



Okanogan Conservation District

1251 S. Second Ave, Room 102

Okanogan, WA 98840

TO: The Record
SUBJECT: February 2, 2021 Board of Supervisors Meeting
LOCATION: Teleconference – (509) 422-0855, ext. 7
FROM: Jess McDaniel, Administrative Assistant

PRESENT:

Ivan Oberg, District Chair – Phone	Becky Drenner, Finance Director – Present
Jerry Asmussen, Vice Chair – Phone	Jess McDaniel, Administrative Assistant – Phone
Albert Roberts, District Auditor – Present	Amy Martin, Conservation Director – Phone
Lorah Super, Member – Phone	Kirsten Cook, Community Outreach Director – Phone
Steve Colvin, Member – Phone	Mindy Untalan, Conservation Planner – Phone
Gerri Oberg, Associate Supervisor – Phone	Hannah Coe, Conservation Planner – Phone
Bob Clark, Associate Supervisor – Phone	Mike Baden, WSCC - Phone
Craig Nelson, Executive Director – Present	

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.

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

Approval of Minutes: Lorah Super moved to approve the January 5, 2021 board meeting minutes as presented. Albert Roberts seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer's Report #813, which covers the checking account activity from January 6, 2021 to February 2, 2021 inclusive was presented for the Board's approval. The following checks/payroll direct withdrawals/electronic payments were approved for payment:

Checks – numbers 11713 - 11724 totaling \$729,680.59.

Payroll direct withdrawal - numbers ACH3927 – ACH3946 totaling \$28,176.95.

Electronic payments - numbers EFT2815 – EFT2829 totaling \$27,110.65.

Deposits totaling \$734,793.92 were made.

Albert Roberts moved to approve Treasurer's Report #813. Jerry Asmussen seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Supervisor Reports:

Jerry Asmussen – There are a lot of snow drifts and a lot of water. Jerry also thanked Craig for forwarding the snow report.

Lorah Super – Lorah reported she feels they had so much snow she was not sure she would ever get caught up with plowing it, but the recent rain has cleared the driveway. She added that she keeps considering planting things indoors. Otherwise, Lorah reported continuing work on out of basin water transfer legislation with representative Goehner, Craig, and commission staff. She went on to state that the Forest Health Collaborative is meeting tomorrow and, while she is not able to make the meeting, she hopes that Mindy will be available for the call as she has been on previous conference calls for the Collaborative.

Albert Roberts – Albert reported it is wet and his cows do not like it though they liked the fact that he brought out a load of straw for them. Albert added that the ground is saturated, and he is glad all the precipitation has not been in the form of snow. Otherwise, he continues to work on the inside of the house.

Ivan Oberg – Ivan reported he was unable to make it to Okanogan for the meeting because he can only get to and from his home by putting on chains because it is just an ice rink up there.

Steve Colvin – Steve reported it has been a great year and that he has not had to plow any snow. Temperatures have been quite mild, reporting 55 degrees a couple days ago and 53 degrees today. The vineyard is in the process of pruning and things are looking good with all the precipitation that has fallen.

Associate Supervisor Reports:

Bob reported that he is trying to keep from getting soggy. Just a little too cool to ride the trike but the roads are clear so he may try going on a walk. He added that he was looking forward to the Crown water rights purchase application discussion.

Staff Report:

Craig reported that he has been unable to finish the survey for the 5-year plan, but he expects to have it out this week. He reminded the board that if there are specific people who should be included in the survey mailing list, he needs their e-mail address. He stated that after the survey results are in, he will compile the responses to develop a draft 5-year plan for the board to review.

Craig went on to report that he has assigned Kim Kogler the task of finding an appropriate system for archiving the District's social media posts and responses for public records act purposes. Staff are awaiting quotes and the costs are expected to range from just under \$1,000 per year to a little over \$2,000 per year. Of course, there will be variances in services provided for those costs. Staff are searching for a system that will allow the District to remain compliant with current public records act laws. Craig stated that he intends to enter a contract once he, Kim Kogler, and Kirsten Cook find a system that works best for a reasonable price.

Craig concluded his report by adding that next week is WACD Legislative Week. Craig asked for supervisors who would be interested in participating in calls with legislators because they are all virtual this year. He will begin scheduling meetings with legislator's tomorrow.

Kirsten reported that she and her husband have experienced some debris flows on Cameron Lake Road and that the tribes have started salvage logging, so views are changing drastically at her place. Otherwise, she is trying to get DNR FAC rolling with COVID restrictions still in place.

