

Washington Association of Conservation Districts

April 15, 2024

Summary of April Board Meeting Minutes

- **Motion:** Amy McKay moved to adopt the agenda. Second by John Preston. Motion carried.
- **Motion:** Doug Rushton moved to adopt the February minutes as presented and March work session minutes as amended. Second by Amy. Motion carried.
- **Motion:** Mark Craven moved to accept the February Treasurer's Report. Second by John Preston. Motion carried.
- **Motion:** Mark Craven moved to adopt the COLA procedure policy with Option 2B. Second by David Vliet. Motion carried.

Washington Association of Conservation Districts

WACD Olympia Office - Remote Connection through Zoom

April 15, 2024

April Board Meeting Minutes

Members Present

Mike Mumford, President (Pend Oreille CD)
Amy McKay, Vice President (Whitman CD)
Barbara Bailey, Secretary (Underwood CD)
Mark Craven, Treasurer (Snohomish CD)
Doug Rushton, National Director (Thurston CD)
Jeanette Dorner, Past President (Pierce CD)
Alan Chapman, Northwest Area Director (Whatcom CD)
David Vliet, Northwest Area Director (Kitsap CD)
Lisa Zaborac, Southwest Area Director (Grays Harbor CD)
John Preston, North Central Area Director (Columbia Basin CD)
Cindy Reed, South Central Area Director (North Yakima CD)
Jack Clark, South Central Area Director (Benton CD)
John W. Floyd, Northeast Area Director (Pend Oreille CD)
Mary Collins, Southeast Area Director (Palouse CD)
Cindy Pierce, WADE President (Skagit CD)

Others Present

Tom Salzer, WACD Executive Director
Jim Brown, WACD Director of Nursery Operations
Ryan Baye, WACD Director of Legislative & Membership Services
Heather Wendt, WACD Director of Development & Engagement
James Thompson, WSCC Executive Director
Jon Wyss, USDA FSA Washington State Executive Director
Kristina Ribellia, Columbia Basin CD Executive Director

President Mumford called the meeting to order at 6 PM. Ryan Baye conducted a roll call to confirm a quorum was present. Amy McKay moved to adopt the agenda. Second by John Preston. Motion carried. None of the individuals present wished to enter a public comment.

Area Focus

Kristina Ribellia presented on behalf of Columbia Basin CD, focusing on their priority project of the Odessa Groundwater Replacement program. She also spoke to their efforts mitigating for phosphorus on Moses Lake, finishing the move into their new building, and VSP activities in Grant and Adams counties. She ended her presentation by showing a new video on OGWRP.

Partner Reports

Jon Wyss spoke primarily to the ongoing CREP audit of the state's program, and provided information on the findings with the number of contracts determined to have compliance issues, the number referred to NRCS for reviewing buffer width and stream eligibility, those sent back to the county FSA committee, those cleared with no issues, and those being terminated for noncompliance.

Cindy Pierce reported there were over 300 registrants for the WADE conference and that employee of the year nominations were being collected.

Doug Rushton referred the board to his written report, and was seeking feedback on their continued value to the board. He also informed the board that NACD Pacific Regional Representative Caleb Griffin would be attending the WADE conference in June.

James Thompson recounted the all-districts meeting in Yakima three weeks ago, Commission staff changes, current rounds of grant funding available, and his participation in the Governor's Riparian Roundtable.

Meeting minutes

Secretary Barbara Bailey presented the February and March draft minutes to the board for consideration. Doug Rushton asked that Brynn Brady's March report be expanded to include her information on legislative retirements. Barbara agreed to insert a line about the "current status of known legislative retirements" into the final minutes. Doug Rushton moved to adopt February minutes as presented and March work session minutes (as amended). Second by Amy. Motion carried.

Financials

Treasurer Mark Craven stated that the March financials weren't available because Lori McLaughlin had been on vacation, and proceeded to repeat some of his report regarding the February financials. Mark Craven moved to accept the February Treasurer's Report. Second by John Preston. Motion carried.

WACD Board

Ryan Baye reported on the outcomes of the Congressional Fly-In meetings, NACD's talking points, and the status of the farm bill discussions.

Heather Wendt shared details of the Spring Legislative Workshop and the staff's intention to be very interactive and engaging for districts. In response to a question, she reported that more district staff than supervisors were currently registered.

Heather Wendt and Ryan Baye presented the rosters of the Renewable Resources Work Group and the Ag Loan Task Force. Heather provided information on the first Renewable meeting later this month, with Ryan to organize first Ag Loan Work Group in May.

Heather Wendt was happy that all 45 districts had completed the survey on plant needs. While the full breakdown was not yet ready, an early theme was that there were a few eastern Washington CDs that don't have plant needs or don't order from the PMC.

Heather Wendt also informed the board that the draft WACD FY2025 Work Plan was out for comment, incorporating the changes from the last meeting.

WACD Policies

Heather Wendt presented a draft health benefits policy proposal with a tiered system for current versus future employees. There was a discussion among board members about cost, creating a delineation among employees with different benefit packages, how to best treat employees with families, and staying competitive with job benefits. During the discussion of cost and what WACD could afford, Barbara Bailey reminded the group that the Financial Investment Policy anticipated that 2% of the average investment portfolio over a prior period would be made available annually for WACD's use, subject to board action.

Heather Wendt also presented a comprehensive policy to create official documentation for WACD's development of a Cost-of-Living salary adjustment for the board to consider each year. There was a discussion among board members around the board's ability to not grant a COLA, how much of a COLA was awarded in previous years, and a notification from Executive Director Tom Salzer that he planned to seek a merit increase for all WACD staff in the next budget. Mark Craven moved to adopt the COLA procedure policy with Option 2B. Second by David Vliet. Motion carried.

WACD Operations

Jim Brown reported to the board on the drop in projected sales versus actual sales for the year, with \$1.6 million in plant sales to date. The nursery had started their blow out sale for the year before turning off the cooler, and had just finished transplanting last week. A company had visited to provide an estimate for replacing the failed western pump. He finished with a potential proposal from a nursery on Whidbey Island about the PMC providing maintenance in exchange for seed, which would be a departure for PMC to use commercial rather than native tree cone seed.

Tom Salzer informed the board of a staff proposal under consideration to reduce the number of rented offices with their landlord in Olympia.

Tom Salzer had spoken with a potential contractor regarding developing a statewide helpdesk for CDs, and for WACD's internal use as well.

Heather Wendt had contacted audit companies about potentially being WACD's 5-year auditor for 2024. One vendor was able to give a preliminary quote. Tom added that IT was the second priority of the Shared Resources Work Group, while Heather Wendt was investigating HR resources.

Heather Wendt shared the memo on upcoming staff travel and activities for the board's information.

Annual Conference

Ryan Baye informed the board that there's a signed contract with the Northern Quest Casino in Spokane for 2024 and 2025, with a deposit paid for this year. Heather Wendt presented the 2024 sponsorship levels and sponsorship packets.

Announcements

The board members present complimented Ryan Baye for graduating from the AgForestry program last week.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30.