

**WHATCOM CONSERVATION DISTRICT  
Public Meeting Minutes  
December 11, 2014**

**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 December 11, 2014, at 7:00 p.m.

**II. Attendance and Quorum.**

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

Joe Heller, Chair	Larry Davis, Treasurer
Dan Heeringa	Dick Yoder

Also in attendance were:

George Boggs, Executive Director	Alex Hall, NRCS staff
Dawn Bekenyi, Admin. Assistant	Andrew Krzysiek, Zervas
Bri Cyr, Zervas	Jeff Rainey, Coldstream Farms

**III. Meeting Called to Order.**

Joe Heller, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Introductions were made.

**IV. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting.**

**Dick Yoder moved that the minutes of the November 13, 2014 Board meeting be approved as mailed. Larry Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed.**

**V. Financial Report.**

The financial report was mailed to the Board with their draft minutes from the November meeting.

Dawn Bekenyi, Administrative Assistant, presented the financial report. There were no questions.

**Larry Davis moved to approve the Financial Report. Dick Yoder seconded the motion. The motion passed. Upon motion made and duly seconded, the Treasurer's Report was approved.**

Accounts Payable –

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.

The following voucher/warrants are approved for payment:

Nov 2014 - balance					
Voucher (check) numbers	<u>22001</u>	through	<u>22066</u>	and totaling	<u>109,121.22</u>
Payroll check numbers:	<u>22067</u>	through	<u>22085</u>	and totaling	<u>34,367.14</u>
December 2014					
Voucher (check) numbers	<u>22086</u>	through	<u>22103</u>	and totaling	<u>32,694.75</u>
Payroll check numbers:	<u>22104</u>	through	<u>22120</u>	and totaling	<u>32,615.25</u>

Voucher (check numbers 22121 through 22122 and totaling 583.56  
**Moved by Larry Davis. Dick Yoder seconded the motion. The motion passed.**

## **VI. Public Comment (written or in person).**

Jeff Rainey, Coldstream Farms, expressed his concerns about buffers being put onto property that they rent. He is concerned that agricultural land is being lost to buffers. Ag land has value and the county should not lose any more agriculture land base.

George explained how the CREP program rules were made and the required buffer widths. He explained that as the lead agency on the CREP program, USDA Farm Service Agency's (FSA) County Oversight Committee (COC) reviews all CREP projects and plans for approval. George was unsure what we or the FSA COC could do differently if the projects met the program requirements.

Jeff asked that buffers on property be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. George said that District staff is reviewing the projects currently enrolled in CREP and if any prime farmland was put into CREP. The Board directed George to review the type and quality of farmland and the buffer widths enrolled in CREP.

## **VII. Action Items.**

### **A. Building Remodel – Selection of Option for Office Remodel.**

Andrew Krzysiek and Bri Cyr from Zevas Architects gave a presentation on the design options for the proposed office remodel for the existing facility. They presented two options that remodeled the building for District staff without the USDA agencies (FSA and NRCS) Option A would modernize and update the facility making it energy efficient with new windows and insulation in the walls and attic. Option A mirrors the final layout as proposed with staff input. Option B is a different layout. Costs for both options were reviewed.

George provided information on projected loan costs based on the remodel cost estimates. Dick and Larry voiced concerns over taking out a loan without adequate income to pay for it. There are persistent concerns over how conservation districts will fare in the governor's budget and the final budget to be adopted by the legislature.

George stated that the most immediate need was the installation of a lab. A lab is fundamental to the programs (Education & Sustainable Livestock) that the Board decided to develop. Cost estimates for converting the FSA storage/server room to a lab and the conference room were discussed. Dick voiced concerns about adding costs by converting a room to a temporary lab in a location that is different than the final layout. Repair of the septic system was also discussed. It will need to be done. Various options and costs were discussed based on estimates provided by the District's architect.

**Larry Davis moved to authorize allocating an estimated \$75,000.00 for the lab as located in Option A and septic system upgrade with a percentage for contingencies from the District savings account. Dick Yoder seconded the motion. The motion passed.**

The Board will continue with the completion of Option A design for the building remodel when the District has firmer funding.

### **B. Approval of Conservation Plans.**

#### Standard Farm Checklist Plan Approval –

Staff completed a standard farm checklist plan for one Birch Bay landowner. The Standard Checklist plan fulfills the requisite elements for that type of plan. Staff recommended Board approval.

