's Monthly Meeting Minutes and Annual Meeting Minutes for February 4, 2026

Sanchez displayed the Monthly and Annual Meeting Minutes (Draft 2 respectively). The Board reviewed both the Board's Monthly Meeting Minutes and the Annual Meeting Minutes for February 4, 2026.

Action: Olson motioned that the Board **approve all the Minutes as presented**, 2nd by Hart. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-6 [Plowhead, Ovchinnikov, Olson, Koch, Justice, Hart] Opposed-0).

3. Treasurer's Monthly Report for January 2026

Sanchez displayed the January 2026 Treasurer's Report.

Action: Hart motioned that the Board **accept as presented the January 2026 Treasurers Report**, 2nd by Koch. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-6 [Plowhead, Ovchinnikov, Olson, Koch, Justice, Hart] Opposed-0).

4. Appointing Budget Committee Members

Sanchez, the Budget Officer, displayed the agenda item brief and announces the updates for the term of 2026-2028 to the Citizen Budget Committee:

- Reappointments: Kenneth Palke and Tim Johnson
- New Appointments: Dave Budeau and Jeff Mehlschau
 - Current Term: Ralph Fisher and Brent Stevenson
 - Concluded Service: Bob Dettwyler 2003-2025

Mehlschau introduced himself and expressed interest in learning about the budgeting process within the District. He lives outside of Jefferson, in Marion County, on a 25 acre hay and cattle farm. He works for Weyerhaeuser Company (or a warehouser company ?) as an engineer, and has partially managed their seed and seedling production facilities in the past. He is also a board member on the Sydney Irrigation District (or an irrigation district), and is involved in the budget planning and budget decisions for that semi-public entity.

Sanchez added that a seven-member budget committee is required. With the appointment of Dave and Jeff, there are six in total. Another budget application was received a few days before this meeting, those details will be provided at the April Board meeting.

Action: Hart motioned that the Board **Appoint for the term of 2026-2028 to the Citizen Budget Committee: Reappointments - Kenneth Palke and Tim Johnson; New Appointments - Dave Budeau and Jeff Mehlschau, 2nd** by Koch. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-6 [Plowhead, Ovchinnikov, Olson, Koch, Justice, Hart] Opposed-0).

5. Education & Outreach Committee

Snachez displayed the agenda item brief. Hart, Committee Chair, presented the CLEAR Grants for Approval and the CLEAR Grant Budget.

- a. CLEAR Grants – Committee Recommended Actions is to fund all (4):
 - 1) McKay High School: Approve the \$3,124 grant request to cover instructional costs (\$850), substitute teacher costs (\$1,974), and transportation fees (\$300) for field trips to support McKay High School Environmental Science students’ field trips.
 - 2) Redeemer Community Garden: Approve the \$1,480 grant request to cover the purchase of compost bins (\$1,430) and copying of instructional materials (\$50) to support the composting workshop at Redeemer Community Garden serving low-income and Spanish speaking families.
 - 3) Miller Elementary: Approve the \$3,010 grant request to cover classroom presentations from staff for 26 classrooms (\$650), Educational Discovery hikes with teacher for 210 2nd–5th students (\$840), and bus transportation fees (\$1,520) to support Miller Elementary student’s classroom presentations and field trips.
 - 4) Oregon Agricultural Trust (OAT): Approve the \$5,000 grant request to cover workshop supplies and materials (\$1,650), and instructor costs (\$3,350) for the Oregon Agricultural Trust (OAT) to host a soil health workshop at Chemeketa Community College.

b. CLEAR Grant Budget – February 3, 2026 Cycle:

Hart added that contingent upon the (4) CLEAR Grant requests being approved, the budget requires the transfer of \$613.35 from unallocated Partner Grant funds to the CLEAR Grant line item to fully fund the current CLEAR grant cycle requests.

Action: Koch motioned that the Board **approve the transfer of \$613.35 from unallocated Partner Grant funds to the CLEAR Grant line item to fully fund the current CLEAR grant cycle requests this cycle, which is contingent upon the Board’s approval of the (4) presented CLEAR Grants**, 2nd by Hart. Discussion:

The Board moved to discussion.

Sanchez clarified that the goal of the request was to move the money first so you could approve the budget with the money there, instead of approving it without the money there.

Olson asked if Oregon Land Trust, noting they’ve been working on creating revisions to land rules, is a registered lobbyist group? Sanchez invited Krahmer, attending the meeting as a grant applicant, to reply.

Krahmer replied that they're a 501c3, not a registered lobbyist, nor is it a primary focus of their organization. They’ve applied for an education grant. The Board continued discussion.

Sanchez and Koch confirm the organization, Oregon Land Trust, has been vetted and are eligible to receive our grant funds.

Plowhead noted fiscal responsibility concerns regarding increasing funds to cover grants, adding she’d be more amenable to reducing awarded grant funds. Ovchinnikov, Koch, and Hart noted they would like to approve the four grant requests and, in the future, clarify the policy that once the grant budget is funded, it’s closed until the next cycle. The discussion continued.