Amy reported that Patrick Hagerty, DNR, and the Forest Service supervisor office in Wenatchee put together a proposal for the Joint Chiefs Project. There had been some back and forth with the program for several months but once DNR was onboard, we went for it, so the District is listed as a partner on the project with potential for funding. Amy went on to add that just today the District received a request from Whitestone Reclamation District to help with another water smart grant, so Ricardo and she will listen in on a conference call to see if staff can help them with canal piping up in the Loomis area.

Mindy reported that she is working with Craig, Amy, and Kirsten on the FEMA grant application, which is due at the end of February. She added that it looks like the District will be able to take advantage of some dollars from DNR to fund the cost analysis part of the grant so there should not be any pass-through dollars for that part of the grant.

Review, Approve and Sign Contracts and Conservation Plans

DNR FAC Pilot Amendment – Kirsten informed that DNR has approved the District's amendment to shift funds to project management and facilitation to complete the project given COVID-19 restrictions. She added that staff are seeing some good initial data from the interviews that facilitators have been able to conduct. Lorah Super moved to authorize Craig Nelson or Ivan Oberg to sign the DNR FAC Pilot Amendment. Steve Colvin seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Loup Loup Creek Restoration Design Contracting – Hannah informed that with funding from the Salmon Recovery Funding Board, Bonneville Power Administration, and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the District is partnering with the Colville Confederated Tribes to develop restoration designs for the Lassila property on Loup Loup Creek. A Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for design and engineering services was announced on December 30, 2020. Amy conducted a site visit to the property on January 12 with interested contractors and statements of qualifications were due January 22. The District received two non-cost proposals in response to the RFQ and the hope is to quickly select a firm and begin contract negotiations. Two of the funding sources are set to expire in June so, to expedite the contracting process, staff is asking for authorization for Craig to sign a contract with the selected firm to develop designs for the stream restoration project at the Lassila property when it is ready. Jerry Asmussen moved to authorize Craig Nelson to sign the Loup Loup Creek Restoration Design Contract. Albert Roberts seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Post-Wildfire Evaluation Training Personal Service Contract – Craig stated that the District has a contract with the Washington State Conservation Commission to provide a two-day training to other conservation districts and partner personnel regarding how to complete post-wildfire assessments for landowners. District staff are booked up with other projects and the training needs to be delivered between March and May of 2021, likely occurring mid to late April, spread out over three to four days. Staff believe the best way to deliver the training is to contract with someone who has the technical skills and knowledge as well as the experience to

teach resource professionals. Terri Williams has extensive experience in post-wildfire assessments, having been an instrumental employee of the District helping landowners following the 2014 and 2015 megafires Okanogan County experienced. She will develop the training curriculum and organize all the paperwork. The District will take registrations and coordinate the technical, online support. Steve Colvin moved to authorize Craig Nelson or Ivan Oberg to sign the Post-Wildfire Evaluation Training Personal Service Contract with Terri Williams. Lorah Super seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

NRCS Report

Sarah Troutman was not present but did send Craig a message stating that NRCS is scrambling to wrap up EQIP contracts. Sarah is looking through applications for the direct hire process. She was bemoaning the fact that she has to go through all 40 applications, though she is happy to have gotten that many applications to choose from. She added that Cathy Cannon is the new District Conservationist in Nespelem and the Okanogan office will likely be looking to fill her position here.

Partner Reports

Mike Baden reported the governor's budget is what the Commission must go on right now and there is some distance to go to get to a final budget. He stated the governor's budget is a good starting point for WSCC and budget cuts were much less than what was expected. The Commission was told to plan for cuts up to 15% but it appears the cuts are closer to 5%, according to the governor's budget. Mike added the million dollars that were dedicated to orca and salmon habitat and recovery in the previous budget was carried forward, but the language specifying that those dollars need to be used on orca and salmon was removed. Unfortunately, the governor's budget did not include or increase conservation technical assistance funds that were asked for, not because of the quality of the budget request package, but simply because money was not available in the budget. Mike went on to say revenues continue to track ahead of what was anticipated, which is good news. He went on to inform that NRI, being an important program for the Commission has, in the past, received only 4 million dollars. However, the proposed governor's budget would include an additional 4 million to that program. Mike felt the program would be vastly improved with the increase.

Other legislative items Mike mentioned included the latest COVID recovery plan. Specifically, the legislature approved a resolution that expands a slew of proclamations made early in the pandemic. Public meetings will continue to be limited until the pandemic or emergency is over, or the governor or legislature rescinds the public meeting limitations. However, based on new guidance from MRSC, if counties and/or regions move into phase 2 of the recovery plan, there will be some form of an in-person component allowed, with certain safety restrictions in place and a virtual option for folks to participate.

