

**LINCOLN COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT
BOARD MEETING
USDA Service Center Conference Room – Davenport, WA
Wednesday, May 8, 2024**

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:

Meeting called to order at 9:07 AM by Chairman, Jeff Schibel. Those attending the meeting in person or by phone were as follows: Jim Bay, Chris Laney, Josh Sherwood, and Braidy Haden - LCCD Supervisors; Jo Gilchrist - Lincoln County Commissioners; Dick Erickson - NRCS; Elsa Bowen, Delaini Disher, Debra Watson, Elayne Hovde-Knudson, and Dean White - LCCD staff.

A. MINUTES: Additions / Corrections:

- **1. Chris moved to approve the April 10, 2024 minutes as presented. Josh seconded. There was no public comment. Motion passed.**

B. TREASURER'S REPORT / TRANSACTIONS REPORT:

- **2. Jim moved to pay and approve vouchers #12398 to #12425, along with 15 EFT's, totaling \$86,556.18. Braidy seconded. Discussion was held. Elsa noted that the invoice for \$6,240.89 to Continuum Office Environments was for the final payment for the new District office furniture and dividers. Elsa also noted that a crew from Continuum Office Environments came to the office several weeks ago to pick up the old office cubicles and the unused office cubicle from storage, and that the District would be receiving some money back for the used cubicles. There was no further public comment. Motion passed.**
- **3. Jim moved to submit voucher #4 for the 24-39-FH grant in the amount of \$170.53 to the Conservation Commission. Braidy seconded. Motion passed.**
- **4. Jim moved to submit voucher #7 for the Adams CD TA grant in the amount of \$646.28 to Adams Conservation District. Chris seconded. Motion passed.**
- **5. Jim moved to submit voucher #8 for the Direct Seed 3 grant in the amount of \$28,417.44 to DOE. Josh seconded. Discussion was held. Elsa noted that Ecology had granted a no cost time extension for the Direct Seed grant up through June 30, 2025, which allows grant participants another year to finish their direct seeding operations for the grant. It was also noted that all Direct Seed grants from Ecology are only available for producers trying direct seeding for the first time, and once producers receive direct seed grant funding or are already direct seeding on their own, they are not eligible for any additional direct seed grant funding from Ecology. Motion passed.**

- **6. Jim moved to submit voucher #7 for the NE Lincoln County Well Level grant in the amount of \$7,118.76 to DOE. Chris seconded. Motion passed.**
- **7. Jim moved to submit voucher #9 for the 24-39-IM grant in the amount of \$1,581.35 to the Conservation Commission. Josh seconded. Motion passed.**
- **8. Jim moved that the Lincoln County Conservation District VISA statement for March 27, 2024 through April 23, 2024 be approved. The total amount owed was \$630.73. Josh seconded. Discussion was held. There was no public comment. Motion passed.**
- **9. Jim moved to approve the Lincoln County Conservation District Co-Energy / Pacific Pride gas card statement with a closing date of April 15, 2024. The total amount owed was \$144.52. Josh seconded. Motion passed.**

After reviewing the statements, the Board members initialed each page of the bank statements for the checking and money market accounts.

The Board reviewed the report of the current annual leave/sick leave balances for District employees.

- **10. Braidy moved to approve the Treasurer's report and Grant's report as presented. Jim seconded. There was no further public comment. Motion passed.**

C. AGENDA

Employee Liability Coverage Reserve Fund

Board members asked about the status of the Employee Liability Coverage Reserve Fund after looking at the employee annual leave and sick leave report and asked if the fund value needed to be raised. The reserve fund as listed on the first page of the Treasurer's Report had a balance of \$80,000. Board members remembered that this value had been raised within the last several years and thought that the value had already been raised to \$100,000. Elsa reminded the Board that the fund needed to cover the total value of all employee annual leave and sick leave balances in the case of a sudden and unexpected door closing event for the District.

- **11. Jim moved to raise the Employee Liability Coverage Reserve Fund balance to \$125,000. Josh seconded. No further discussion was held. There was no public comment. Motion passed.**

FY 2025 Annual Work Plan

Hard copies of the draft fiscal year Annual Work Plan for 7/1/2024 – 6/30/2025 were distributed. Elsa reminded Board members that all District activities expected for the next fiscal year needed to be included in the Annual Work Plan and that the Plan was a working document that could be updated throughout the fiscal year as needed. The

approved 2025 FY Annual Work Plan needs to be submitted to the Conservation Commission by the end of May.

Elsa commented on selected Program Areas while moving through the draft Annual Work Plan. The DNR Firewise Micro Grant for \$8,000 in Program Area 4 was just awarded to the District yesterday. Lincoln County CD is expecting to continue providing technical assistance to Adams CD as listed in Program Area 7. Even though there is no current grant funding at the moment, working with the Columbia Basin Sustainable Water Coalition (CBSWC) in Program Area 11 has been left in the plan for if and when new funding becomes available. The Mid-Columbia Basin Drought Preparedness Plan has been included in Program Area 13 because a good chance of grant funding is expected in the near future. Delaini and Elayne have been gathering soil health samples this spring for Program Area 16 as a part of the Washington Soil Health Initiative (WASHI). Delaini has been working with Palouse CD on the FLOURISH program (Farmers Leading our United Revolution in Soil Health) for Program Area 14 by downloading soil temperature and moisture content from soil sensors for a Lincoln County producer along the eastern edge of the county.

