

WHATCOM CONSERVATION DISTRICT
Public Meeting Minutes
January 12, 2017

I. Time and Place of Meeting.

A regular meeting of the Board of Supervisors of the Whatcom Conservation District (WCD) was held at the Ag Service Center, 6975 Hannegan Rd, Lynden, Washington on January 12, 2017, at 6:30 p.m.

II. Attendance and Quorum.

The following Supervisors, being a quorum of the Board, were present:

Larry Helm, Chair
Dan Heeringa, Treasurer
Theresa Sygitowicz

Larry Davis, Vice-Chair
Joe Heller

Also in attendance were:

George Boggs, Executive Director
Dawn Bekenyi, Admin. Assistant
Alex Hall, NRCS staff
Shana Joy, WS Conservation Commission
Rich Appel, Appel Bros Dairy
Ann Appel, Appel Bros Dairy
Dale Blok, Blok's Evergreen Dairy
Zach Blok, Blok's Evergreen Dairy
Roger Blok, RJ Blok & Sons Dairy
Larry Stap
Heather Christianson
Karen Brown

Jeff Snyder, Snyder Farms
Suzzi Snyder, Snyder Farms
Nick Snyder, Snyder Farms
Cal Bratt, Lynden Tribune
Max Perry
Landon Van Dyk, Van Dyk-S Holsteins
Brant Van Dyk, Van Dyk-S Holsteins
Brian Thompson
Melodie Kirk
Gabe Epperson, Whatcom Land Trust
Rich Bowers, Whatcom Land Trust

III. Meeting Called to Order.

Larry Helm, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. The Chair revised the agenda to include the Lummi Nation Shellfish Cost-share application and move the Whatcom Land Trust's presentation to later in the meeting.

IV. Public Comment (written or in person).

George explained that the Conservation District received a cost share request from the Lummi Nation to complete shellfish harvest area restoration work in Lummi Bay. Phase 1 entailed purchasing a barge to float gravel to the site, permitting, labor and gravel substrate to enhance about 3 acres. Phase 2 of the project would entail enhancing another 25 acres with gravel. The project was broken up into two phases in order to complete work by the end of this fiscal year (June 30th). District staff previously asked Commission staff to determine that the activities and the Lummi Nation were eligible to receive funding from the Shellfish Restoration Fund. This was affirmed. With the Board's approval, the Phase 1 of the project would go to the Commission for ranking among other shellfish restoration activities submitted by other districts. Phase 1 was for the amount of \$150,000. The Lummi Nation would provide the spawn to the restored area.

Those in support made the following points:

- It would achieve the goal of restoring shellfish harvest areas;
- It would support dairy farmers at a ground level in their efforts to build a productive relationship with the tribe.

- Enhancing shellfish harvest areas was farming. The tribe is no different from other farmers being able to access the funds made available by the legislature to recover shellfish harvest areas.

The person in opposition to approving the project, mentioning that

- these funds are tax dollars and that the tribes do not pay taxes'
- The agreement between the farmers and the Lummi Nation is a private agreement and should not be supported indirectly by the taxpayer dollars;
- In order to receive these funds the Lummi should be more willing to work with small well owners on the water quantity issue

In addition to those that spoke at the meeting, the Conservation District received eight phone calls and eighteen emails in support of dairy farmers and approving the proposal.

The board thanked those present for their input. Each Board member explained their view of the proposal and their vote. The Board made a unanimous decision to support the cost-share application.

Larry Helm moved to approve the Shellfish Cost-share application from the Lummi Nation and submit to the Washington State Conservation Commission for funding consideration. Theresa Sygitowicz seconded the motion. The motion passed.

V. Consent Agenda.

The Board adopted a consent agenda for approval of accounts payable. The Board further authorizes the payment of District expenses incurred subject to their review and approval at the next Board meeting.

Larry Davis moved to approve the consent agenda: authorize payment of District invoices and incurred expenses (below), as listed in the Accounts Payable Report. The Board further authorizes the payment of District expenses incurred subject to their review and approval at the next Board meeting. Dan Heeringa seconded the motion. The motion passed.

