



**Marion Soil and Water Conservation District (MSWCD)
Board of Directors Wednesday May 6th, 2026
Minutes - Monthly Meeting & Budget Hearing FY 26-27**

6:05 PM – 6:22 PM Budget Hearing
6:22 PM – 8:27 PM Board Monthly Meeting
Facilitator: Vice-Chair Olson
Recorded by: Brenda Sanchez
Approved Date: 06-03-2026

Budget Hearing - 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)	Absent	
Zone 5-Rochelle Koch	Present	
Staff		Guests
Brenda Sanchez		
Ivy Chappelle		

Board Meeting - 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 (Chair)	Present	
Zone 4-Angela Plowhead (Vice-Chair)	Absent	
Zone 5-Rochelle Koch	Present	
Staff		Guests
Chelsea Blank		Teresa Brehm
Ivy Chappelle		Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Becky Pineda		Al Hrynyshyn
Kassi Roosth		OACD (Oregon Association of Conservation Districts)
Brenda Sanchez		
Cesar Zamora		

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).

Budget Hearing Minutes

Vice-Chair Olson Called to Order: 6:05 PM

Sanchez displayed the agenda.

Attendance was announced.

A. Presentation of Proposed Budget

The FY (fiscal year) 2026-27 budget is displayed and presented by the Budget Officer Sanchez. The total projected fund balance was \$5,228,352, with expenses including personnel services, materials and services, capital outlay, and contingency funds. The budget included a 5-cent per \$1,000 property tax levy and maintained \$0 in debt.

Changes in activities and sources of financing for FY 2026-27:

1. Fund consolidation: In FY 2025-26, the district consolidated funds into a single General Fund to improve clarity, transparency, and financial management; this supports a more streamlined and accurate FY 2026-27 budget projection.
2. Building reserve resources: The allocation of 12% of dividends to the Building Reserve will end in June 2026; beginning July 2026, 100% of dividends will be allocated to the General Fund.
3. Unappropriated funds policy: The Board adopted a policy with a target of maintaining at least \$1,000,000 in unappropriated funds to ensure sufficient cash flow prior to receipt of property tax revenues later in the fiscal year.
4. Capital outlay: The proposed budget includes \$30,000 for a vehicle purchase.
5. Partner Grant Program: Funding is included in the budget; continuation as a permanent program remains under review as part of a three-year pilot and is pending Board approval.
6. Overall alignment: These updates align the FY 2026-27 budget with current financial conditions and the District's strategic priorities.

B. Public Comment & Hearing

Hart requested clarification of where the totals are for the reserve funds and Sanchez noted that all funds are combined, which the resolution explains. The formatted summary is a required document.

Olson opened public hearing for 10 minutes, until 6:20 PM.
No comments, verbal or written, were received.

Vice-Chair Olson adjourned the Budget Hearing at 6:22 PM

Monthly Board Meeting Minutes

Vice-Chair Olson Call to Order: 6:22 PM

- A. Attendance was announced.
- B. Agenda additions or changes

Discussion of agenda changes, included moving agenda item number eight (8). Approve Regular Ortiz and Wilson Status & Step Increase for Grants Specialist and Digital Multimedia Assistant, to June 2026 Board Meeting due to the Chair's absence and that all staff actions require full leadership. Hart asked if staff would receive their salary step increase on time? Sanchez clarified, no, but that the staff were notified.

- C. Public Comment

Al Hrynyshyn, Oregon Association of Conservation Districts (OACD) and the Soil and Water Conservation Commission (SWCC), provided updates on several topics during the meeting. He recommended that Sanchez contact Eric Nussbaum, Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA), regarding serving people outside taxing boundaries, noting that outside funding would be required rather than using tax-derived monies. Hrynyshyn also informed the group about upcoming capacity grant listening sessions and the OACD conference in November 2026 and mentioned his work on a best practices handbook involving review of strategic plans from various districts. Sanchez added that Marion District has both an external strategic plan for outreach and promotion, and an internal plan with detailed strategies and performance measures, agreeing to share the internal version with Hrynyshyn.

- D. Announcements

None.

1. District Snapshot & Staff Reports

- 1. Staff Report – Pineda, Agriculture Conservation Planner Pasture & Livestock

Pineda presented virtually – she has been learning about a new reporting system for the ODA. In ag (agriculture) water quality projects or technical assistance, from July to January, the team served 41 clients and hosted 7 ag water quality-related events. That does not include people in our SIA (Strategic Implementation Area), whose numbers are counted separately. The

LAC (Local Advisory Committee) for ag water quality rules met in April to discuss revisions, and the Prairie Creek SIA received an extension for two more years. The conservation planner team is developing a comprehensive conservation planning template to assist clients with broader farm planning beyond individual projects.

Koch suggested incorporating the district's developing landowner guide into farm visits to help educate clients about regulations.