- **12. Josh moved to approve the FY 2025 Annual Work Plan as presented. Braidy seconded. There was no further public comment. Motion passed.**

Tree & Shrub Planting Update

Elsa reported that the Westley Cress planting project had been completed. A DNR work crew installed the landscape fabric and planted the trees and shrubs. District staff ordered and delivered the fabric and the stems for planting. The Lazy YJ EQIP planting along Hwy 2 and Waukon Road just east of Reardan has also been completed. NRCS designed the planting project and a DNR work crew planted the trees and shrubs. A total of 3,600 stems were planted that included Douglas hawthorn, caragana, Rocky Mountain juniper, red osier dogwood, quaking aspen, and blue elderberry.

Dairy Planning and Assistance Update

Elsa noted that the state Department of Agriculture had directed the Schoonover dairy to work with Lincoln County CD on the update of their dairy nutrient management plan. Elayne is continuing to work with the Zeigler dairy just west of Harrington to have the due date extended for its dairy nutrient management plan along with dairy improvements including concrete alley ways and a lagoon.

Cost Share Action Approval

Hard copies of the May 8 Cost Share Action spreadsheet were distributed. There were 2 applications for cost share payment from the Direct Seed 3 grant and 1 application for cost share payment from the 24-39-FH (Forest Health) grant for fuels reduction, for a total of \$19,625.00.

- **13. Chris moved to approve the May 8 Cost Share Action spreadsheet as presented. Josh seconded. There was no further public comment. Motion passed.**

Fire Protection Meeting

Elsa announced that a public fire protection meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 22 at Davenport Memorial Hall. Guy Gifford with DNR will be the lead speaker at the meeting. Elsa noted that she has been working to get the new Wildfire Preparedness Technician hired and ready to give a presentation at the fire protection meeting. Elsa, Delaini and Elayne have been participating in Zoom interviews with candidates for the Wildfire Preparedness Technician position in the conference room at the office. District staff need more training before they will be ready to demonstrate the fire simulation SimTable to the public. Chris suggested that the District consider having the Wildfire Preparedness Technician position assigned the responsibility of flying the two District drones as part of the job position since no other current District staff have the training and/or experience to fly the drones.

Recent Grant Awards

As noted in the 2025 Annual Work Plan in Program Area 4, the District recently received an \$8,000 micro grant from DNR to distribute 48 pre-cut screens to county residents to install over vents in house siding to help prevent windblown wildfire flames from getting inside or underneath the house and starting a catastrophic house fire.

The District has also received a \$1,150 grant from the Conservation Commission to help cover the cost for District staff time to collect soil health samples in the field for the Washington State Soil Health Initiative (WASHI).

VSP Update

Delaini reported that the VSP Technical Panel tour is scheduled from 9:30 AM to 2:30 PM on Thursday, May 23. VSP project/potential project sites planned for the tour include a livestock watering facility, several water monitoring sites including 1 site that dries up every summer, creek bank stabilization issues, and a fencing project (if time available).

Conservation Commission End of Fiscal Year Funding Grants

Elsa announced that she had applied for a total of \$20,000 in end of fiscal year grant funding from the Conservation Commission to be used for new equipment acquisition, including computer equipment, and for employee health and safety concerns which may include new chairs along with protective gear.

WACD Update

Jeff noted that the next WACD Board of Directors meeting will be held over Zoom on Monday, May 20th from 6 - 8:30 PM. WACD is hosting a Spring Legislative workshop at the Hal Holmes Community Center in Ellensburg on May 29 – June 30. The next Conservation Commission meeting will be held in Pullman on May 16 and be hosted by Palouse CD.

Conservation Commission Report

There was no regular Conservation Commission report. Elsa noted that Mike Baden is participating today in an interview meeting for the Conservation Commission to select a Fire Response Team Leader. Mike will be out to Lincoln County tomorrow to conduct the annual field site visits to review selected LCCD projects in the county that were funded by Conservation Commission funding.

County Commissioners Report

Commissioner Jo Gilchrist reported that both she and Scott Hutsell had announced their intentions to seek reelection for their County Commissioner positions this fall. If Scott is reelected this would be his 5th term as a County Commissioner. Commissioner Gilchrist announced that the Washington State Department of Agriculture and the WSU College of Agricultural, Human and Natural Resource Sciences will be cohosting the 2024 Washington Agricultural Viability Conference on May 29 – 30 at the Three Rivers Convention Center in Kennewick.

Washington House Bill 1216 – Clean energy siting addresses the efficient and effective siting and permitting of new proposed clean energy projects such as wind turbines and solar panels in Washington while protecting the environment and overburdening of local communities and tribal lands. The Department of Commerce is conducting 3 community meetings for public comments on clean energy projects in Dayton (May 14), Zillah (May 15) and Mt. Vernon (May 16).

