

**WHATCOM CONSERVATION DISTRICT
Public Meeting Minutes
March 9, 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 March 9, 2017, at 6:30 p.m.

II. Attendance and Quorum.

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

Larry Helm, Chair
Joe Heller

Larry Davis, Vice-Chair
Theresa Sygitowicz

Also in attendance were:

George Boggs, Executive Director
Dawn Bekenyi, Admin. Assistant
Chris Clark, WCD Engineer

Sarah Tanuvasa, NRCS staff
Matthew Arrington, WCD intern
Diana Meeks, Whatcom Food Network

III. Meeting Called to Order.

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

IV. Presentations.

Lynden FFA presentation –

The Lynden FFA team gave a presentation sharing the pros and cons of the What's Up Stream campaign. They presented their facts and shared some slides, followed by a question and answer with the Board.

WCD provision of technical assistance to berry growers on manure management –

Matt Arrington gave a presentation on the berry producer program. He shared some handouts that he produced and results from the survey of participants at the Berry Producers Workshop. There was discussion regarding the demographic of berry farmers in Whatcom County, the number of acres in berries and conversion from raspberries to blueberries in some areas. Joe Heller pointed out that blowing dust from berry farms without cover crops was an issue.

Whatcom Food Network –

Diana Meeks is the Administrative Assistant with Whatcom Food Network, a group of different agencies and farmers that discuss food issues. It was formed in 2011. They hold two public forums a year. Representatives from Portage Bay were scheduled to speak at the next forum. Diana was asking for the Conservation District to be on their steering committee. She explained that it would be approximately a 3 hours a month commitment, since the group meets monthly. Theresa Sygitowicz asked where the Whatcom Food Network received their funding. Diana said that they received funds from the Whatcom Community Foundation only for her position. Theresa asked who the members of the network were and what agencies were involved with the group? She suggested that references be provided before the Board allocated staff time on this project. Theresa suggested that the Board get further information and have Diana come back to review in a few months.

V. Public Comment (written or in person).

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

VI. Consent Agenda.

The Board adopted a consent agenda for approval 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.

Larry Davis 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 Helm seconded the motion. The motion passed.

The following voucher/warrants are approved for payment:

Feb 2017 - balance					
Voucher (check) numbers	24545	through	24557	and totaling	5,327.71
Payroll check numbers:	24558	through	24577	and totaling	32,835.77
March 2017					
Payroll taxes	EFT				10,404.99
Voucher (check) numbers	24578	through	24599	and totaling	35,805.86
Payroll check numbers:	24600	through	24619	and totaling	45,425.93

VII. Action Items.

A. Approval of Conservation Plans.

Dairy Nutrient Management Plan (DNMP) Certification –

Chris reported that the proposed Dairy Plan certification was not ready. When he completed the inspection there were some things that needed to be addressed prior to certification. It was decided to table the certification.

B. Cost-share.

There was general discussion regarding cost-share and the Washington State Conservation Commission cost-share program. The current cap is \$50,000 per producer per biennium. The local Conservation District Board sets the eligible cost-share rate. Whatcom has set 75% of actual expenses. Chris reported that it takes a lot of time to put eligible projects into the state system. The process is a lot of work before the project funding is awarded. Staff was asking the Board for prioritization of their workload. George discussed how the cost-share program used to run and how cost-share is funded out of projects input into the state-wide CPDS system. It was suggested that a workgroup could prioritize the problems to get the most bang out of the buck. Chris said there are a lot of issues in addition to water quality testing results. Larry Helm and Theresa volunteered to be on a committee. It was decided that staff would have some internal discussions first before a committee was formed.

C. Sarah Tanuvasa, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) –

Sarah distributed a workload analysis handout. The Local Work Group selected the fund pools and percentage of funds to be allocated to those pool funds. In Whatcom County, there are currently 60 EQIP applications and 9 RCPP applications. Contracts are going to need a CNMP written prior to funding. There are twenty-five applications to get a CNMP written in Whatcom County.