2. Staff Report – Zamora, Agriculture Conservation Planner Soil & Croplands

Zamora reported virtually – He noticed an increase in client inquiries and site visits as spring approaches and discussed a recent riparian breakfast event that had lower attendance than expected despite good engagement from attendees. He noted that future events might be better scheduled during off-season months to improve farmer participation. Zamora also updated the team on SIA Howell Prairie Creek Water Testing monitoring activities, mentioning they have three water sampling sessions remaining this season and are seeing increased suspended solids turbidity levels in the creek. Finally, he shared updates on collaboration with OrCAN (Oregon Climate and Agriculture Network), including potential funding for workshops and discussions about hosting soil sampling events for both the public and technical service providers.

Howell Prairie Creek Water Testing - The board discussed water testing results from Howell Prairie Creek, where Zamora reported a significant increase in peak total suspended solids (TSS) from 2,000 to 10,000 milligrams per liter. Zamora agreed to present to the board on the samplings and analysis are completed.

3. District Snapshot – Sanchez, District Manager

Sanchez congratulated Roosth who was awarded a \$1,490 grant from the American Fisheries Society for Salmon Watch field trips and supplies.

2. Approve Zamora as Watershed Council Liaison

Sanchez displayed the agenda item brief and attachments.

The board approved Zamora's appointment as Watershed Council liaison.

Action: Justice motioned for the Board to **approve Cesar Zamora as Watershed Council Liaison**, 2nd by Ovchinnikov. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-5 [Ovchinnikov, Olson, Justice, Koch, Hart] Opposed-0).

3. Approve Out of State Travel for NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service) Planner Training for Zamora

Sanchez displayed the agenda item brief and attachments.

The board approved his travel to Washington state for NRCS's Soil Health & Sustainability for Field Staff 2026 training totaling \$786 for 4 nights.

Action: Justice motioned that the Board **approve out of state travel and NRCS training costs of \$786.00 for Cesar Zamora**, 2nd by Koch. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-5 [Ovchinnikov, Olson, Justice, Koch, Hart] Opposed-0).

4. Board's Monthly Meeting Minutes for April 1st, 2026

Hart stated review of the April 1st, 2026 minutes and submitted edits. Sanchez displayed the meeting minutes.

Revision Request - Chappelle to correct a typo in the bulleted section of the Treasurer's Report minutes that should read "awarded" instead of "lowered".

Action: Olson motioned that the Board **approve the April 1st, 2026, Meeting Minutes as amended**, 2nd by Justice. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-5 [Ovchinnikov, Olson, Justice, Koch, Hart] Opposed-0).

5. Treasurer's Monthly Report for March 2026

The board discussed the report Sanchez displayed.

The treasurer's report showed concerning percentages for net ordinary income and net income at 7,105%, which Sanchez agreed to clarify at the next meeting.

The group also discussed the high cost of their grant management software, which costs \$18,150.00 annually, and Sanchez agreed to explore alternative options and complete a cost analysis with the Grants Specialist when the current contract expires.

Action: Justice motioned that the Board **accept as presented the March 2026 Treasurers Report**, 2nd by Hart. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-5 [Ovchinnikov, Olson, Justice, Koch, Hart] Opposed-0).

6. United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) - Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Report

Brehm from NRCS updated the group on upcoming NRCS training opportunities, including Zamora's approval for training in Pullman, Washington and other programs scheduled for June and July. She discussed efforts to provide partner access to

NRCS's AgLearn system for conservation planner certification, noting the complexity of background checks required.

The group also explored challenges and potential solutions for using hazelnut shells as mulch, with Olson and Justice highlighting cost concerns and suggesting grant funding could help cover transportation and hammer mill costs. Brehm and Pineda are planning field days to help farmers share experiences and information about various conservation practices. She reported plans for a potential demo day with hazelnut growers and updates on funding applications, noting about 25 eligible applications in Marion County spanning various conservation efforts.

She reported that NRCS is awaiting an official staffing reorganization plan from USDA, with current staffing at around 155 people (down from 200 the previous year) and anticipation of potential staffing levels ranging from 140 to 170.

7. Fiscal Year 2026-27 Resolution Adopting the Budget

Sanchez displayed the agenda items.

Hart read the Marion Soil and Water Conservation District Resolution Adopting the Budget Resolution: No. 050626 Making Appropriations and Imposing and Categorizing Taxes;

“BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Directors for the Marion Soil and Water Conservation District hereby adopts the budget for 2026-2027 now on file at the District’s facility at 408 N Third Ave. Stayton, OR in the sum of \$5,228,352.

