



Okanogan Conservation District

1251 S. Second Ave, Room 102

Okanogan, WA 98840

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

PRESENT:

Ivan Oberg, District Chair – Present	Becky Drenner, Finance Director – Present
Jerry Asmussen, Vice Chair – Phone	Jess McDaniel, Administrative Assistant – Phone
Albert Roberts, District Auditor – Present	Ben Carroll, Range Planner – Phone
Lorah Super, Member – Phone	Hannah Coe, Conservation Planner – Phone
Steve Colvin, Member – Phone	Sarah Troutman, NRCS – Phone
Gerri Oberg, Associate Supervisor – Present	Ryan Baye, WACD – Phone
Bob Clark, Associate Supervisor – Phone	Rachel McClure, Congressman Newhouse’s Office – 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 February 2, 2021 board meeting minutes as presented. Jerry Asmussen seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer’s Report #814, which covers the checking account activity from February 3, 2021 to March 2, 2021 inclusive was presented for the Board’s approval. The following checks/payroll direct withdrawals/electronic payments were approved for payment:

Checks – numbers 11725 - 11730 totaling \$2,135.84.

Payroll direct withdrawal - numbers ACH3947 – ACH3966 totaling \$27,560.11.

Electronic payments - numbers EFT2830 – EFT2839 totaling \$23,530.56.

Deposits totaling \$102,489.52 were made.

Albert Roberts moved to approve Treasurer’s Report #814. Lorah Super seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Supervisor Reports:

Jerry Asmussen – Jerry reported that he is just starting with calves and that Spring has sprung. He added that his feed lot is pretty dry, and that the deer are moving up out of the valley so the next thing he is waiting for is grass.

Lorah Super – Lorah reported that her neck of the woods is a muddy, snowy, slushy mess and that it is best not to go out except in the dead of night. She informed that she has been working with Craig and others on legislation related to the creation of a local water bank. She noted after reading Craig's staff report that the project has evolved into a capital budget proviso request, which was submitted on February 19.

Lorah went on to add that she was asked to give a presentation about Crown Columbia's efforts to form their own, for profit, water bank and offer insight about the District's legislative request for funding to create a locally operated water bank. Additionally, a separate request was submitted to Representatives Goehner and Steele with the hope that, by the middle of next month, there will be some word about whether the request made it into the budget, which will then require a little work with Senators to make sure it stays in the budget. Lorah added that most of the towns, if not all, who are part of the Okanogan Council of Governments are opposed to the Crown Columbia application. She has been working with professionals who have a better understanding of the process and proper objection language to help groups and agencies adequately articulate their opposition to Crown's application. Lorah emphasized the importance of local agencies and organizations presenting a united front against such a large, privately funded water bank in hopes of getting it stopped.

Lorah wrapped up her report by adding that the North Central Forest Health Collaborative has a steering committee meeting tomorrow.

Albert Roberts – Albert reported it is definitely mud season but that things are looking good. He added that the Okanogan County Planning Commission will have a public hearing regarding the 2021 comprehensive plan soon.

Ivan Oberg – Ivan did not give a report.

Steve Colvin – Steve reported that they are busy pruning and there is good water up there. He added that he is glad spring is here, if not up in the hills, at least down in the valley.

Associate Supervisor Reports:

Bob Clark – Bob reported it is finally warm enough to go out on his trike again.

Staff Report:

Craig reported he has been setting up appointments with legislators for WACD legislative week. Schedules are very full for them with floor action and other appointments so at least one is the following week, on the 15th. He and Albert will be attending the appointments. Craig asked that if one other supervisor wishes to attend to let him know and he will get the appointment access to them.

Craig went on to inform that fire recovery has popped back up in the past week with some mud flows that occurred in and around the Cold Springs Fire area. Craig and Ricardo visited with one landowner that experienced a mud flow on their property. Thankfully, it was a small enough flow that the landowners were able to divert it away from their home. The landowner has maintained a channel from a culvert that he was told historically occasionally had some water

flow. However, Craig reported that the channel is now completely full of sediment and the landowners are seeking assistance with cleaning it out so there is room for future potential flows. Craig has requested funding from the Conservation Commission but there has been no word yet on whether funds will come available.

Craig reiterated Lorah's point of keeping in focus the importance of maintaining water in the basin and that he has talked to various entities related to Okanogan Watershed Planning who are also interested in writing letters of support to Representatives Goehner and Steele. He added it was also his understanding that the City of Okanogan is working on a resolution in support of local water banks and opposition to the Crown application.

