

**LINCOLN COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT
BOARD MEETING
NRCS / FSA MEETING ROOM-DAVENPORT WA
Wednesday, February 12, 2020**

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:

Meeting called to order at 8:30 AM by Chairman, Jeff Schibel. Those attending the meeting were as follows: Jim Baye, Chris Laney, Josh Sherwood, and Braidy Haden - LCCD Supervisors; Mark Stedman, Lincoln County Commissioner; Elsa Bowen, Val Vissia, Kristen Balko, Connor Nikkola, Delaini Disher, and Dean White - LCCD staff.

A. MINUTES: Additions / Corrections:

Board members brought up some minor corrections to the draft minutes for the January 29 board meeting, including several edits in the Legislative Days section on page 3 (Jeff shared the Legislative Day packets with legislators; \$40,000 additional costs for elections would be for Supervisor elections being added into the general election ballot), CRP Task Order EQIP LWG on page 5 (CRP, not CPR), and WACD Update on pages 5 and 6 (WACD Board meeting was in Olympia in January; Tom Salzer's focus and priorities spreadsheet was for 12 months).

- **1. Chris moved to approve the January 29, 2020 minutes as amended. Jim seconded. Motion passed.**

B. TREASURER'S REPORT / TRANSACTIONS REPORT:

- **2. Jim moved to pay and approve vouchers #11048 to #11064, along with 12 EFT's, totaling \$38,182.91. Josh seconded. Discussion was held. Motion passed.**
- **3. Jim moved to submit voucher #7 for the VSP 3 grant in the amount of \$12,394.88 to the Conservation Commission. Chris seconded. Motion passed.**
- **4. Jim moved to submit voucher #8 for the 20-39-IM grant in the amount of \$9,303.48 to the Conservation Commission. Braidy seconded. Motion passed.**
- **5. Jim moved to submit voucher #7 for the 20-39-NR grant in the amount of \$0.00 to the Conservation Commission. Josh seconded. Motion passed.**
- **There was no Lincoln County Conservation District Cenex credit card statement to approve for February.**

- **6. Jim moved that the Lincoln County Conservation District Visa statement for December 24, 2019 – January 23, 2020 be approved. The total amount owed was \$2,467.20. Chris seconded. Discussion was held. Motion passed.**

After review, the Board initialed each page of the available bank statements for the checking and money market accounts and signed the Treasurer's Report signature page.

The Board reviewed the report of the current annual leave/sick leave balances for District employees. Elsa noted that there was \$65,000 in the designated reserve fund for covering annual leave and sick leave.

- **7. Jim moved to approve the Treasurer's report and the Grant's report as presented. Josh seconded. Motion passed.**

C. AGENDA

New Bookkeeper

Delaini Disher introduced herself to the board members and the board members introduced themselves. Delaini noted that she recently graduated from Cornerstone College in Michigan, majored in Environmental Biology with a minor in Communications, and always wanted to move out west.

8. Jim moved to add Delaini Disher as an approved signer to the bank signature lists. Braidy seconded. Motion passed.

Elections

As noted at the January board meeting, nobody else besides Jim applied for the elected supervisor position currently held by Jim, and so no election was necessary and the elections for spring 2020 were cancelled following the appropriate protocol. Jim's reelection to the Board will be officially certified at the May Conservation Commission meeting.

VSP Update and Cost Share Approval

Val and Connor will be giving VSP presentations at the Highline Grain Grower meetings on February 18 in Odessa, February 20 in Almira, and February 25 in Reardan. Hardcopies of the Cost Share Action list for February were distributed. The 5 applications for VSP grant funding had already been approved by the Lincoln County VSP working group. A decision needed to be made on how to fund the estimated \$20,000 in engineering assistance costs for these 5 approved VSP applications. Orca recovery funding from the Conservation Commission was initially considered and then dropped for consideration because all of these VSP projects would need to be completely finished by June 30, 2020 in order to use the Orca funding. The other two alternative sources to consider for engineering funding were the \$50,000 in Lincoln County CD cost share funding each year or the remaining

\$92,000 in the VSP funding for Lincoln County CD for the current biennium. The Lincoln County VSP working group would also have to approve the use of the VSP funding to pay for the engineering assistance.