Koch and Olson discussed that in the future, they need to know how much money is left in the grant budget prior to approving applications.

Plowhead calls for further discussion.

Olson requested the motion be repeated. Plowhead repeated the motion.

Action: No further discussion. MOTION DID NOT PASS (Aye-3 [Ovchinnikov, Koch, Hart] Opposed-3 [Plowhead, Olson, Justice]).

The Board went into discussion.

Action: Koch motioned that the Board **reduce the Redeemer Community Garden budget by \$113.35 and reduce the Oregon Agricultural Trust (OAT) budget by \$500.00**, 2nd by Justice. Discussion:

The Board went into discussion. Olson called a question. Plowhead repeated the motion.

Action: No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-5 [Plowhead, Ovchinnikov, Olson, Koch, Justice] Opposed-1 [Hart]).

The Board went into discussion.

Action: Hart motioned that the Board fund all CLEAR Grants (4) with the following amended funding award amounts: McKay High School for \$3,124. Redeemer Community Garden for \$1,366.65 for Miller Elementary, \$3,010, and for OAT, Oregon Agricultural Trust, for \$4,500, 2nd by Koch. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-6 [Plowhead, Ovchinnikov, Olson, Koch, Justice, Hart] Opposed-0).

c. CLEAR Grant Budget Remaining FY 2025-26 (April 7, 2026) Cycle -

Hart noted there is no need for a motion after the budget conclusions earlier in the evening but explained the committees recommended action to transfer \$10,000 from the unallocated Partner Grant funds to the CLEAR Grant program to make funding available for the fourth and final CLEAR grant application cycle of FY 2025-26. As a member of the committee, she wanted the board to have an opportunity to discuss the issue as much as the actual amount.

6. Education & Outreach - Discussion

Sanchez explained that we have a new participant enrolled in the Little Habitat Project who lives in the exclusion zone of Marion County. Roosth, the Education Specialist, shared with the Board that the incentives include a certification sign, a membership to Salem Audubon, and they're planning to add some sort of plant give-away. She asked, if this landowner would be eligible to receive these incentives with a completed certification, or would they only be eligible for technical assistance? Noting, they are not eligible for grant funding.

Olson added that historically, since this has come up in the past, the Board's response was to not provide technical assistance or grant funding. Explaining, that part of the county decided not to be included in the Conservation District, is now annexed out, and therefore is not paying into the funds that provide our resources. If their public community members wish to pursue joining, they can work with their community members, but the district technically cannot be involved in any way bringing that area in, it must be the public.

The Board continued discussion.

Sanchez asked for clarification on technical assistance, and Olson confirmed that in the past technical assistance was not allowed outside of the District.

Hrynyshyn added that it's okay to inform them that their area chose to annex from the district, and we are funded through taxpayer dollars. Because you are annexed, you do not pay taxpayer dollars, so we cannot provide technical services or other services to your area. He recommended directing them to the District's website, watershed councils, and having them contact Karen Stutzman, at ODA, for information on joining the District.

7. Grant Programs

Shanchez displayed the agenda brief for the Grant Change Requests.

- a. Grant Extension – CAG-20-24-018 – Hedgerows Phase 1
- b. Grant Cancellation - CAG-20-24-020 – Pudding River Habitat Improvement

Action: Hart motions for the Board **to approve the extension request for CAG-20-24-018 – Hedgerows Phase 1 and approve the cancellation of CAG 2024020, Pudding River Habitat Improvement**, 2nd by Koch. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-6 [Plowhead, Ovchinnikov, Olson, Koch, Justice, Hart] Opposed-0).

8. Admin Committee – Introductory and Promotional Period Procedure

Sanchez displayed the Salary Administration Plan and explained she has been going through several introductory periods and promotional periods with staff, which are described as a 6-month period from their hire date. She asked for clarification if the period ends on that 6-month date or upon the Board's approval of the staff completion of the introductory period / promotional period.

Hart asked for clarification if this is regarding issuing the pay raise, if due to them, retroactively. Sanchez response that is not necessarily the case.

Olson added that clarification on this would be beneficial to future District Managers, as well as staff. He also recommended Sanchez consult legal advice.

The Board continued discussion deciding to amend the Personnel Policy Handbook to clarify that employees remain in their introductory or promotional period until approved for regular status by the board, even if this extends beyond the initial 6-month period. They also added language regarding reassignment, demotion, or separation as options if an employee does not demonstrate competency in their role.

Action: Plowhead motioned that the Board agree **Employees to remain in evaluation period until status (promoted, reassigned, demoted, or separation) is approved by the Board**, 2nd by Hart. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-6 [Plowhead, Ovchinnikov, Olson, Koch, Justice, Hart] Opposed-0).

Adjourn: Chair Plowhead adjourned the meeting at 8:45 PM



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