National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI) –

They are taking sign-ups for NWQI. There are three applications at this time. NRCS had a meeting at the Lummi Nation. They set up ranking questions for the NWQI program for this funding cycle. Sarah reported on the status of contracts and projects implemented under the 2016 contracts. There were no major changes to the previous year's ranking questions. A few new questions were added.

The Tenmile Watershed will be assessed and funding would become available next fiscal year. George explained that there are currently two watersheds designated to receive funds for cost-share through the NWQI program.

D. Approval of Conservation Plans (continued).

CPAL Moderate Intensity Farm Plan Approval –

Chuck Timblin wrote and moderate intensity farm plan for Townline Growers Inc (Jagtar Alamwala). It fulfilled the requisite elements for that type of plan. Staff recommended Board approval.

Joe Heller moved to approve the CPAL Moderate Intensity Farm plan for Townline Growers Inc (Jagtar Alamwala). Larry Helm 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.

Larry Helm moved to ratify the CREP maintenance contracts provided by Emily Hirsch for: Spencer and Stacey Beier; and Hanna Zolkiewicz. Larry Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

E. Changing Financial Institutions.

During a recent request for loan services, George encountered unsatisfactory service from our current bank, Bank of America. There was discussion regarding finding a different financial institute. George outlined the parameters; the bank must be FDIC insured, etc. George will seek proposals for services from new banks for Board consideration.

VIII. Executive Session.

The Board adjourned into Executive Session to discuss staff evaluations at 8:00 p.m. The length of the Executive Session was scheduled for 15 minutes.

In the course of discussion, it became apparent that the evaluations were of a general nature and not specific employees, so the Board closed the executive session.

Chair Larry Helm closed the Executive Session at 8:15 p.m.

The Board directed George to have evaluation reviews for all staff completed within 60 days. Larry Helm and Larry Davis will do the review of George.

IX. Other Business.

A. Supervisor Reports.

Theresa Sygitowicz –

Theresa attended the Puget Sound Conservation Districts meeting last week. She shared the handouts.

Larry Davis –

Larry attended the Janicki tour on February 17, 2017 along with Larry Helm and Theresa.

The Whatcom County Ag Advisory Committee met for two hours without a quorum.

Joe Heller –

Joe submitted his application for the appointed position to the Washington State Conservation Commission. Joe also reported that he would not be able to observe the district election process, since his mother’s funeral was scheduled for that day.

Joe will follow up on Firewise with Larry Helm.

Larry Helm –

Larry said the price of beef was up. There is a lot of stress on the animals with all of the cold that we have been having.

Larry expressed a concern that the neighbors had installed a CREP buffer, removing the reed canary grass buffer between their properties. He was concerned that his cows can now see the vegetation on the other side of the fence. George pointed out that legally staff cannot disclose anyone who signs up for federal programs, such as CREP. Larry would like to see a visual barrier for livestock, if possible between projects and farmers.

B. George Boggs, Executive Director.

Annual Plan of Work –

George passed out the annual plan of work draft for last year. He reviewed the proposed activities for the upcoming fiscal year for the Board to review in preparation of their annual planning process.

Lummi Nation –

Larry Helm asked about how the Lummi Nation deals with their sewage. George has not received that information.

George did receive word that Randy Kinley, Lummi Natural Resources, had passed away. The Board expressed their condolences and asked that a card be sent.

X. Record of Board Actions.

17-17 Larry Davis 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 Helm seconded the motion. The motion passed.

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17-18 Joe Heller moved to approve the CPAL Moderate Intensity Farm plan for Townline Growers Inc (Jagtar Alamwala). Larry Helm seconded the motion. The motion passed.

17-19 Larry Helm moved to ratify the CREP maintenance contracts provided by Emily Hirsch for: Spencer and Stacey Beier; and Hanna Zolkiewicz. Larry Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

XI. Adjournment.

There being no further business before the meeting, Larry Helm moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:51 p.m. Theresa Sygitowicz seconded the motion. The motion passed.

The meeting, on motion duly made, seconded and carried, adjourned at 8:51 p.m.

Dated: August 11, 2017

Dawn Bekenyi, Administrative Assistant

Approved: _____