9. Chris moved to approve the use of \$20,000 in funding from Lincoln County CD VSP funding for the current biennium to pay for engineering assistance costs for the 5 approved VSP applications. Josh seconded. Motion passed.

The Cost Share Action list also included 4 applications for approval for funding from the DOE Direct Seed grant

10. Jim moved to approve the 4 applications for Direct Seed grant funding as presented. Josh seconded. Discussion was held. The Direct Seed grant funding provides \$28/acres on a maximum of 200 acres for 3 years on the same fields. Applicants would have to annual crop 3 years in a row on the same fields to get the maximum \$16,800 for the grant. Elsa noted that District has a good chance of getting the Direct Seed grant extended, which would help the District fund the 12 more applicants who are on a waiting list for funding. Motion passed.

Tree Sale Update

Elsa noted that the annual tree sale preorder period was going well, with the 1 gallon potted grasses and strawberries selling the best.

CRP 54 Task Order Update

Elsa submitted the CRP 54 task order last Friday to Rich Edlund, acting West Palouse Team District Conservationist. February 28 is the deadline for producers to sign up for contracts under CRP 54. The latest word is that the NRCS East Area is seeking to standardize CRP task orders across the area, and so it may be awhile before the task order with Lincoln County CD can be approved. Elsa noted that the District only applied to conduct in office contracting and folder development and would not be doing any field reviews of CRP stands, which would be left to NRCS staff to conduct.

Surplus Equipment

Elsa announced that the District has following computer equipment which has been retired and is taking up limited space in the office:

- 2 older LCD monitors
- 2 newer Lenovo monitors
- 2014 Dell tower computer and 2 older LCD monitors

Elsa asked board members if they would like to donate or surplus the above equipment. She suggested that the 2 older LCD monitors be disposed of individually while the 2 Lenovo monitors and the Dell tower and 2 older LCD monitors be disposed of as separate packages. Connor has investigated Ebay prices for equivalent computer equipment.

11. Braidy moved to authorize the surplusing of the computer equipment as presented. Chris seconded. Motion passed.

New Logo Ware

Elsa requested that new District logo ware such as shirts, jackets, and hats be made available for new District staff and for other staff and board members. Elsa will look into new District logo ware options and report back to the Board at a future meeting.

Ag Expo and Supervisor Appreciation Dinner

Elsa reported that she had heard good comments on the appreciation dinner from the 3 retired board members who appreciated the chance to have dinner with current board members and staff members. The Yeti cups for the retired board members and spouses were also greatly appreciated. Connor noted that he attended quite a few of the classes and keynote speaker presentations, including the weather forecast from Art Douglas, who is predicting a relatively warm and dry spring and early summer followed by a wet August.

Meeting with Cathy McMorris Rodgers

Jeff, Elsa and Commission Mark Stedman attended a meeting with Representative Cathy McMorris Rodgers last Friday. Cathy was on a tour of Harrington and Davenport schools and had about 20 minutes to meet with Jeff, Elsa and Commissioner Stedman. Water issues in the Odessa Subarea were discussed and copies of draft maps from the well level measuring grant were distributed. Cathy asked how much funding would be needed to implement the second half of the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project, and Jeff suggested that up to \$5 billion would be needed but on an incremental basis, as the second half of the CBIP project would be implemented on an incremental basis just like the first half of the CBIP project was completed. One impression from the meeting was that funding to complete the second half of the CBIP project might be possible and available from Congress in the near future.

WACD Update

Jeff reported that quite a few emails concerning elections for CD supervisors have been sent recently from Ryan Baye with WACD. It sounded like the proposed bill to have CD supervisor elections added on to the general ballot in each respective county was not likely to go anywhere this legislative session, but this issue is not likely to go away anytime soon either. The proposed bill to restrict the sale of both surface water and groundwater/deep well irrigation rights out of the watershed of origin is also not likely to pass the legislature this year. Elsa added some home email addresses of board members so that they would be forwarded these emails from Ryan.

May 2020 Conservation Commission Tour Update

A tentative route for the May Conservation Commission tour has been developed and will feature projects unique to Lincoln County CD. The first stop out of west Spokane will start at the Wagner farm and feature straw wattle production, a grassed waterway implemented with District assistance, and a drone demonstration. The second stop will be at the Community Garden in Davenport. The third stop will be out west at the Hatten Rd roadside fuel break project in the Swanson Lakes area. The fourth stop will be at the Sinking Creek OW-8 well on Sinking Creek Road heading back toward Creston for a demonstration of well level grant measuring with an Etape and the sonic meter. The final stop in Lincoln County will be for dinner at the Lincoln County Fairgrounds kitchen.

