



Okanogan Conservation District

1251 S. Second Ave, Room 102

Okanogan, WA 98840

TO: The Record
SUBJECT: June 8, 2021 Board of Supervisors Meeting
LOCATION: Teleconference – (509) 422-0855, ext. 7
FROM: Jess McDaniel, Administrative Assistant

PRESENT:

Ivan Oberg, District Chair – Present	Jess McDaniel, Administrative Assistant – Phone
Jerry Asmussen, Vice Chair – Present	Kirsten Cook, Outreach and Education Director – Phone
Albert Roberts, District Auditor – Present	Mindy Untalan, Conservation Planner – Phone
Lorah Super, Member – Phone	Hannah Coe, Conservation Planner – Present
Steve Colvin, Member – Phone	Rachel McClure, Congressman Newhouse’s Office – Phone
Gerri Oberg, Member – Present	Jerry DeBacker, Okanogan Land Trust – Phone
Bob Clark, Associate Supervisor – Phone	Kate Miller, Okanogan Land Trust – Phone
Craig Nelson, Executive Director – Present	

Meeting Call to Order: Ivan Oberg called the meeting to order at 6:01 PM. Ivan completed a roll call of Supervisors, Associate Supervisors, staff, partners, and the public.

Treasurer’s Report #817, which covers the checking account activity from May 5, 2021, to June 8, 2021, inclusive was presented for the Board’s approval. The following checks/payroll direct withdrawals/electronic payments were approved for payment:

Checks – numbers 11761 – 11769 totaling \$16,707.40.

Two payroll direct withdrawals – numbers ACH4007 – ACH4026 totaling \$27,770.63.

Electronic payments – numbers EFT2866 – EFT2879 totaling \$36,620.83.

Deposits totaling \$146,729.71 were made.

Albert Roberts moved to approve Treasurer’s Report #817. Jerry Asmussen seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes: Jerry Asmussen moved to approve the May 4, 2021 board meeting minutes as presented. Albert Roberts seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Supervisor Reports:

Jerry Asmussen – Jerry reported there was frost on May 13 and then Sunday night there was snow. He commented that people who grow hay at those higher elevations are noticing cold damage with grass getting taller and starting to head out. He added that the water ponds are noticeably down and that he has moved the cows to higher pastures. He is also planning for the wolf grant program to have a meeting, for which he will be calling in.

Albert Roberts – Albert commented on the strange weather, going from 100° to snow, which was quite unexpected. He added that he had gotten about a quarter inch of snow at home but nothing on the fields. He reported being in the middle of hay season – cutting one field, raking and baling the others. His cows are out and happy. Other than that, he stated it looks dry but there is good moisture in the ground and water running down the hill into the troughs.

Ivan Oberg – Ivan reported they had a low of 31° yesterday. He confirmed that the Timothy and other grasses are already heading out, which is early.

Steve Colvin – Steve reported having received about half an inch of rain. He added that everything else is doing well and with the new season coming up things are looking very much like Spring.

Lorah Super – Lorah reported that she has been preoccupied with moving off the ranch and preparing for summer, so the place does not burn down while she is gone. Other than her usual efforts she added that the water banking and forest restoration strategy, which are on the agenda, are of particular interest to her.

Associate Supervisor Reports:

Bob Clark – Bob did not have anything new to report.

Staff Report:

Craig reported that Amy, Kirsten, Hannah, Kim, and Ricardo joined him in interviewing three candidates for the Range Planner Lead position on Friday June 4. All three applicants had good interviews and staff believe each of them would make a good employee for the position. However, staff have narrowed it down to two candidates who Craig is in the process of conducting reference checks for. When those are complete, he and Amy will confer and make a final selection. He hopes to have that done before the end of this week.