The following voucher/warrants are approved for payment:

Dec 2016 - balance					
Voucher (check) numbers	24370	through	24376	and totaling	51,974.58
Payroll check numbers:	24377	through	24401	and totaling	40,858.26
January 2017					
Voucher (check) numbers	24402	through	24422	and totaling	36,714.34
Payroll check numbers:	24423	through	24440	and totaling	38,947.14

VI. Presentations.

Whatcom Land Trust –

Rich Bowers and Gabe Epperson, Whatcom Land Trust, gave a presentation on the Land Trust's programs. Gabe was recently hired as Executive Director. The Land Trust is moving toward more land planning. They are current seeking input on their long-range work plan and asked for the Board's comments. Board members shared what they heard from community members. These included taking property off property tax roll, weeds in fallow lands, taking land out of farming and forestry production. Rich Bowers stated that the Trust has returned more acres to farm production than it has removed from farm production. Joe Heller suggested that the Land Trust give the Board a tour of their projects in the next three months or so. Brian Thomson, an observer, recently a Whatcom Land Trust tour and commended the idea to the Board.

VII. Action Items.

A. Approval of Conservation Plans.

Dairy Nutrient Management Plan (DNMP) Approval –

Staff recommended approval as the plan contains the necessary elements prescribed by the Conservation Commission and the operator signed the plan indicating that it accurately reflects his operation and agrees to its implementation.

Dan Heeringa moved to approve the Dairy Nutrient Management Plan for Windy Willow Farm (Bill and Jackie DeGroot). Larry Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) Contracts –

CREP is a joint federal and state program to enhance fish habitat and protect water quality. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) is the administrative lead. A District resource specialist (Wayne Chaudiere, Frank Corey or Emily Hirsch) works with a landowner to develop a conservation plan that includes practices meeting the landowner's needs. It is reviewed for technical sufficiency by the Natural Resources Conservation Service representative (Alex Hall) and George Boggs. The landowner signs the plan and it is passed on to FSA. The FSA County Oversight Committee (COC) approves all CREP plans. The current District policy is that once FSA approves the Federal Contract and CREP plan, then the CREP maintenance contract is brought to the Board for its approval. Absent unusual circumstances, the Board approves the standard-language maintenance agreement prescribed by the State Conservation Commission.

There were two CREP maintenance contracts submitted for Board approval.

Theresa Sygitowicz moved to ratify the CREP maintenance contracts provided by Emily Hirsch for: Eric and Pamela Davis; and Chris and Neil McLeod. Larry Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

B. Long Range Program.

The final draft copy of the Long Range Program was approved. The Board asked that it be posted on the District's website.

Larry Davis moved to approve the Long Range Program document. Larry Helm seconded the motion. The motion passed.

George reported that the Team Coordinators will beginning draft the Annual Work Plan, based upon the Long Range Program, for Board review at the March Board meeting.

C. Staff Compensation Adjustment.

George provided a memo to the Board regarding appropriate pay for the mid-manager and GIS/IT positions. The District is compensating experienced personnel in those positions significantly below what other agencies (NRCS, Whatcom County and Puget Sound CDs) pay. The Board approved the Executive Director's recommendation to adjust compensation for Andrew Phay and Frank Corey based upon comparable positions at other agencies.

Larry Helm move to approve the compensation adjustment for Andrew Phay effective January 1, 2017. Larry Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Joe Heller moved to approve the compensation adjustment for Frank Corey effective January 1, 2017. Theresa Sygitowicz seconded the motion. The motion passed.

D. Department of Ecology Memorandum of Agreement (MOA).

The Conservation District seeks to avoid being drawn into situations where Ecology does not have clear authority under the Water Pollution Control Act RCW 90.48 to require a landowner/operator to fix a problem. This should reserve our limited staff time to addressing problem(s) one-on-one. We utilize events to raise the general level of stewardship. The landowner/operator will be asked to enter into a cooperative agreement. This identifies our respective responsibilities including a commitment to identify and address all the problems on the farm or ranch. This comprehensive plan is confidential and will not be released to Ecology. It will be organized in a manner that permits the landowner/operator to share with Ecology the solutions to the problems for which that they referred to the District as needing to be addressed.

E. Washington Woodland Cooperative.

The Board reviewed and approved sending a letter of support for Washington Woodland Cooperative's Wood Innovations Program grant application.

Joe Heller moved to approve the letter of support for the Washington Woodland Cooperative's Wood Innovations Program grant application. Larry Helm seconded the motion. The motion passed.

F. Whatcom Conservation District Board Representatives on Committees.

Public Utility District #1 (PUD) –

PUD #1 asked for a WCD Board representative on their Drought Contingency Task Force. The Board selected Larry Helm as their representative, with George Boggs providing technical assistance.