**Dick Yoder moved to approve the Standard Farm Checklist Plan for:**

- **Scott and Kristy McAllister.**

**Larry Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed.**

EPA – Birch Bay Project Cost-share –

Two landowners submitted a cost-share application for implementation of BMPs and one landowner submitted a cost-share application for septic system repairs as a part of the EPA Birch Bay project pursuant to adopted cost-share policy previously adopted by the Board.

**Dick Yoder moved to approve the EPA Birch Bay Cost-share application for 100% of project costs not to exceed \$4,677.00 for:**

- **Scott and Kristy McAllister.**

**Dan Heeringa seconded the motion. The motion passed.**

**Dick Yoder moved to approve the EPA Birch Bay Cost-share application for 100% of project costs not to exceed \$3,693.03 for:**

- **Deborah Marguiles.**

**Larry Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed.**

**Dick Yoder moved to approve the EPA Birch Bay Project cost-share application for 100% of project costs for septic tank repairs not to exceed \$10,000 for:**

- **Todd and Janel Black.**

**Larry Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed.**

#### **C. Phone System.**

At present, the Conservation District is using the USDA phone system. As they prepare to leave the building, we will lose use of that system. Therefore, the District needs to purchase a new phone system. Andrew Phay provided a cost estimate of three potential phone systems. The Board authorized the purchase of a phone system.

**Dick Yoder moved to authorize the purchase of a new phone system and sign up for a contract for service through the most competitive provider for approximately \$3,300 initial outlay costs. Larry Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed.**

#### **D. Employee Matters.**

District Employee Step Increases –

Employees that are not at the top step of their pay scale band are eligible to an annual step increase based upon time served (1 year full time equivalent at each step) and the acknowledgement that staff would not still be employed with the District if they were not meeting job expectations. Emily Hirsch and Brandi Hutton are eligible for a step increase effective January 1, 2015.

**Dick Yoder moved to approve a step increase in payroll for Emily Hirsch to Band C1 Step 4 and Brandi Hutton to Band B1 Step 2. Larry Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed.**

Dick asked about a cost of living increase for staff. He is concerned about the potential of losing staff. The District last made an adjustment in the pay scale Dec 2008 that was adopted on Jan 1, 2009. George stated that he and Dawn were gathering information with which to consider the sufficiency of the current pay schedule. Further, that it may be that the District simply cannot compete with other employers in different sectors given the differing financial structure.

Employee Medical Insurance –

The District is a member of the state's Health Care Authority through the Public Employees Benefit Board. Employee medical insurance premiums increased an average of 2% for 2015.

The proposed medical/dental premium increases were anticipated in the previously approved 2014-2015 annual budget.

**Dick Yoder moved to affirm the current policy of District payment of 100% of employee and dependents medical/dental premiums for full-time and 100% of employee for part-time staff and approved the 2% increase in premiums for 2015. Larry Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed.**

**E. WCD Totes.**

In 2013, the City of Bellingham enacted a ban on single use plastic bags. In response to the ban, WCD purchased 500 reusable grocery bags to utilize for our plant sale, outreach purposes, and for tours. We have exhausted our initial supply of 500 bags.

The bags were purchased from Enviro-Tote, Inc. in New Hampshire and made at their US facility. They have enough left over materials to supply us with 625 medium grocery bags and offer a discount at the same price as 2013. An estimate of the cost of the totes and a comparison of their regular cost and a competitor's grocery bag were provided for the Board to review.

**Dick Yoder moved to approve the purchase of 625 totes for approximately \$2,316.25 + design layout and shipping from Enviro-Tote, Inc. Dan Heeringa seconded the motion. The motion passed.**

**VIII. Other Business.**

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

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) –

The first round of 2015 EQIP sign up ended. There were 23 new applications and 27 were deferred applications. There are 52 applications on the books for this year. Alex is unsure how much funding they will have to allocate to projects. The projects need to be ranked by January 19, 2015.

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) –

The announcement for funding RCPP projects has been moved to mid-January 2015. George spoke with Anne Mills at the WACD annual meeting. She said that they are waiting to make sure they get it right.

Conservation Security Program (CSP) –

There are two projects up for renewal. One has opted to reenroll in the program. The program is more suited to farms of larger acreage.

**B. Supervisors.**

Larry Davis –

Larry attended the Washington Association of Conservation Districts (WACD) annual meeting in Cle Elum, WA.