Craig mentioned that while the board has granted him authorization to acquire two vehicles at previous meetings, he would like to explore the option of purchasing new vehicles with a loan versus purchasing used vehicles. He is not looking for a decision tonight but rather to gauge if there is strong opposition to the idea. He stated that he intends to contact lending institutions (starting with the District's bank) to see what kind of loan pricing is available. He also intends to get some vehicle purchase quotes to replace the Prius and Compass as they are having more significant mechanical issues. He noted that he would like to set up a depreciation schedule whereby the District replaces vehicles after a set number of years and/or miles so funding is used to keep reliable vehicles at the ready as opposed to spending funds paying maintenance costs. Albert asked about whether the District would qualify for state vehicle loans and Craig informed that with the governor had made a decree that no new vehicle loans would be allowed for agencies that were not directly under the purveyance of the state. Several of the Board members expressed a desire to acquire an electric or at least a hybrid vehicle and Craig stated that, with the Prius being the biggest priority to replace, he is definitely considering those options. He added that the Compass would be replaced with midsize SUV such as a Subaru Forester, Toyota Rav4, or a Honda CR-V, which are all in the \$20,000-\$30,000 range.

Hannah reported that the Conservation Partners Program final application was submitted at the end of May. This is a proposal for use drone surveys to collect high resolution, geo-referenced thermal imagery of irrigated fields. This will allow us to pinpoint leaks, clogged nozzles, pooling, among other things in order to provide technical assistance and plan on-farm improvements for irrigators. There are a couple of potential local options for drone pilots. Hannah added that the District's Ecology program manager, Heather, came out last week for site tours and that she and Amy took her around to some old sites, the planned timber barrier sites, and a new site, which will likely be included in this Fall's Ecology application. Heather seemed generally happy with the work on the ground. Hannah went on to say that she went out with the WSDA surface water monitoring folks this Spring to sample for pesticides. She mentioned to them that the District was a bit equipment-limited with regards to data collection equipment and that recent water quality information would be beneficial to inform grant applications. They contacted Hannah recently and asked if the District wanted to a new water quality probe on "permanent loan." Hannah concluded by saying that she would likely have an MOU for the loaning of the probe for signature at the next board meeting.

