

**WHATCOM CONSERVATION DISTRICT  
Public Meeting Minutes  
April 13, 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 April 13, 2017, at 6:30 p.m.

**II. Attendance and Quorum.**

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

Larry Helm, Chair	Larry Davis, Vice-Chair
Dan Heeringa, Treasurer	Theresa Sygitowicz

Also in attendance were:

George Boggs, Executive Director	Alex Hall, NRCS staff
Dawn Bekenyi, Admin. Assistant	Aneka Sweeney, Education Coordinator
Heather Christianson	

**III. Meeting Called to Order.**

Larry Helm, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

**IV. Public Comment (written or in person).**

There was no public comment either in writing or in person.

**V. Consent Agenda.**

The Board adopted a consent agenda for approval of the financial report and accounts payable. The financial report was mailed to the Board. Dawn Bekenyi, Administrative Assistant, presented the financial report. A copy of District invoices and incurred expenses, as listed in the Accounts Payable Report, were reviewed and approved. The Board further authorizes the payment of District expenses incurred subject to their review and approval at the next Board meeting.

**Theresa Sygitowicz moved to approve the consent agenda: the financial report and 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. Larry Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed.**

The following voucher/warrants are approved for payment:

March 2017 - balance					
Voucher (check) numbers	24620	through	24661	and totaling	45,772.29
Payroll check numbers:	24662	through	24682	and totaling	46,182.69
Voucher (check) number	24683			and totaling	693.44
April 2017					
Voucher (check) numbers	24684	through	24720	and totaling	61,194.62

Payroll check numbers: 24721 through 24741 and totaling 44,881.00

## VI. District Education & Outreach Activities Presentation.

Aneka Sweeney gave a presentation on the District's outreach activities; including the small farm expos, speaker series, plant sale and watershed explorer model demonstrations. She informed the Board that the speaker series is usually video recorded and a link for each presentation can be found on the District website.

## VII. Action Items.

### A. Partnership with Puget Sound Energy (PSE).

In 2017, PSE has collaborated with Thurston, Pierce, and King County Conservation Districts to provide outreach to small agricultural customers for energy conservation services. Through these partnerships, PSE has participated in several events during which program staff was available to provide details and sign agriculture customers up for free energy efficiency assessments. PSE's assessments include a comprehensive lighting and refrigeration audit. Our qualified service provider will provide specific recommendations on available improvements, and will highlight the upgrades that the service provider may be able to perform at no- or low-cost to the customer.

- Small agricultural customers can participate in both residential and commercial rebate programs.
- The program will focus on small and medium agricultural customers, where there is typically a mix of electric and natural gas residential and commercial measure applications.
- This will result in higher customer awareness of energy-efficiency opportunities, and lead to maximized electric and natural gas savings in this market sector.

Collaboration with WCD:

- PSE is interested in co-branding outreach materials with the WCD logo (Aneka shared some examples from other districts around the state.)
- PSE is interested in other collaborative approaches to provide outreach to customers about this service, including supporting the annual Farm Speaker Series and the Run with the Chums 5k Fun Run.

**Larry Helm moved to approve collaborating with Puget Sound Energy to provide energy efficiency opportunities to landowners, authorizing Aneka Sweeney, Education Coordinator, to co-brand materials and coordinate outreach events, including the Run with the Chums event. Larry Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed.**

### B. Alex Hall, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) –

The state agency set up a new policy: any cost-share applications for manure handling and storage will require that a producer has a comprehensive nutrient management plan (CNMP) by a third party vender. Alex reported that this will delay the cost-share process by a full year. NRCS state office sent a direct letter to all dairies in the focus watershed. The local office received eight applications for CNMPs that day. Nationally the policy is to have a CNMP in place before the first practice is installed. It is a state policy to have the CNMP prior to ranking projects. There was discussion about why this policy was put into place. It is good planning ahead of the projects. The policy is to protect landowners against plans that require them to do something without them knowing about the contracts.

Alex reported on the number of contracts that NRCS staff is working with and the type of projects. Alex reviewed the workload of the EQIP projects, Local Work Group applications and NWQI applications that need to be ranked as well. NRCS staff will be contracting into August.

There were 12 fish passage applications through the RCPP funds.

OmniProcessor –

NRCS staff received a memo from the national committee that the OmniProcessor was not approved technology for EQIP funding. There is the possibility to open it up for next fiscal year, if information to show that it is a proven technology can be provided. NRCS can cost-share on auxiliary items, not the machines.