Work has been started on the tour packet and on the invite list for the tour, which will be sent out on gov.list delivery.

Columbia Basin Sustainable Water Coalition Meeting

Jeff, Kristen and Dean attended the Columbia Basin Sustainable Water Coalition meeting in the Moses Lake Fire Department meeting room yesterday. Harold Crose with Grant County CD gave a presentation on continuing water quality issues with excess phosphorous and the resulting adverse blue green algae blooms in Moses Lake, along with several proposed projects such as alum application to help address these issues, with significant funding amounts required. Gina Hoff with BOR noted that both grant applications had been received from the Coalition, and that the Applied Science grant application had been preliminarily approved and was moving on. The second WaterSMART cooperative watershed application grant, which would provide funding for establishment of the Sustainable Water Coalition and facilitation of initial meetings, is still being processed. Quite a bit of time was spent rewording the one page vision statement for the Coalition and removing the development of a regional groundwater recharge plan as a long term priority because this would be an enormous task that the coalition would not be able to achieve.

Dean handed out 15 copies of the draft well level fluctuation and well use type maps recently produced for the Lincoln County well level grant and addressed how they were developed and how they describe the 77 wells that are currently being measured for the well level grant. Copies of these maps plus 2 precip maps were given to Kevin Lindsey with GeoEngineers, who will be identifying any long term well level trends (declining, increasing, or stable) for the ERO irrigations measured for the well level grant.

Dean handed out copies of the 2018 – 2019 calendar year comparison and the 2017 calendar year precip map to the board members to remind them of the 3 to 6" of above precip that the county received back in 2017 compared to the average to below average precip for 2019.

Jeff noted that Shawn O'Brien with the City of Othello described how the city had pumped 600 GPM of clean drinking water into a well as part of an ASR test project (aquifer storage and retrieval) last summer, and that it was a difficult process to obtain a permit to pump clean drinking water into the well due to the overly strict regulations for ASR projects. It was noted that one possible goal of coalition would be to lobby state legislators and regulators to develop more reasonable regulations for ASR that would make these projects more feasible and attainable.

Waterway Cleanout Consultation

District staff will be meeting with WDFW and Ecology staff next week at a channel cleanout project site on a tiny perennial stream next to Hwy 231 that did not have required HPA permit obtained prior to the project cleanout. The landowner assumed that since this tiny stream had been cleaned out before that it didn't need a permit this time. WDFW and Ecology are now requiring an HPA permit for all stream cleanout projects, regardless of whether the stream has been cleaned out before or whether the area has been mapped as a farmed wetland on FSA maps. A workable solution should be able to be reached to bring the cleanout project back into compliance with state standards.

Upcoming NRCS Farm Bill Meeting

An informational meeting on updated NRCS Farm Bill funding resources will be facilitated by Roylene Comes at Night, State NRCS Conservationist, at the Washington Association of Wheat Growers building in Ritzville on February 27 from 9 AM to 1 PM. Along with the EQIP and CSP programs, the Resource Conservation Partnership Planning (RCPP) program will also be discussed. Of current interest to deep well irrigators just east of the East Low Canal in the Columbia Basin is the possible option to obtain funding from RCPP to pay for the cost of installing pipelines from individual farms to connect to the larger pipelines to be constructed by local irrigation districts to pump water out of the canal east to replace groundwater with surface water from the CBIP project to irrigated farm ground close to the canal.

Jeff cautioned that any producers who sign RCPP contracts would have to have their farm pipelines built and pumping water within 5 years or pay the money back, plus the producers will have to pay taxes on the RCPP funding that they receive. Mike cautioned that conservation districts and producers should contact the local RCPP coordinators for their area to make sure that plans to connect to the larger pipelines using RCPP funding are truly workable. Laura Williams, RCPP Coordinator for the Conservation Commission, will be attending the meeting. Elsa and Kristen are also planning on attending, along with several NRCS employees from the Ritzville and Davenport offices.

FSA Report

There was no FSA report.