Review, Approve and Sign Contracts and Conservation Plans

Loup Loup Creek Designs – Hannah explained that in January the District contracted with Windward Environmental for the development of restoration designs at the Lassila property on Loup Loup Creek. She went on to say that most funds for the project are from CCT via the Bonneville Power Administration, which requires salmon habitat designs to be compliant with the Habitat Improvement Program Biological Opinion (HIP4). The District originally anticipated completed designs by the end of the fiscal year. However, due to noncompliant design aspects at the 30% stage, the timeline will need to be adjusted to allow Windward to incorporate necessary changes to ensure compliance with the HIP4 manual. Compliance with the HIP4 manual will provide us certain permits covered under BPA's programmatic approvals, saving us time and money when progressing into the implementation stage. Therefore, staff is requesting an extension of the Windward contract through September 30, 2021. Albert Roberts moved to authorize Craig Nelson to sign the extension contract with Windward Environmental through September 30, 2021. Jerry Asmussen seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Hannah went on to explain that during consultation selection, CCT pledged additional funds for the development of restoration designs for the Loup Loup Creek project. This additional \$13,200.00 is sourced from a BIA grant awarded to CCT Fish and Wildlife during the summer of 2020. The funds are now available with a contract ready for signature. Jerry Asmussen moved to approve the contract with CCT for the \$13,200.00 of BIA funds available and authorize Craig Nelson to sign it. Steve Colvin seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Finally, Hannah added that to accommodate the additional time and effort from Windward to achieve the HIP4 compliant designs, CCT has allocated up to \$25,000.00 of additional BPA funds to dedicate to the project if necessary. Lorah Super moved to authorize Ivan Oberg or Craig Nelson to sign a contract with CCT for an additional \$25,000.00 of BPA funds if necessary. Albert Roberts seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Cook Cost Share Landowner Agreement – Hannah explained this project is funded by the Department of Ecology as part of the timber barriers grant. The project site is in an unnamed wetland fed by a perennial seep, which supports approximately 0.4 acres of wetland vegetation. The planned project work includes installation of a “jackstraw” timber barrier to exclude range cattle from the area. As a result of the Cold Springs fire there are recently dead trees near the project area that will be strategically felled to act as the initial latticework structure for the timber barrier. Supplemental material from the property will be utilized to roughen and build up the timber barrier structures. Supplemental planting will install a mix of native trees and shrubs. Although this area burned last fall, a month after the fire there was already evidence of grass and woody vegetation sprouting; cattle exclusion from this area will promote revegetation with naturally occurring plants and help to prevent hillside erosion into the wetland area. The total project cost is \$2,075.00. The landowner contribution is 25% or \$477.25 leaving 75% or \$1,431.75 to be funded by the Department of Ecology timber barriers grant. Lorah Super moved to approve the Cook cost share contract and authorized Ivan Oberg or Craig Nelson to sign the landowner agreement. Albert Roberts seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Greene Cost Share Landowner Agreement – Hannah presented another project funded by the Department of Ecology through the timber barriers grant. This project will protect and restore approximately 1.7 acres of riparian rea along 660 feet along Pine Creek, an ephemeral stream. The planned project work includes installation of a “jackstraw” timber barrier to exclude cattle. Timber material sourced on site will be utilized to install the timber barrier. Supplemental planting will provide a mix of native trees and shrubs. In addition to the riparian plantings as part of the project work, cattle exclusion from this area will promote revegetation of naturally occurring plants. Hannah went on to say that in addition to the timber barrier, this project includes installation of an off-creek watering source. A solar pump will be used to connect the on-site well to a water tank up the hill. The storage tank will then gravity feed the water trough, which will be located outside the timber barrier. However, due to increases in raw material costs and the addition of the water tank, which was not included in the original project plans when developing the grant application, the current landowner agreement does not include the full 75% contribution from the Department of Ecology timber barriers grant funding. The total project cost is \$28,153.76. Staff is proposing a landowner contribution of 49% or \$13,795.34 with the remaining 51% or \$14,358.42 be funded by the Department of Ecology grant. Additionally, staff is hoping to utilize new NRI grant funds from the Commission to cover the increased cost of materials. Staff is in the process of finalizing bids and plans for aspects of project with the landowner and will then obtain signatures on the cost share agreement. One of the Board members asked about the placement of the trough and suggested moving the trough out into the grass. Albert suggested adding an overflow tank by the water trough because there will likely be overflow and the cattle might as well be able to use it. The concern is that a mudhole could occur if there is too much uncontained overflow. Jerry asked about the placement of the solar panel and the extensive wiring associated with it. Craig added that he has not been on site but thought that part of the concern was making sure that it has good view of the sun. He added that there was some concern about people driving by on the county road and possibly taking shots at the panel, so the idea was to hide it a bit behind the hill. Jerry commented that he has one 12 feet from the road, and it has been fine. Jerry expressed concerns that with that much wiring the costs will be higher. Lorah replied that solar technology has come a long way where inverting happens at the panels, so you are running much cheaper wires from the panel and not losing as

much power. However, Jerry doubts this panel has an inverter on it and it is likely a DC pump. Lorah asked about revising project design while in progress. Jerry Asmussen moved to approve the Greene cost share contract with the stipulation that there are no substantial changes to the draft agreement and authorize Craig Nelson to sign the landowner cost share agreement following landowner signature. Albert Roberts seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

NRCS Report

Sarah Troutman was not present but sent along a quick report stating that it has been crazy busy for all at NRCS. She announced the Okanogan office hired a forester, Jeff. He started Monday and they have been working on CSP assessment and EQIP contracting. A new resource conservationist for Okanogan was announced and there is a panel review for a new range conservationist. Craig added that Sarah would be here, but she is in a local work group meeting deciding how to distribute over \$170,000.00.

Partner Reports

Jerry DeBacker reported that the Okanogan Land Trust received RCO and NRCS funding with 4 RCO projects slated. The NRCS pool of projects look like they will be funded, based on the way it was stated, that the projects have been reviewed, considered, and believed that all applications in the state were successful in meeting the requirements and were eligible to be funded. He added that 3 of the 4 Farmland Preservation projects got funded as well as 2 Ecology projects that the District is involved with.

Public Comment:

Rachel added the Congressman was in the county on late last month and that she had the privilege of chauffeuring him around. While do so, she talked with him about the projects going on at the District. She added that if there is anything of concern she can be contacted and will run it up the pole.

Old Business:

There was no old business.