National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI) –

NRCS approached the Whatcom Conservation District to do the Tenmile Watershed Assessment in order to add the watershed to the list for NWQI cost-share areas. It is a two part process. Doing the watershed assessment and, secondly, outreach to gather public interest. Nichole and George teleconferenced with NRCS staff regarding the project, followed by a meeting with District staff that will work on the project.

**C. Miscellaneous.**

Theresa asked for a progress report on staff evaluation from George. Evaluations are progressing.

**D. Approve WSCC Grant Addendums.**

The Whatcom Conservation District administers a number of grants for the Washington State Conservation Commission (WSCC), including funding for the activities of the Center for Technical Development (CTD) program and Washington Association of District Employees (WADE). WSCC wants to contribute an additional \$50,000 to the CTD for activities through the end of June 2017. The WSCC also wants to contribute \$20,000 for scholarships to cover registration, meals and lodging for District employees attending WADE training. (Whatcom CD has received three such scholarships).

**Larry Davis moved to approve the grant addendums for Center for Technical Development (CTD) for \$50,000 and Washington Association of District Employees (WADE) for \$20,000. Larry Helm seconded the motion. The motion passed.**

**E. Puget Sound Conservation Districts Block Grant Proposal.**

The Northwest Agriculture Business Center will soon submit an application for a Specialty Crop Block Grant. Its purpose is to further the work that our combined organizations are engaged in within King County and Puget Sound: to provide much needed support for small farmers to cooperatively grow, distribute, and sell their goods locally. It is collaborating with WSDA, King County and the Puget Sound Districts. The Conservation District has been asked to provide a letter of support. The application was provided to the Board for review.

There was discussion regarding the vagueness of the proposal. The Board did not know what it would be supporting as drafted.

**Theresa Sygitowicz moved that the Whatcom Conservation District not send a letter of support for the grant proposal. Larry Helm seconded the motion. The motion passed. (3 ayes and 1 nay)**

**F. MRSC Small Works Roster Renewal.**

In June 2015, the District joined the Municipal Research and Services Center (MRSC) in order to access its Small Public Works, Consultant, and Vendor Rosters. This allows the District to bid projects through MRSC rather than having to do the process ourselves. It is time for the annual renewal before May 1, 2017. The annual fee is \$120.

**Larry Helm moved to approve renewal of MRSC Model Small Public Works, Consultant and Vendor Rosters contract for the \$120 annual fee. Theresa Sygitowicz seconded the motion. The motion passed.**

**G. Electric Vehicle Volt Charging Station.**

The installation of a 240 volt electric vehicle charging station on the north side of the WCD office building is to provide convenient charging of the WCD Leaf. This will be the first 240 volt station in the greater Lynden area. This station could remain a private station strictly for District use or it could become part of the Washington State EV charging network. The District will undoubtedly take advantage of that network. It is not anticipated that maintaining a public charging station would materialize into a significant drain on District resources. There was discussion regarding how the charging station would work. The District has priority charging. George will monitor costs to ensure that there is not a significant increase in electric use.

**Larry Helm moved to approve Public Use of the WCD EV Charger and direct staff to list the facility on the PlugShare App. Larry Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed. (3 ayes – 1 nay).**

**H. Board Chair Authority to Sign Grant Contract Extensions/Renewals.**

The Whatcom Conservation District has established long lasting partnerships with many granting agencies. These agencies financially support the District's mission and programs where education and incentives instill voluntary stewardship to achieve shared conservation values. There are layers of bureaucratic process that make it very difficult to get contract extensions before the board for approval before the underlying contract expires. If a contract expires, then a new contract must be introduced and processed by those agencies. This results in several month-long gaps in funding for District programs. This will not only result in an unnecessary interruption of service, but also a financial hardship upon the District.

The proposal was put forward that in limited circumstances the District Chair, or Vice-chair in his/her unavailability should have the authority to sign on behalf of the District. Specific circumstances were outlined ensuring that the contracts would be something that had previously been approved and that the Board would be informed that the contracts were in the works to be signed.

The Board discussed the pros and cons of such an authorization.

**Theresa Sygitowicz moved to not approve the proposed authorization for grant signatures. Larry Helm seconded the motion. The motion failed due to lack of majority. (2 ayes – 2 nays)**

Special meetings can be set up to approve new contracts as they come in.