Craig said he found out late in the afternoon that NRCS had identified a location for a Sno-Tel, which the District had requested be placed in the upper portion of the Loup Loup basin. The proposed location is by Buck Mountain on DNR land. They are waiting on permission from DNR before they can proceed with plans to install. Craig sent a request to the NE Region Manager to get that process expedited to increase the likelihood that it could be installed this summer and online by wintertime.

Becky reported today was the last day people could request absentee ballots and that no such requests were made. The election will be held on March 23 and the hope is that the weather will continue to be warm and pleasant so the election can be held outdoors to avoid a crowd of people in the hallway. Becky added that she and Craig are working out the details of a possible drive-up voting format.

Ben added that he engaged in the first of this year's CRM meetings earlier in the day and that it went well, considering it was entirely virtual with producers calling in. He confirmed the conversations were productive but that the meeting did go a little more quickly than in-person meetings. Ben added that there are more CRMs scheduled for next week with a few more next month as well.

Review, Approve and Sign Contracts and Conservation Plans

NRCS Conservation Plan Review & Signatures – Craig explained that NRCS has traditionally sought conservation district approval of their conservation plans. However, due to federal restrictions on public disclosure they are not allowed to present such plans at public meetings. Craig went on to say that the board has previously authorized two district supervisors to individually review the conservation plans and has granted them authorization to approve and sign them. Jerry asked if it would be best to split it up by region, as had been done in past years, where Albert took the reservation and south end and Jerry took the north end of the county. Lorah added that if applications come up from the Methow area she could be available for reviewing the Methow region plans. Sarah will call those who are able to review by region. Albert Roberts moved to authorize the board members to divide the NRCS conservation plans by region and review and sign as necessary. Jerry Asmussen seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Contract with VCC for 2021 Intern – Ben presented the contract that was developed between the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs and the Okanogan

Conservation District. The contract outlines the details for hiring an intern for 2021 through the Veterans Conservation Corps. The contract provides for a 6-month internship (May-October), that can be either full or part-time. A full-time intern participant receives a \$1,800 monthly stipend and the District pays a one-time \$500 participation fee to the VCC; part-time intern participants will receive a \$900 monthly stipend and the District will pay a one-time \$250 participation fee. The VCC will advertise the position throughout their network and will conduct the first round of candidate interviews. The District will conduct the final round of interviews and select the final candidate. Ben added that the Ecology Livestock BMPs grant application had budgeted \$30,000 for 3 years for a seasonal technician to help complete field work during the field season so this program would save the District a lot of money if a good candidate can be found. Jerry asked Ben to forward him the position advertisement when it is put together because he knows someone who may be a good candidate. Jerry Asmussen moved to authorize Craig Nelson to sign the contract between the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs and the District to participate in the Veterans Conservation Corps intern program for the 2021 field season. Albert Roberts seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Webster Riparian Restoration Cost-Share Contract – Hannah presented details of the cost-share project at the Webster property along Chiliwist Creek, which experienced post-fire flood and extreme sediment deposition following the Carlton Complex fire. Hannah explained the project would be funded by the Benson Creek water quality grant from the Department of Ecology, which was amended last year to include the Chiliwist Creek watershed. The project site has eroding banks and an infestation of reed canary grass, which will require a two-phase approach whereby the canary reed grass will be cut back and weed control fabric will be installed in the spring of 2021 to suppress its growth. In the fall of 2021 potted plants will be installed in the areas where the grass suppression was successful over the summer. The cost-share is a 75/25 split where the landowner is responsible for 25% of the total cost of the project, which is not to exceed \$5,737.10. Lorah Super moved to approve the Webster cost-share agreement and authorize Ivan Oberg to sign the contract. Jerry Asmussen seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

WRIA 49 Contract Extension – Craig informed the Board that the WRIA 49 Planning Unit is continuing to meet to discuss their role in implementing the plan addendum. Okanogan County has asked Craig to continue in his role as facilitator of their efforts through June 30, 2021. Jerry Asmussen moved to authorize Ivan Oberg to sign the WRIA 49 contract extension. Albert Roberts seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

NRCS Report

Sarah Troutman reported that NRCS finally got their budget on Friday; the state office started looking at it yesterday and it is not what was hoped for. She added that after she and several counterparts spent quite a lot of time reviewing applications for direct hire positions in Okanogan and Waterville those positions were put on hold due to budget constraints. Sarah went on to say that with folks in the office moving up and/or out they are quite shorthanded now.