New Business:

Conservation Easement 3rd Party Standing – Craig stated that the Okanogan Land Trust is working with the Department of Ecology to fund a conservation easement here in Okanogan County. Standard process included identifying a second and third party to take over the management of the easement should OLT become unable to oversee the easement. OLT is hoping to have the funding agency be the 3rd Party in Standing. However, OLT is asking if the District would be able to hold that position if the funding agency is unwilling to do so.

Jerry DeBacker added that if you look at the graphic of the easement, the 3rd Party will usually have some degree of involvement. As a 3rd Party Standing, the District would be consulted regarding any major changes or amendments. It was determined it would be a good decision to have OCD serve as a 3rd Party because it is legally able to hold and monitor conservation easements. But normally, he would argue if an agency had the rights associated with the easement, why would that agency switch it off to some other entity that has no stake in the

project. Jerry DeBacker is advocating that Ecology should be the 3rd Party Standing. Jerry Asmussen asked if this language is that of the RCO or Ecology to which Jerry DeBacker responded by saying it is from the RCO's Manual Three. Albert asked if the District held the easement whether it would be responsible for monitoring and Jerry DeBacker confirmed that OCD would have the obligation of annual monitoring. Jerry DeBacker said there is a stewardship fund that is held by OLT, which holds funds for future monitoring of easements as well as a legal defense fund. Albert asked if the District became the holder, could the 1st or 2nd Parties retake responsibility. The language in the documents spells out that if both of those entities disappear, the Attorney General's office will designate the easement holder to a natural resource or wildlife agency, either to a state or federal agency. The 3rd Party role is more of an oversight position unless everyone else where to fail. Craig asked what the timeline for all of this is, to which Jerry DeBacker stated that there is some confusing finalizing the language of the contract so the project cannot proceed until the contract is finalized and who is determined to be the 3rd Party Standing. So, things will likely not proceed quickly, as in not in the next 60 days.

Forest Restoration Strategy Refresh Funding – Craig informed that the North Central Washington Forest Health Collaborative is working with the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest to update the Forest Restoration Strategy. They have developed a proposal to utilize partner agency's technical staff along with USDA Forest Service employees to update the near decade old strategy. There is some cost associated with the update as the Forest Service will need to hire a couple of paid consultants. The estimated total cost is approximately \$12,000-\$15,000. The Forest Service has commitment of approximately half of those funds. Lorah brought it to Craig's attention and so staff is proposing we could contribute up to \$500 from Rates and Charges. Lorah added that, at the steering committee meeting, Chelan County committed \$2,000.00, though there has not been any word from Okanogan County, but because it is a collaborative, members are throwing into the proposal, so this was not the Forest Service's idea. Lorah informed that not too many years after putting the Strategy was put into place the folks who launched it all retired around the same time and there have been at least two supervisors change hands since then. The Collaborative has noticed that with recent forest management decisions, there has been a lot of drifting from the original strategy. Cascadia CD is also going to be taking this up with their board. Jerry asked whether support from the Forest was waning a bit and hindering the projects. Lorah responded by stating that the first thing the Forest drifted away from was the prioritization process by which they commit funding. Jerry Asmussen moved to authorize Craig Nelson to enter into an agreement with the appropriate party to provide \$500.00 from the Rates and Charges fund and to then authorize the release of said funds according to the terms of the agreement. Albert Roberts seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Conservation Commission Master Contract – Craig informed that the Washington State Conservation Commission requires a new master contract each biennium. The master contract establishes the rules and requirements for most elements of grant funding from the Commission and allows them to submit individual grant addendums to districts for specific fund sources without having to repeat much of the same grant rules and boilerplate policies. To Craig's knowledge there are no major changes to the current contract from the previous contract. Steve Colvin moved to approve the WSCC Master Contract and authorize the Chair and Vice-Chair to sign the contract. Jerry Asmussen seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Conservation Commission Authorization to Submit Grant Addendums – Craig informed that the Conservation Commission requires grant addendums be submitted for the multiple funding sources the District receives including Basic Allocation, Irrigation Efficiencies, and Implementation. Staff are proposing to use the grant funds in the same manner as previous biennia grants and must have board authority to submit the addenda. Jerry Asmussen moved to authorize the Craig Nelson to submit the Conservation Commission grant addendums as needed. Lorah Super seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Resolution 2021-02 Cost Share and Cooperator Labor Rates for WSCC Projects – Craig stated that the Conservation Commission requires the Board approve, by resolution once per biennium, the cost share and cooperator labor rates that the District will use for grant projects. This resolution is slightly modified from previous year's resolutions in that a stipulation was added that the Board may authorize up to 100% cost share rate, though it can be less, for projects that are a direct result of a natural disaster. Craig added that the Board may want to consider adding language for increased cost share rates for new and beginning farmers or landowners with special circumstances. Albert Roberts moved to approve Resolution 2021-02 Cost Share and Cooperator Labor Rate for WSCC Projects and authorize Ivan Oberg to sign it. Steve Colvin seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Resolution 2021-03 Conservation District Supervisor Mileage Reimbursement Policy – Craig informed that the Washington State Conservation Commission requires monthly billing for all grant expenses. Staff have been charging a portion of Supervisor's mileage on a quarterly basis to Commission grants since this policy was enacted nearly 15 years ago. The Commission informed the District that it is no longer allowed to bill them for these expenses on a quarterly basis. The resolution presented currently updates the language of the existing policy to allow for monthly billing as well as clarifying some minor reimbursement points. Jerry Asmussen moved to approve Resolution 2021-03 Conservation District Supervisor Mileage Reimbursement Policy and authorize Ivan Oberg to sign it. Steve Colvin seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Employee Assistance Contract Renewal – Craig reminded the Board that the Okanogan CD began participating in the Employee Assistance Program last summer and that this program offers employees assistance ranging from stress management to crisis counseling. The program also offers periodic information and life skill suggestions through electronic bulletins. The program has been utilized by employees, but that information is confidential. The cost of the program is \$1,080.00 for the two-year biennium. Jerry Asmussen moved to authorize Craig Nelson to re-enroll the District in the Employee Assistance Program. Steve Colvin seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Okanogan Ag Water Bank – Craig informed that he and Lorah Super have worked with partners and legislators to secure funding for the creation of an ag water bank for Okanogan County. The funding was appropriated to the Conservation Commission for the coming state biennium. Staff are requesting input from the Board regarding how to proceed as well as water bank priorities. Craig suggested the creation of a committee consisting of Board members and District staff should be convened to continue the development of the project, reiterating that time