The Governor's budget for the state should be out around December 20, 2015. It is important to continue to support the Washington State Conservation Commission's budget request and send letters to and meet with our legislators regarding the budget.

Larry is on the WACD Tribal Task Force. There will be a two day training opportunity for Conservation Districts and Tribes on partnerships, sometime next spring.

Larry is now the President of the Washington Conservation Society. He was the Secretary Treasurer.

**C. George Boggs, Executive Director.**

Whatcom County Pollution Identification and Correction (PIC) Program –

George reported that the two contracts for the District to work with Whatcom County on the voluntary process of the PIC program were completed and signed. Both contracts are for two years. One provides technical service dollars for planning, etc. The other one has an outreach component and \$32,000 for cost-share of BMPs. Aneka Sweeney, Corina Cheever and Chuck Timblin will be working with the County on this program.

Other Potential Funding –

George reported that Aneka wrote a grant for a Volunteer Storm Team to collect water quality samples.

Other Conservation Districts are helping their cities with their storm water program. George talked with representatives of the Cities of Bellingham and Lynden about the potential to partner with the District on education outreach and Low Impact Development (LID) and rain garden projects under a storm water program.

North Lynden Watershed Improvement District (WID) –

George reported that Ray Ledgerwood, Washington State Conservation Commission, has been facilitating meetings between the North Lynden WID and the Lummi Nation. They are trying to work out how farming and clean water can work together.

Ag District Coalition –

The WID elections have been completed. There is close to \$15,000 remaining in the grant the the District will utilize to do outreach to the WIDs and the joint Board. There will be an initial meeting on December 17, 2014 for all WID board members.

Other –

George shared copies of the resolutions voted on at the WACD annual meeting.

George shared an outline written by Aneka Sweeney regarding the education program.

**IX. Record of Board Actions.**

**14-105 Dick Yoder moved that the minutes of the November 13, 2014 Board meeting be approved as mailed. Larry Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed.**

**14-106 Larry Davis moved to approve the Financial Report. Dick Yoder seconded the motion. The motion passed. Upon motion made and duly seconded, the Treasurer’s Report was approved.**

**14-107**

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**Moved by Larry Davis. Dick Yoder seconded the motion. The motion passed.**

**14-108 Larry Davis moved to authorize allocating an estimated \$75,000.00 for the lab as located in Option A and septic system upgrade with a percentage for contingencies from the District savings account. Dick Yoder seconded the motion. The motion passed.**

- 14-109 Dick Yoder moved to approve the Standard Farm Checklist Plan for:
- Scott and Kristy McAllister.
- Larry Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed.
- 14-110 Dick Yoder moved to approve the EPA Birch Bay Cost-share application for 100% of project costs not to exceed \$4,677.00 for:
- Scott and Kristy McAllister.
- Dan Heeringa seconded the motion. The motion passed.
- 14-111 Dick Yoder moved to approve the EPA Birch Bay Cost-share application for 100% of project costs not to exceed \$3,693.03 for:
- Deborah Marguiles.
- Larry Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed.
- 14-112 Dick Yoder moved to approve the EPA Birch Bay Project cost-share application for 100% of project costs for septic tank repairs not to exceed \$10,000 for:
- Todd and Janel Black.
- Larry Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed.
- 14-113 Dick Yoder moved to authorize the purchase of a new phone system and sign up for a contract for service through the most competitive provider for approximately \$3,300 initial outlay costs. Larry Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed.
- 14-114 Dick Yoder moved to approve a step increase in payroll for Emily Hirsch to Band C1 Step 4 and Brandi Hutton to Band B1 Step 2. Larry Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed.
- 14-115 Dick Yoder moved to affirm the current policy of District payment of 100% of employee and dependents medical/dental premiums for full-time and 100% of employee for part-time staff and approved the 2% increase in premiums for 2015. Larry Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed.
- 14-116 Dick Yoder moved to approve the purchase of 625 totes for approximately \$2,316.25 + design layout and shipping from Enviro-Tote, Inc. Dan Heeringa seconded the motion. The motion passed.

**X. Adjournment.**

There being no further business before the meeting, Larry Davis moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:00 p.m. Dick Yoder seconded the motion. The motion passed.

The meeting, on motion duly made, seconded and carried, adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

Dated: January 15, 2015

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

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Dawn Bekenyi, Administrative Assistant