County Commissioner Report

Commissioner Mark Stedman reported that the County Commissioners have been working on dealing with trash nuisance complaints across the county. Mark will be heading to Edwall to meet with local citizens about a complaint in their area and is hoping to find a compromise solution between complying with local codes and with protecting private property rights. Road restrictions are still on due to moisture content in the roads. Mark complemented Val and Connor for their good work with the Lincoln County VSP program. Mark commented that the county and the Columbia Basin Development League are still committed to supporting the development of the Columbia Basin Sustainable Water Coalition and the implementation of the second half of the CBIP project, and asked the board members to consider what central and eastern Washington would be like today if Franklin Roosevelt had not pushed for the construction of Grand Coulee Dam and the implementation of the first half of the CBIP project.

NRCS Report

An email from the acting District Conservationist for the West Palouse Team, Rich Edlund, was distributed for the NRCS report. WPT staff worked on applications for the second signup of the "CSP-Grasslands Conservation Initiative", which protects very specific farm areas that other conservation programs usually exclude. Initial training was held on the CART (Conservation Assessment and Ranking Tool) which will be used for ranking 2020 EQIP applications. The General CRP signup began December 9, will run through February 28, and may create a huge workload for

NRCS. WPT staff have made great progress on CSP, CSP-Grassland Conservation Initiative, and RCPP-CSP contract evaluations and annual payments.

Conservation Commission Report

Mike reported that the Conservation Commission is currently working on the CAPP (Conservation Accountability & Performance Program) process. Hardcopies of the CAPP handout were distributed. The Standard 1 (Compliance with Laws) table will be filled out as part of the Internal Audit and Schedule 22 form completion following the end of the board meeting. Mike will be providing a written status review of the CAPP process for the District as part of the new requirement for CAPP. An NRI funding committee will be established to address requests from numerous conservation districts for more flexibility with NRI funding of projects. A budget development meeting to start the process for developing the next budget packet requests to forward on to the state Legislature will be held for all conservation districts to attend in Ellensburg on April 14 & 15. Reimbursement for travel costs should be available from the Commission.

Miscellaneous Items

Kristen noted that the Department of Ecology is now allowing for the direct seeding of cover crops to be reimbursed by the current Direct Seed grant being offered by the District to producers. Josh brought up issues with planting dates and not being able to obtain crop insurance for cash crops that are not planted within the standard crop insurance dates. For example, if sunflowers are planted with winter wheat in June, he can still get crop insurance for the winter wheat but not for the sunflowers which are a spring crop. Another issue with cover crops that Josh brought forward for discussion is that NRCS typically requires cover crops to be terminated by certain dates to comply with NRCS programs, but if summer cover crop species will be killed by fall and winter temperatures, why can't the frost be allowed to kill these species instead of being required to spray them out?

Elsa noted that there are possibilities to apply for a CIG (Conservation Innovation Grant) for testing cover crops in Lincoln County. Mike Nestor with Ag Enterprises already has experience with planting cover crop species in with standard cash crops such as wheat or triticale in Douglas County and has offered to help with crop plantings in Lincoln County. Jim reminded board members that there are 2 separate practices to consider here: Planting cover crops only, or planting cover crop species in with cash crops.

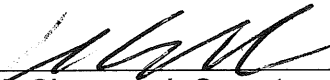
Elsa reported that she has still not received any input back from Aaron Esser on planting trees and shrubs on the farm as a memorial for Eddie Johnson, and asked board members for other possible ideas on what the District could do for a memorial for Eddie, such as a project in the Wilbur area.

Public Comment

There was no Public Comment.

The meeting was adjourned by Chairman Jeff Schibel at 10:18 AM. The next board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 11 starting 8:30 AM in the conference room here in the USDA Service Center in Davenport.

Respectfully submitted,



Josh Sherwood, Secretary



Dean White, Minute Taker

SUMMARY:

All 11 motions were reviewed:

- 1. M/S/P to approve the January 29 minutes as presented.
- 2. M/S/P to pay and approve vouchers #11048 to #11064, along with 12 EFT's, totaling \$38,182.91.
- 3. M/S/P to submit voucher #7 for the VSP 3 grant in the amount of \$12,394.88 to the Conservation Commission.
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- 11. M/S/P to authorize the surplusing of the computer equipment as presented.