is of the essence because there are a lot of agencies looking at creating water banks, but there is money and interest for the District to hold and operate a water bank. Craig added that he had received a call from an attorney representing a fairly senior water rights holder who wants to sell their water rights but want to both keep it in the county and available for agricultural use. Lorah added that the Methow Watershed Council is meeting June 17th and suggested that whoever agrees to be on the committee attend because it would be a sort of “water banking 101.” Jerry Asmussen moved to create an Okanogan Ag Water Bank Development Committee, appointing Lorah Super and Albert Roberts along with Craig Nelson to the committee as well as authorizing the committee to make necessary decisions on the development of the project with the requirement that the committee report to the Board on its progress at each Board Meeting. Steve Colvin seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Staffing Structure Changes – Craig informed that with Kirsten Cook’s resignation the District is left with the challenge of replacing her talent and knowledge. Kirsten has recommended that the District hire a marketing specialist. Other staff agree that having someone who specializes in targeted outreach activities and possesses the knowledge and skills to effectively advertise District programs and present information on natural resource conservation is a priority. Staff continues to have discussion about how to reorganize our structure to best meet this need. Craig stated that in the meantime there is a need to determine who will supervise the new hire as well as the Education Specialist. Craig stated he is leaning towards leaving Kirsten’s position empty for now and work with the personnel committee to look at funding and then develop a position. Steve asked why hire a marketing specialist. Craig stated that the District has grants that require staff to do certain types of outreach, including online, newspapers, direct mailers, and other printed outreach. He added that someone with that type of knowledge and skill could help the District better advertise and share it’s story. Lorah added that the personnel committee should consider where the District is now and develop a position from there. Lorah Super moved to authorize Craig Nelson to temporarily supervise Kim Kogler, the District’s Education Specialist and authorize Craig to organize the personnel committee meeting to discuss further steps for a new hire. Albert Roberts seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Staff Wage Adjustments – Craig stated that last December, when evaluations were completed, most employees were not given cost of living or merit pay increases. It was discussed with the board at that time that if funding in the legislature and grants staff had applied for looked positive the subject would be revisited mid-year. The state budget fared far better than anticipated and the District has, or will, receive several of the grants that were applied for. Steve Colvin moved to provide all employees with a cost-of-living wage adjustment as well as provide a one-step increase for Jess McDaniel and Mindy Untalan effective June 1, 2021. Albert Roberts seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Ivan Oberg adjourned the meeting at 7:48 PM.