Public Comment:

There was no public comment.

Old Business:

Icicle Fund Grant – Mindy presented information regarding the Icicle Fund Grant application, which is a one-year grant with funding up to \$15,000 to support organizations that have

influence in the arts, environment, or history in and of Chelan, Douglas, Okanogan, and Grant counties. The funds would be used to support the District's fire preparedness program. Staff completed the grant application, which was due January 15, and Mindy reported the District should know in March if the application was accepted. However, the granting agency likes to see approval of the grant application by the District's Board. Steve Colvin asked if it was a competitive grant and Mindy confirmed it was competitive because it was made available for general funds this year. Both Craig and Lorah commented that the funding agency does often ask if Districts could work with less than requested because it is such a competitive grant. Lorah Super moved to approve the Icicle Fund grant application. Jerry Asmussen seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

New Business:

Schedule 22-Internal Audit – Becky informed that she, Albert, Craig, and Mike Baden will be choosing a date and time in March, sometime after the elections, to hold the Schedule 22 internal audit remotely. Mike added that the auditor's office sent a PDF of the Schedule 22, which he will send along to Becky via email.

Annual Review of RCW 89.08 – Craig presented the Conservation District Act, RCW 89.08, for review by the District's board members, as recommended by the Washington State Conservation Commission. He pointed out four subsections – 200, 210, 215 and 220, which are key sections in the RCW. Craig stated this review is to ensure elected officials and others in decision making positions are familiar with the authorities within district's enabling legislation. Lorah stated she regularly refers to the RCW when partnering with essentially anyone, because it gives districts very broad authority in partnering with various agencies, groups, or individuals, whether private, public, or governmental. Mike added there is an electronic version of the pocket guide online.

District Operations Manual – Craig presented for consideration an updated Operations Manual for the District. He informed that over the past several months leadership staff have worked on creating cohesive and consistent sections within the manual. Some policies have been updated to ensure current operations practices are consistent with the current law. Some changes have been made to existing authorities such as purchasing, employee discipline, and more. Craig acknowledged this is a big read and the hope is to receive some initial feedback during the February board meeting with approval by the March meeting. He added that the draft manual has been reviewed by Enduris as well as the Conservation Commission and the few concerns raised have been corrected and revised language included. Albert asked about the policy that states conservation credit cards should not be used to purchase fuel in a personal vehicle. Craig clarified that the employee should pay for fuel purchased for a personal vehicle used for work purposes. The employee is reimbursed via check for the mileage of the trip, based on the current OFM rate per mile. Ivan added that he appreciated the section including the history of conservation districts but commented that he would like to see additional history regarding tribal districts. This topic will be revisited at the March meeting.

Crown Columbia Water Resources-Letter in Opposition of Water Rights Purchase Application – Craig informed that Crown is a private firm trying to acquire water rights in the upper watershed with no stated purpose to be transferred to a particular point or for a specific

reason. It appears the goal of the firm is to sell the water rights downstream for profit. The fear is the firm will essentially be commoditizing water rights. Craig added this is a complicated situation because no one wants to tell a landowner they cannot sell their water. On the other hand, landowners probably do not want to have to turn around and purchase water rights from a for-profit third party. Craig presented information regarding writing a letter in opposition of Crown's water rights purchase application based on several statutory requirements that Crown has not met sufficiently. Lorah added context by stating that the District has been pursuing legislation with the Conservation Commission to establish a role whereby conservation districts have a role in water banking, which would be locally run with the goal of a flexible program.

Craig went on to say Crown recently applied for almost 50 cfs from the upper Columbia basin and all associated tributaries, which makes it fairly clear they are trying to out-maneuver anyone who is trying to create a water bank of their own, buying water rights before local sources can do it themselves. Craig stated the firm has not indicated a point of withdrawal nor any specific point of use and that it appears they just want to do this really vague thing. Various groups have made requests to find out if there are any underlying documents associated with the application, but all they have is a blanket MOU with the trust. Lorah added that she has been in touch with Mary McCrae, a retired water rights attorney, who made a request to Ecology for underlying documentation but there was none available.

Craig concluded that the point of opposing this application is because the Department of Ecology would require any other organization to submit a complete application. Craig stated he would write the letter and get it sent off tomorrow afternoon or early the following day. The only other thing Lorah added was that, by presenting a united front with the county and other organizations, hopefully the tribes will take notice and Ecology will get a clear message that this is not acceptable. Albert Roberts moved to authorize Craig Nelson to write a letter in opposition to the Crown water rights purchase application. Jerry Asmussen seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Ivan Oberg adjourned the meeting at 7:10 PM.