Commissioner Gilchrist noted that the Lincoln County Planning Commission is composed of 5 members, with 1 member each appointed from County Commissioner Districts 1, 2 and 3 and the last 2 seats being filled by at large positions which are appointed by the County Commissioners with recommendations from the overall Planning Commission. Jo reported that there has been a sudden increase in county residents who are now interested in filling the one vacant at large position with the recent discussions and controversy with the proposed wind turbine installations in the county. A new 12 member board has been created to address the wind turbine installation issue and is composed of 6 members in favor of wind turbines and 6 members opposed to wind turbine installation in the county.

The long time County Engineer is retiring in May and two candidates have applied for the position and will be interviewed in June. The county has received 88 comments on its website for the proposed Lake Roosevelt Superfund designation issue. The Commissioners were surprised that a majority of comments were in favor of the Superfund designation.

Jim asked if the number of applications for building permits is increasing in the county. Commissioner Gilchrist reported that only about 20 new building permit requests had been received so far this year, which is quite low. Jim noted that vehicles driving on Hwy 2 tend to be driving too fast most of the time and asked if anything might be done about this issue. Josh asked if anybody is looking into adding passing lanes on Hwy 2. Jo noted that only the State Patrol is responsible for issuing speeding tickets on Hwy 2, and that there has been no success in the past with getting DOT to investigate the prospects for installing passing lanes on Hwy 2 in the county.

Jo reported that Lincoln County had to absorb a 52% increase in insurance premiums last December. The county is working to close the budget deficit. Some of the deficit has been caused by a \$1.7 million decrease in sales tax revenues in the county. Chris asked if wind turbine farms installed in the county might be a potential solution for future county budget gaps.

FSA Report

There was no report from FSA.

NRCS Report

Dick reported that 10 CSP contracts have been obligated and that a second CSP signup will be held this year due to the available IRA (Inflation Reduction Act) funding. Fourteen EQIP contracts have been obligated and 9 more contracts have been approved. Lauren, Samantha and Rainey have been attending pest management training in order to get job approval authority. Dick has working on cost share for CRP contracts. The West Palouse Team will find out in the near future if 2 new employees have been hired for the Ritzville office.

Miscellaneous

Elsa noted that NRCS still has not sent their new order for office furniture and that NRCS staff in the office may not be receiving their new furniture until December.

Dean described the latest well level chart for well BIU506. The latest well level measurements on the far right of the chart show that peak spring well level in early April was at 7 ft. below the land surface, which is now looking to be about average for the well in spring. However, the relatively dry March and last half of April have contributed to the well level already dropping ½ ft. down from the spring peak, even though the frost-free faucet has yet to be turned on for spring.

Dean also passed around several printouts of the map from DOH (Department of Health) website that shows the detection of arsenic at greater than 10 PPB (parts per billion) and greater than 50 PPB in public drinking water sources across the state. Dean noted that there were no detections of arsenic greater than 10 PPB in the town wells in the more central parts of Lincoln County on the Columbia Plateau basalt flow area. But 8 public wells along Lake Roosevelt along the north edge of the county showed arsenic detections greater than 10 PPB. Other wells in the northeast and central part of the state showed arsenic detections greater than 10 PPB, which is not too surprising because tributary streams flow through the older, non-basalt bedrock areas here that can have more arsenic in them.

But the map also showed 5 public wells in Grant County and 2 wells in the panhandle of Adams County that showed arsenic detections greater than 10 PPB in areas far away from the Columbia River and also on the Columbia Plateau basalt flow area. These Grant and Adam county wells are also within the currently established CBIP (Columbia Basin Irrigation Project) area. Has anybody measured arsenic levels in the CBIP project water?

Delaini and Braidy announced that a spring canola tour on May 17 would be held starting in Wilbur and ending at the Wilke Farm just east of Davenport.

Request for Public Comment

Jeff asked if there was any more public comment for the meeting. There was no public comment.

Chairman Jeff Schibel adjourned the meeting at 10:51 AM. The next regularly scheduled meeting is on Wednesday, June 12 starting at 9:00 AM. The 2024 WADE (Washington Association of District Employees) training is being held at the Sleeping Lady in

Leavenworth on June 10 -12 and so there may be some meeting conflicts that need to be addressed.

Respectfully submitted,

Josh Sherwood, Secretary

Dean White, Minute Taker

SUMMARY:

All 13 motions were reviewed:

- 1. M/S/P to approve the April 10, 2024 minutes as presented.
- 2. M/S/P to pay and approve vouchers #12398 to #12425, along with 15 EFT's, totaling \$86,556.18.
- 3. M/S/P to submit voucher #4 for the 24-39-FH grant in the amount of \$170.53 to the Conservation Commission.
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- 10. M/S/P to approve the Treasurer's report and Grant's report as presented.
- 11. M/S/P to raise the Employee Liability Coverage Reserve Fund balance to \$125,000.
- 12. M/S/P to approve the FY 2024 Annual Work Plan as presented.
- 13. M/S/P to approve the May 8 Cost Share Action spreadsheet as presented.