



Okanogan Conservation District

1251 S. Second Ave, Room 102

Okanogan, WA 98840

TO: The Record
SUBJECT: November 1, 2022; Board of Supervisors Meeting
LOCATION: Okanogan Conservation District Office, Okanogan, WA and
Remotely via Microsoft Teams
FROM: Cassandra Lange, Administrative Assistant

PRESENT:

Ivan Oberg, District Chair	Cassandra Lange, Administrative Assistant
Jerry Asmussen, Vice Chair	Chevelle Yeckel, Water Quality & Riparian Planner
Albert Roberts, District Auditor	Kim Kogler, Grants & Contracts Director
Gerri Oberg, Associate Supervisor	Dylan Streeter, Conservation Planner
Bob Clark, Associate Supervisor (Phone)	Eli Loftis, Wildfire & Community Resilience Lead
Steve Colvin, Member	Emmy Engle, Communication & Outreach Specialist
Craig Nelson, Executive Director	Jordana Ellis, Irrigation Planner
Becky Drenner, Finance Director	

Meeting Call to Order: Ivan Oberg called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM. Ivan completed a roll call of Supervisors, Associate Supervisors, staff, partners, and the public.

Public Comment:

There was no public comment.

Agenda Approval: Jerry Asmussen moved to approve the agenda as amended. Albert Roberts seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes: Jerry Asmussen moved to approve the October 4, 2022 board meeting minutes as presented. Steve Colvin seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer's Report #834, which covers the checking account activity from October 5, 2022 to November 1, 2022, inclusive was presented for the Board's approval, the following checks/payroll direct withdrawals/electronic payments were approved for payment:

Checks – numbers 12022 - 12042 totaling \$111,194.61.

One payroll direct withdrawal – numbers ACH4344 – ACH4354 - totaling \$16,618.04

Electronic payments – numbers EFT3101 – EFT3117 totaling \$28,263.88

Deposits totaling \$161,736.86 were made, including a transfer of \$100,000.00 from Savings to Checking to cover cost share payments until reimbursement.

Albert Roberts moved to approve Treasurer's Report #834. Jerry Asmussen seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Supervisor Reports:

Albert Roberts – Albert reported he is done harvesting hay.

Ivan Oberg – Ivan did not have anything to report.

Jerry Asmussen – Jerry reported that moisture is good, and he has seen snow up in the hills.

Steve Colvin – Steve reported that he will be done with grape harvest soon, and that the grapes are looking good despite the trying weather.

Lorah Super – Lorah was not present.

Associate Supervisor Reports:

Bob Clark did not have anything to report.

Staff Reports:

Craig reported that had been contacted by Dean Hellie, the district administrator at Stevens County Conservation District, who was interested in the district's opinion on asking WACD to support delisting wolves. This issue stems from the lack of assistance with kill orders and follow through. Stevens County Conservation District wants the United States Fish & Wildlife to take over for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. There is a desire for something to be done for ranchers. Albert added that he didn't reject the stance but wanted it to have a conservation friendly approach. Overall, board members were in support of the principle and Albert pointed out that the wolves are causing damage to the conservation practices we have put in, like when we put in a new trough and the wolves kill animals while they are getting a drink. Craig said he would be in contact with Dean to let him know the district supports the idea but want to see resolution language before fully committing. Craig added that he wrote a letter of support to the Farm Bureau for their Holistic Grazing program.

Craig went on to say that he attended the VSP Field Day event that Justin Stanley hosted, and it was a success. The tour took them to the Lesamiz project, which showcased how the river fluctuates, Casey Witte's cost-share fence project, and Dan Russel's planting project. Craig added that all districts are learning the VSP program on their own, and it would be very helpful to have districts share their experiences and work together on VSP activities. The VSP Workgroup participants has fallen from six to two members, and the district will work with the Okanogan County Planning Department and Commissioners to get more participants.

Becky reported she completed the draft 2023 budget and would be available to answer any questions. She added that she is happy to be working with such a great team.

Chevelle reported that she is getting ready for two more planting projects that will occur later in the month.

Eli stated the Community Wildfire Defense Grant application was submitted and the district should hear back by December 31, 2022. He added that half of the current fire recovery projects

are completed. Eli went on to say that the chipping events have gone very well with few issues and added that he is thankful for Dylan's help.

Emmy reported that the quarterly newsletter for fall will be out within the week. She is currently working on the 2023 calendar. Emmy posted a request for calendar pictures on the districts Facebook page and has already received over fifty submissions.

Jordana introduced herself to the board and said she has been enjoying learning and being part of the team.

Dylan reported that the districts new mulcher was used yesterday for the first time.