**I. Board Recommendation for Appointed Position.**

George explained that it is appropriate to send a recommendation from the Board to the Washington State Conservation Commission regarding the appointed position candidates. The candidates were reviewed.

**Larry Helm moved to recommend Joe Heller for the Appointed Position on the Board to the Washington State Conservation Commission. Theresa Sygitowicz seconded the motion. The motion passed. (3 ayes – 1 nay)**

**J. Personnel Manual.**

Larry Helm, Larry Davis and Theresa Sygitowicz have reviewed the Employee Manual in different committees for the past few years. There are limited issues with the current version. It was decided to not try to modify the current manual.

**Larry Helm moved to approve the current version of the Employee Personnel Manual as it is written. Dan Heeringa seconded the motion. The motion passed.**

**K. Prioritizing Technical & Financial Assistance to Dairy Producers.**

George gave a power point presentation on prioritizing technical and financial assistance. There was follow-up discussion.

New priorities for the farm planning workload were discussed.

Larry Helm asked that the new staff be introduced to the Board. NRCS has a planning boot camp that NACD will pay per diem for attending. To train up staff for planning, it was suggested to have Kristin Haider and Corina Cheever attend.

**Larry Helm moved to send Kristin Haider and Corina Cheever to NRCS boot camp for training. Theresa Sygitowicz seconded the motion. The motion passed.**

**Theresa Sygitowicz moved to approve renewing the NACD Dues of \$710 for 2017. Larry Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed.**

## **VIII. Other Business.**

### **A. Supervisor Reports.**

#### **Larry Helm –**

Larry shared that he had sought some feedback from people about the Whatcom Conservation District.

#### **CREP –**

Larry asked about CREP projects regarding limbs and noxious weeds. George reported that the CD provides up to 5 years of maintenance initially and does a check around the contract's ninth year. The landowner is required to control all noxious weeds under their contract with the USDA Farm Service Agency. Depending on the length of contract either the eighth or ninth year the District would see if the landowner wished to extend their contract. They could address any issues at that point as well.

George pointed out again that under federal law Personally Identifiable information (PII) obtain by virtue of someone signing up or participating in a farm bill program may not be disclosed without permission of the landowner. In the future, staff would encourage a landowner to tell their neighbors that a buffer was going to be planted.

#### **Farm Planning –**

Larry voiced his concerns about keeping the Conservation District separate from the conflict from the Department of Ecology, when they inspect water quality issues in watersheds.

Request that Whatcom County Planning and Development Services work positively with landowners. Request that no letters of violation be sent until other letters have been sent. In all areas of the County, not just the PIC focus areas.

#### **Plant Sale –**

The Plant Sale went very well. The Board wanted to give kudos to all the staff.

**Theresa Sygitowicz moved to give an award for service on the Plant Sale to Brandi Hutton, Frank Corey and Emily Hirsch. Larry Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed.**

#### **Dan Heeringa –**

It has been very wet. This has caused some challenges and frustrations. In six months, there has been 113 year record rainfall. This amount of rain exceeds the design of manure storage facilities.

#### **Larry Davis –**

**Whatcom County Ag Advisory Committee –**

The Ag Advisory Committee met four times. Of the four meetings three did not have a quorum present. There was discussion regarding changing the time of the meeting. Chris Elder is the sole Whatcom County staff support to the Ag Advisory Committee. There are still two vacancies on the committee.

There are two code amendments – definitions need to be made for “animal husbandry” and “domestic farm animals.”

There are sixteen applications for the Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program.

The County is also working on an amendment to add impervious surface limits. It is a stormwater issue. The Planning Commission is acting on the amendment. There was discussion to make the requirements variable if a landowner has a farm plan. Make the impervious surface limits adaptable like buffers. It was suggested that the District engineer could look at the proposed language. Larry Helm mentioned that the matter had already passed out of the Ag Advisory Committee while he was still on it.

Washington Association of District Employees (WACD) –  
WACD needs a new Executive Director. Bob Shroeter is leaving at the end of April.

**Theresa Sygitowicz –**  
Theresa distributed a flyer regarding Farm Plan disclosure.

Theresa shared the status on some bills at the Legislature. There is a bill to move regulation of marijuana production under the Washington State Department of Ag, not the Liquor and Cannabis Board as is the current case.

There was discussion regarding impervious surfaces in Skagit County. Cow paths are taxed under their stormwater taxes.