Theresa Sygitowicz moved to appoint Larry Helm as the Whatcom Conservation District representative on the PUD #1's Drought Contingency Task Force. Joe Heller seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Whatcom County Ag Advisory Whatcom Conservation District Representative –

The Conservation District has a designated position on the County Ag Advisory Committee. Dick Yoder was the District's representative. Larry Davis and Theresa Sygitowicz both expressed an interest to serve on the committee. To reach an objective decision, it was decided to create a policy that when two board members express interest in a single appointment, the Board will give weight to the board member with the most seniority in addition to factors like, performance, available time and track record in completing commitments.

Larry Helm moved that for future appointments the Board member with seniority have the weighted position for an appointment. Joe Heller seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Joe Heller moved to appoint Larry Davis as the Whatcom Conservation District designated Ag Advisory Committee representative and write a letter of support for Theresa Sygitowicz to be a Citizen's Representative. Dan Heeringa seconded the motion. The motion passed.

VIII. Other Business.

A. Alex Hall, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) –

There were 30 applications in the Local Work Group EQIP funding. NRCS staff will start to rank the projects. Alex explained the various funding pools. There are two more funding rounds. Alex explained that NRCS is becoming stricter in having all of the applicant's information into the system when they sign up or they will not be considered eligible for that funding cycle.

Alex reported on the National Watershed Initiative and Technical Service Provider programs.

Theresa suggested that the Conservation District should have a Firewise booth at the Deming Log Show this year.

B. Supervisor Reports.

Larry Davis –

Larry reported that he and Dick’s family have been working on a write up for Dick to be added to the Washington Conservation Society’s Leaving a Legacy book.

Larry will provide information to the Board on how to apply for the vacant Washington Association of Conservation District (WACD) Northwest area director position.

Larry Helm –

The funding for the Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) counties were included in the Governor’s budget for the upcoming biennium. It is unclear what the budget will be like.

Dan Heeringa –

Dan attended the Nutrient Management Training that the Conservation District put on. There were a lot of people in attendance. Erika Douglas, Whatcom County, discussed water quality testing.

Theresa Sygitowicz –

Theresa reported that the Cattlemen are having a fundraiser at the Log Show grounds at the end of February. Beef day on the Hill is January 23. The Washington State Cattlemen are looking for a new Executive Director.

C. George Boggs, Executive Director.

George reported that there was 30 plus people in attendance at the Berry Workshop and over 100 at the Nutrient Management Training that the Conservation District put on.

The Supervisor Candidate filing deadline is January 27, 2017 at 4:00 pm.

IX. Record of Board Actions.

17-1 Larry Helm moved to approve the Shellfish Cost-share application from the Lummi Nation and submit to the Washington State Conservation Commission for funding consideration. Theresa Sygitowicz seconded the motion. The motion passed.

17-2 Larry Davis moved to approve the consent agenda: authorize payment of District invoices and incurred expenses (below), as listed in the Accounts Payable Report. The Board further authorizes the payment of District expenses incurred subject to their review and approval at the next Board meeting. Dan Heeringa seconded the motion. The motion passed.

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- 17-3 Dan Heeringa moved to approve the Dairy Nutrient Management Plan for Windy Willow Farm (Bill and Jackie DeGroot). Larry Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed.
- 17-4 Theresa Sygitowicz moved to ratify the CREP maintenance contracts provided by Emily Hirsch for: Eric and Pamela Davis; and Chris and Neil McLeod. Larry Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
- 17-5 Larry Davis moved to approve the Long Range Program document. Larry Helm seconded the motion. The motion passed.
- 17-6 Larry Helm move to approve the compensation adjustment for Andrew Phay effective January 1, 2017. Larry Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed.
- 17-7 Joe Heller moved to approve the compensation adjustment for Frank Corey effective January 1, 2017. Theresa Sygitowicz seconded the motion. The motion passed.
- 17-8 Joe Heller moved to approve the letter of support for the Washington Woodland Cooperative's Wood Innovations Program grant application. Larry Helm seconded the motion. The motion passed.
- 17-9 Theresa Sygitowicz moved to appoint Larry Helm as the Whatcom Conservation District representative on the PUD #1's Drought Contingency Task Force. Joe Heller seconded the motion. The motion passed.
- 17-10 Larry Helm moved that for future appointments the Board member with seniority have the weighted position for an appointment. Joe Heller seconded the motion. The motion passed.
- 17-11 Joe Heller moved to appoint Larry Davis as the Whatcom Conservation District designated Ag Advisory Committee representative and write a letter of support for Theresa Sygitowicz to be a Citizen's Representative. Dan Heeringa seconded the motion. The motion passed.

X. Adjournment.

There being no further business before the meeting Larry Helm adjourned the meeting at 9:15 pm.

Dated: March 2, 2017

Dawn Bekenyi, Administrative Assistant

Approved: _____