Review, Approve and Sign Contracts and Conservation Plans

Classroom in Bloom NACD UAC Agreement – Kim informed that the district received funds from the NACD UAC grant initiative to increase school garden outreach to communities in Okanogan County. The district and Classroom in Bloom will partner on project activities including superintendent meetings, Classroom in Bloom tours, a training about asking for and receiving donations, onsite teacher trainings, community events, and teaching students about agriculture and conservation. Kim went on to say that the district will provide Classroom in Bloom with up to \$4,950.00 to attend superintendent meetings, host garden tours, lead a donation training, and support trainings and community events. Additionally, the district will hire the Okanogan County school garden coordinator (CiB employee) as an honorarium to teach students about agriculture and conservation and provide insight at meetings, trainings, and events. Kim added that the district will provide the honorarium up to \$5,500.00 for their services. Albert Roberts moved to approve the Classroom in Bloom NACD UAC Agreement and authorized Ivan Oberg to sign. Steve Colvin seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Jamie Petitto Videography Services NACD UAC Agreement – Kim informed that the district received funds from a NACD UAC grant initiative to increase school garden outreach to communities in Okanogan County. This included time and funding to create a 3-5 minute film highlighting the work at all 8 school gardens. After researching various local videographers, staff chose to hire Jamie Petitto, and filming will occur in the fall and in the spring. The final video will be completed by June. The district will share the completed video on social media platforms and request local theaters play it before movies. The district will pay Jamie Petitto up to \$5,000 for her services. NACD UAC will cover \$4,000 of the cost and the \$1,000 donation from Okanogan Slow Food will cover the remaining costs. Jerry Asmussen moved to approve the Jamie Petitto NACD UAC Agreement and authorize Ivan Oberg to sign the contract. Steve Colvin seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Fairground Trees – Craig informed that the district was contacted by Naomie Peasley, the manager of the Okanogan County Fairgrounds, in search of trees for the fairgrounds. Recently, some hazardous trees were removed from the fairgrounds and the county is interested in replacing them with conifer trees. The trees would provide shade and a windbreak to people and animals. There are three planting locations at the fairgrounds totaling 1,393 feet. The trees will be planted 10-15 feet apart according to "Trees Against the Wind". The southernmost location plans to have 54 trees, the middle location 32 trees, and the northern location 114 trees and

include a double belt. Craig added that if the plan is approved, when the trees are planted, signs will be installed stating “Trees provided by the Okanogan Conservation District” which will get more advertisement for the district. The 200 trees will be ordered from the University of Idaho nursery and consist of 50 Blue Spruce, 50 Engelmann Spruce, 50 Austrian Pine, and 50 Dawn Redwood that are 20 cui and between 10-20 inches tall. Craig went on to say that flagging will be provided by the district to ensure the trees will not be destroyed, and the fairgrounds irrigation gets turned on April 1, according to Naomie. The University of Idaho will ship the trees on March 27, 2023 and the fairground plans on planting the trees the week of April 2, 2023. Steve Colvin moved to authorize staff to expend up to \$1,200 of Implementation Grand Funds to purchase 200 trees to be planted in the spring of 2023 at the Okanogan County Fairgrounds and installation of signs identifying that the trees were planted by the district. Albert Roberts seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

NRCS Report

Sarah Troutman was not present but sent out a report that was included with board documents.

Partner Reports

There were no partners present.

Old Business:

Water Bank Update – Craig reported that the district is still waiting to hear back from the Department of Ecology about the application for this project, but the department indicated they would be doing their final review in the coming weeks. Craig added that the district has continued conversations with other water right holders about their interest in selling all or a portion of their water rights to the water bank, and he hopes that the district will be working on a new application for at least one of them in the coming weeks and months.

WACD Ecology Stock Water Resolution Update: Craig reported that the 2022-02 Ecology Stock Water Policy resolution that was approved at the last board meeting was approved at the WACD meeting. Upon the approval, WACD asked the Okanogan Conservation District to combine the Stevens County conservation district resolution 22-03 with their own 2022-02 Stock Water Policy. Steve Colvin moved to approve the updated 2202-02 Stock Water Policy Resolution to be presented at the WACD annual meeting. Albert Roberts seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

New Business:

Resolution 2022-03 Set Board Election Date – Becky informed that it is time to begin the 2022 election process by setting a date. The proposed date is Tuesday, March 14, 2023. Ivan Oberg is up for election and Jerry Asmussen is up for appointment. Albert Roberts moved to approve Resolution 2022-03 adopting the election resolution and setting the date of March 14, 2023, for the 2023 District Elections. Steve Colvin seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Resolution 2022-04 – Set 2023 District Board Meeting Dates – Becky offered that the 2023 board meeting dates and times be set for the first Thursday of each month at 6:00PM, except the months of September and December, which will be held on September 5, 2023 and December 5,