Summary of Motions

Albert Roberts moved to approve Treasurer's Report #817. Jerry Asmussen seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Jerry Asmussen moved to approve the May 4, 2021, board meeting minutes as presented. Albert Roberts seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Albert Roberts moved to authorize Craig Nelson to sign the extension contract with Windward Environmental through September 30, 2021. Jerry Asmussen seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Jerry Asmussen moved to approve the contract with CCT for the \$13,200.00 of BIA funds available and authorize Craig Nelson to sign it. Steve Colvin seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Lorah Super moved to authorize Ivan Oberg or Craig Nelson to sign a contract with CCT for an additional \$25,000.00 of BPA funds if necessary. Albert Roberts seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Lorah Super moved to approve the Cook cost share contract and authorized Ivan Oberg or Craig Nelson to sign the landowner agreement. Albert Roberts seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Jerry Asmussen moved to approve the Greene cost share contract with the stipulation that there are no substantial changes to the draft agreement and authorize Craig Nelson to sign the landowner cost share agreement following landowner signature. Albert Roberts seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Jerry Asmussen moved to authorize Craig Nelson to enter into an agreement with the appropriate party to provide \$500.00 from the Rates and Charges fund and to then authorize the release of said funds according to the terms of the agreement. Albert Roberts seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Steve Colvin moved to approve the WSCC Master Contract and authorize the Chair and Vice-Chair to sign the contract. Jerry Asmussen seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Jerry Asmussen moved to authorize the Craig Nelson to submit the Conservation Commission grant addendums as needed. Lorah Super seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Albert Roberts moved to approve Resolution 2021-02 Cost Share and Cooperator Labor Rate for WSCC Projects and authorize Ivan Oberg to sign it. Steve Colvin seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

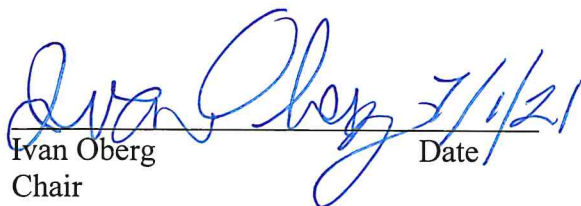
Jerry Asmussen moved to approve Resolution 2021-03 Conservation District Supervisor Mileage Reimbursement Policy and authorize Ivan Oberg to sign it. Steve Colvin seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Jerry Asmussen moved to authorize Craig Nelson to re-enroll the District in the Employee Assistance Program. Steve Colvin seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

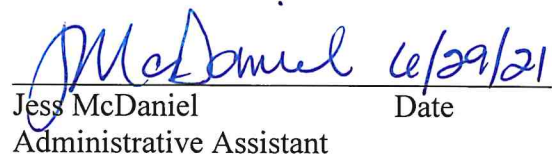
Jerry Asmussen moved to create an Okanogan Ag Water Bank Development Committee, appointing Lorah Super and Albert Roberts along with Craig Nelson to the committee as well as authorizing the committee to make necessary decisions on the development of the project with the requirement that the committee report to the Board on its progress at each Board Meeting. Steve Colvin seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Lorah Super moved to authorize Craig Nelson to temporarily supervise Kim Kogler, the District's Education Specialist and authorize Craig to organize the personnel committee meeting to discuss further steps for a new hire. Albert Roberts seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Steve Colvin moved to provide all employees with a cost-of-living wage adjustment as well as provide a one-step increase for Jess McDaniel and Mindy Untalan effective June 1, 2021. Albert Roberts seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.


Ivan Oberg
Chair

Date


Jess McDaniel
Administrative Assistant

Date