Theresa reported on activities with the Nooksack Indian Tribe. They are awaiting a ruling from the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). The Nooksack Tribe received a grant to do a watershed survey of the South Fork Nooksack River. Theresa said that there has been no public input into the plan. After it is written then the public can provide comments. Theresa discussed the process and the local community.

The community is concerned about the tubers in the Nooksack River. They are leaving a lot of trash and causing damage to the river’s edge. George pointed out that tubers can also damage fish.

American River is trying to initiate a special designation to cause the watershed to be classified as primitive status.

**B. George Boggs, Executive Director.**

Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) –  
George sent a copy of the contract to the Board for review. A special meeting was set up for April 18, 2017 at 12:00 noon to approve and sign the WSDA Manure Technical Assistance contract.

Calendar of Events –  
The Board is given access to George’s time and a calendar of events on the Conservation District’s website. They can log in to see the calendar.

Department of Ecology Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) –  
The status of updating an MOU between the Whatcom Conservation District and the Department of Ecology is not going anywhere at this time. Absent a MOU, the Conservation District will do business as follows:

1. If someone comes to the District, we would not turn them away if they agree to the cooperator agreement (understand who we are and how we will work).
2. Staff will make an independent assessment of the entire farm.
3. In the exclusive judgement of our staff they will offer their recommendations as solutions.
4. The Conservation District is not going to develop a farm plan because Ecology says they need a farm plan, unless Ecology has provided a documented violation and they have recommended the WCD as an opportunity to address the violation.

George and Larry Helm will continue to pursue an MOU at a later date.

**IX. Record of Board Actions.**

**17-20 Theresa Sygitowicz moved to approve the consent agenda: the financial report and 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. Larry Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed.**

The following voucher/warrants are approved for payment:

March 2017 - balance

Voucher (check) numbers	24620	through	24661	and totaling	45,772.29
Payroll check numbers:	24662	through	24682	and totaling	46,182.69
Voucher (check) number	24683			and totaling	693.44
April 2017					
Voucher (check) numbers	24684	through	24720	and totaling	61,194.62
Payroll check numbers:	24721	through	24741	and totaling	44,881.00

**17-21 Larry Helm moved to approve collaborating with Puget Sound Energy to provide energy efficiency opportunities to landowners, authorizing Aneka Sweeney, Education Coordinator, to co-brand materials and coordinate outreach events, including the Run with the Chums event. Larry Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed.**

**17-22 Larry Davis moved to approve the grant addendums for Center for Technical Development (CTD) for \$50,000 and Washington Association of District Employees (WADE) for \$20,000. Larry Helm seconded the motion. The motion passed.**

**17-23 Theresa Sygitowicz moved that the Whatcom Conservation District not send a letter of support for the grant proposal. Larry Helm seconded the motion. The motion passed. (3 ayes and 1 nay)**

**17-24 Larry Helm moved to approve renewal of MRSC Model Small Public Works, Consultant and Vendor Rosters contract for the \$120 annual fee. Theresa Sygitowicz seconded the motion. The motion passed.**

**17-25 Larry Helm moved to approve Public Use of the WCD EV Charger and direct staff to list the facility on the PlugShare App. Larry Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed. (3 ayes – 1 nay).**

- 17-26 Theresa Sygitowicz moved to not approve the proposed authorization for grant signatures. Larry Helm seconded the motion. The motion failed due to lack of majority. (2 ayes – 2 nays)
- 17-27 Larry Helm moved to recommend Joe Heller for the Appointed Position on the Board to the Washington State Conservation Commission. Theresa Sygitowicz seconded the motion. The motion passed. (3 ayes – 1 nay)
- 17-28 Larry Helm moved to approve the current version of the Employee Personnel Manual as it is written. Dan Heeringa seconded the motion. The motion passed.
- 17-29 Larry Helm moved to send Kristin Haider and Corina Cheever to NRCS boot camp for training. Theresa Sygitowicz seconded the motion. The motion passed.
- 17-30 Theresa Sygitowicz moved to approve renewing the NACD Dues of \$710 for 2017. Larry Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed.
- 17-31 Theresa Sygitowicz moved to give an award for service on the Plant Sale to Brandi Hutton, Frank Corey and Emily Hirsch. Larry Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed.

**X. Adjournment.**

**There being no further business before the meeting, Larry Helm moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:16 p.m. Larry Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed.**

The meeting, on motion duly made, seconded and carried, adjourned at 10:16 p.m.

Dated: August 11, 2017

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dawn Bekenyi, Administrative Assistant