2023. Each of those said dates will help ensure enough time for administrative staff to process vouchers with strict deadlines. Jerry Asmussen moved to approve Resolution 2022-04 setting the 2023 board meeting dates and times, authorizing Ivan Oberg to sign it. Steve Colvin seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Operations Manual Update – Craig informed that the Districts Operations Manual has been in place for about 18 months and in that time a few items have come up that staff feel need to be updated. Craig brought a draft copy of the Operations Manual with tracked changes. Becky, Kim, and Craig reviewed these changes in principle during a meeting on October 24, 2022. The changes included an updated organizational chart, change in vehicle mileage reimbursement for personal vehicles, increase in award value, cloud-based file storage, performance assessment cycle, addition of Juneteenth as a District recognized holiday, modification to vacation leave accrual rate, clarification to Pregnancy Disability Leave policy, and a modification of the Compensatory and Exchange Time policies. Craig recommended the board move to adopt the changes to the Okanogan Conservation District Operations Manual effective November 1, 2022. Jerry Asmussen moved to approve and adopt the changes to the Okanogan Conservation District Operations Manual effective November 1, 2022 as presented except for the organizational chart, which will be excluded due to the ever-evolving structure. Albert Roberts seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

NACD 2023 Membership Dues – Becky informed that NACD offers several levels of membership ranging from \$1.00 to \$3,000.00+. Becky recommended the Gold level membership of \$775.00, which is typically what the district has committed in the past. Steve Colvin moved to pay the NACD Conservation Investment at the Gold level of \$775.00. Jerry Asmussen seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

2023 Budget Update – Becky presented the Draft 2023 Budget for review and comment. A final budget will be presented at the December board meeting.

Temporary Wage Increase – Becky reported that she will be on medical leave beginning November 14th for at least 2 weeks but potentially 6 weeks. Cassie will take over her tasks for that period in time. Becky added that with the increased responsibility and workload, Cassie is due fair compensation for that work. Becky proposed that the Board authorize a temporary increase in Cassie's pay commensurate with the increase in workload and responsibilities during her absence. This increase would be effective November 16 – November 30, 2022, with the board giving Craig authority to extend, if necessary, based on the duration of Becky's medical leave, but no longer than December 31, 2022. Jerry Asmussen moved to authorize the Executive Director to increase Cassandra Lange's wages to Range 60, Step D (\$32.73) commensurate with the increased duties and responsibilities, effective November 16-30, 2022 to be extended by Executive Director Craig Nelson, if necessary, until Becky Drenner returns from medical leave and resumes her responsibilities, but no longer than December 31, 2022. Albert Roberts seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Salary Range Adjustment – Craig informed that the district has had to hire employees to fill vacancies which have been created in part due to opportunities former employees took for jobs that had higher wages. Though there are other reasons employees leave, this pay scale has been

cited by former employees as being part of their decision to leave. The district has had increased difficulty with finding qualified candidates for advertised job positions. Upon comparing the district's pay scale to other natural resource organizations, Craig found that the district is lagging behind what others offer. Craig presented a list of recent job listings with the minimum wage amounts or pay range as advertised for districts in similar economic situations as ours or agency positions that are relatable to jobs in Okanogan County. After reviewing and discussing these conditions, Craig recommended the district move their employee classifications to the following salary/wage ranges.

- Technicians (Range 43) - \$20.00 - \$26.10
- Planners/Education/Admin (Range 50) - \$23.66 - \$31.03
- Leads/Communication (Range 57) - \$28.11 - \$36.89
- Directors (Range 67) - \$35.98 - \$47.22
- Executive (Range 75) - \$43.83 - \$57.53

Steve Colvin moved to approve the salary schedule amendments as presented effective November 1, 2022. Jerry Asmussen seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

District Boundary Annexation Plan – Emmy informed that Craig and she are working on a plan to invite additional cities and towns throughout Okanogan County to annex into the District. As a part of the plan, they are gathering a report of recent projects and accomplishments, listing OCD programs and services, breaking down rates and charges costs to annexation as well as informing of potential future increases, explaining how rates and charges funding is/will be utilized, describing the benefit of OCD services, and sharing future opportunities that will be made possible with annexation. After this report is complete, they will connect with cities and towns to present the information and encourage council members to say yes to annexation. Emmy stated they hope to share this information with each of the remaining seven cities and towns who are not currently part of the district and continue with more targeted efforts for a select few. Emmy added the goal is to succeed in at least three annexation approvals by December of 2023. Emmy went on to say staff encourages board feedback on the District Plan strategy; especially if there are additions to the report contents, suggestions for presenting to council members, and recommendations for which cities/towns to work with in 2023. The topic will be revisited at the December meeting

Ivan Oberg adjourned the meeting at 7:48 PM.

Summary of Motions

Jerry Asmussen moved to approve the agenda as amended. Albert Roberts seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Jerry Asmussen moved to approve the October 4, 2022 board meeting minutes as presented. Steve Colvin seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Albert Roberts moved to approve Treasurer's Report #834. Jerry Asmussen seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

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Steve Colvin moved to approve the salary schedule amendments as presented effective November 1, 2022. Jerry Asmussen seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

 12/6/22

Ivan Oberg
Chair

Date

 12/6/22

Becky Drenner
Finance Director

Date