BE IT RESOLVED that the amounts for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2026, and for the purposes shown below are hereby appropriated as follows:

General Fund	
Personnel Services	\$1,108,005
Capital Outlay	\$52,000
Materials and Services	\$601,242
Special Payments	\$1,519,338
Operating Contingency	\$195,000
Interfund Transfers	\$0
Fund Total	\$3,280,585

Multipurpose Reserve Fund	
Unanticipated Projects	\$75,000
Catastrophic Loss	\$241,271
Fund Total	\$316,271

Building Reserve Fund	
Building-Property Remodel/Const.	\$336,750

Fund Total \$336,750

Total Appropriations All Funds \$3,933,606

Unappropriated Amount \$1,294,746

Total Adopted Budget \$5,228,352

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 2026-2027 at the rate of \$0.0500 per \$1000 of assessed value for permanent rate tax.

BE IT RESOLVED that the taxes imposed are hereby categorized for purposes of Article XI section 11b as: **Permanent Rate Tax \$ 0.0500/\$1,000”**

Action: Hart motioned that the Board **approve the Resolution: No. 050626 for Fiscal Year 2026-2027 as read**, 2nd by Koch. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-5 [Ovchinnikov, Olson, Justice, Koch, Hart] Opposed-0).

Olson noted that this motion supersedes the prior Board authorization to transfer \$115,000 from reserves to the General Fund, since the approved budget no longer requires the transfer.

Hart signed the resolution as written.

8. Education & Outreach (E&O) Committee

Sanchez displayed the Education & Outreach Committee briefs and attachments.

A. Proposal - Clarification of CLEAR (Conservation Learning Education and Resource) Grant Program and Partner Grant Education Grant Eligibility

Hart presented the proposal: The group discussed a recommendation from the Education Outreach Committee to modify the grant funding structure, with CLEAR grants covering K-12, college, and trade/technical education, while partner grants would support adult environmental education.

Action: Justice motioned for the Board to **approve defining education funding under CLEAR Grants as supporting student focused education programs across K-12, Collegiate [post-secondary], and trade/technical pathways; and defining education funding under Partner Grants as supporting adult education**, 2nd by Olson. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-5 [Ovchinnikov, Olson, Justice, Koch, Hart] Opposed-0).

Discussion continued about clarifying language for inclusivity and that homeschool students are eligible to apply for our education programs.

Clarifying that the focus is on environmental education projects rather than university research, they Board agreed that college students would be considered on a case-by-case basis, with teachers and institutions typically making funding requests rather than individual students.

Action Amended: Olson recommended for the Board to **amend the action to include children in the age group of K-12, 2nd** by Justice. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-5 [Ovchinnikov, Olson, Justice, Koch, Hart] Opposed-0).

B. CLEAR Grant Report

Roosth presented the Program Summary Report of how the funds were allocated, since all funds were used for this fiscal cycle, totaling \$37,043, which reached approximately 1,581 students and adult learners through various educational initiatives.

Financial Overview

- Total Program Costs: \$37,043
- Transportation: \$8,070
- Substitute Teacher Costs: \$5,954
- Instructional Costs: \$13,962
- Supplies & Materials: \$9,057
- Total In-Kind Contributions: \$20,650 (even though in-kind isn't a requirement)

Cost Efficiency

- Average Cost per Learner: \$23.43

Participant Groups

- Schools Served: 7
- Community Garden: 1 (adult learners)
- Non-profits: 2 (students and adult learners)

Stories from completed projects were shared including field trips and educational initiatives at various schools and community organizations. She highlighted specific examples like McKay High School's environmental studies and Community Roots School's coastal field studies program.

Discussion continued about outdoor-school in the district.

9. Grants Programs

Sanchez displayed the grant report for two (2) cancelations.

The group approved the cancellation of three grants due to no contact from the recipients.

1. CAG 20-24-002 – Cattle HUA at gates & troughs
2. CAG 20-24-013 – Pond/Spring Invasive Weed Abatement

Action: Hart motioned that the Board **cancel the following two (2) grants CAG 20-24-002 – Cattle HUA at gates & troughs and CAG 20-24-013 – Pond/Spring Invasive Weed Abatement**, 2nd by Justice. No further discussion. MOTION PASSED (Aye-5 [Ovchinnikov, Olson, Justice, Koch, Hart] Opposed-0).

10. Natural Resources Committee

Sanchez displayed the agenda item and attachments.

They discussed upcoming Natural Resource Committee meeting agenda items for May 13th and clarified authority and decision-making processes regarding grant applications.

Zamora explained that the initial agenda item about priority project types, Program Alignment with District Priorities, was a result of miscommunication and will be discussed at the next Natural Resource Committee meeting.

The Board determined that while they could make recommendations about the staff's grant application process, the authority to approve staff time and costs for expenses under \$5000 actually rests with the District Manager. The Board confirmed that, while the Manager has discretion for staff time costs under \$5,000, any grant award contract would require Board approval when it comes forward.

Adjourn: Vice-Chair Olson adjourned the meeting at 8:27 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.