Otherwise, NRCS has been busy working on EQIP and writing conservation plans. The initial deadline was last Friday to get conservation plans signed so they could move forward with contracting in April. However, there was a software glitch that occurred on a national level last

week so now NRCS will not even be able to rate the applications until April. Sarah went on to report that the Okanogan NRCS team has written 89 conservation plans and that statewide there was around \$49 million in EQIP applications. Sarah stated this was exceptional because they typically fund around \$14 million in applications so how that number was nearly quadrupled is a little bit of a mystery. However, the Okanogan team alone produced over \$11 million in plans, much of which she stated was due to fire recovery as well as expiring CRP contracts. Sarah added that she would like to expediate fire recovery efforts and does not want to wait 3 months to get folks help so hopefully there will be more helpful information available next month. Sarah also informed that NRCS announced their conservation stewardship program for this month.

On the FSA side of things, Sarah said she is still expecting ERP status reviews using Randy to the extent that he is available as well as the help of the District. She added that Okanogan CD was a huge help during fencing certification, checking fences, and polling the data for that so there is potential for a task order there.

Finally, there was some relatively late breaking guidance regarding the status of operations for the building. Sarah reported that Okanogan and Waterville had been allowing customers into the building by appointment only because they were in stage 3 and things had been going well. However, the new Biden Administration guidelines dictate that the building be at no more than 25% capacity, which necessitates sending folks home and requiring telework again and no longer allowing customers into the building.

Partner Reports

Rachel reported that Congressman Newhouse's office was successful in solidifying a piece of legislation that preserves businesses and homeowners' landlines after natural disasters, preventing those numbers from being sold to someone else for up to two years after the disasters. The goal of this is to allow time for businesses and homeowners affected by the natural disaster to rebuild and maintain their original phone number. Otherwise, she added that she is the case worker for natural resource and agricultural issues for Congressman Newhouse's office, so she is available to help mitigate those types of issues as needed.

Ryan Baye thanked the District for their work and extended his appreciation to Craig for volunteering to serve on one of the WACD committees. Ryan went on to say that a focus for himself, Tom, and the WACD board is what would be the NACD fly-in to Washington DC where conservation agencies would have the opportunity to work with folks on the federal level, but that this year that event will happen virtually towards the end of March. Ryan stated that Craig had covered state legislative issues that are of specific interest to the Okanogan area very well and that hopefully appropriations are made in the capital budget to fund the water bank program. WACD is keeping a close eye on a bill to modernize irrigation district elections; they are tracking what is going on there because it is a good process for the Association and districts to observe from a far in case the decision is made to pursue similar legislation in the next two years.

Public Comment:

There was no public comment.

Old Business:

District Operations Manual – Craig reported that he added a paragraph in the history of the district regarding the history of the Colville Confederated Tribes CD, highlighting some of the differences between their governing ordinances and that of the state conservation districts. Lorah Super moved to approve the District Operations Manual. Jerry Asmussen seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

New Business:

Computer Purchases – Replacing Existing Computers – Craig explained that most of the staff computers are approximately 5-6 years old and have begun showing significant signs of aging with increased errors, slow response times, and even having lost data in one case. Craig explained that Hannah's computer got the blue screen of death, Mindy's computer is not functioning properly and as the IT contact at the District she needs a properly functioning computer, and finally Kim's computer ticks loudly. Craig would like to purchase three laptops powerful enough to run GIS, replacing Hannah, Kim, and Mindy's computers. Becky added that the District had budgeted for an accountability and financial audit this year, but she received notice that it will only be the accountability audit, which is nearly half the cost of what had been budgeted so the computers will be paid for out of those savings. Jerry Asmussen moved to authorize Craig Nelson to purchase computers up to an amount of \$7,500.00. Steve Colvin seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Ivan Oberg adjourned the meeting at 7:03 PM.

Summary of Motions

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

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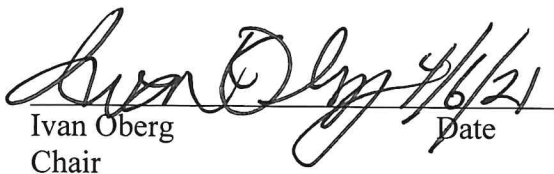
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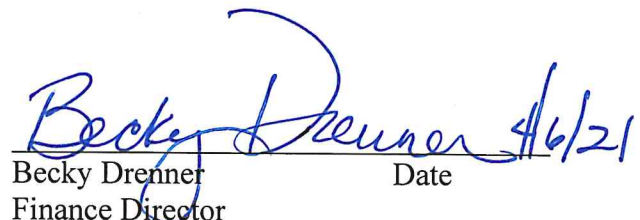
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Ivan Oberg
Chair


Becky Drenner
Finance Director