

**LINCOLN COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT
BOARD MEETING**
Upstairs Meeting Room Above Auditorium, Fairgrounds– Davenport, WA
Wednesday, November 8, 2023

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:

Meeting called to order at 8:34 AM by Chairman, Jeff Schibel. Those attending the meeting in person were as follows: Jim Baye, Chris Laney and Braidy Haden - LCCD Supervisors; Mike Baden, Conservation Commission; Elsa Bowen, Delaini Disher, Debra Armstrong, and Dean White - LCCD staff.

A. MINUTES: Additions / Corrections:

- *1. Chris moved to approve the October 10, 2023 minutes as presented. Braidy seconded. There was no public comment. Motion passed.*

B. TREASURER'S REPORT / TRANSACTIONS REPORT:

- *2. Chris moved to pay and approve vouchers #12234 to #12262, along with 15 EFT's, totaling \$84,069.32. Braidy seconded. No discussion was held. Motion passed.*
- *3. Chris moved to submit voucher #6 for the Direct Seed 3 grant in the amount of \$47,238.63 to DOE. Braidy seconded. Motion passed.*
- *4. Chris moved to submit voucher #3 for the 24-39-NR grant in the amount of \$0.00 to the Conservation Commission. Braidy seconded. Motion passed.*
- *5. Chris moved to submit voucher #5 for the NE Lincoln County Well Level grant in the amount of \$7,452.36 to DOE. Braidy seconded. Motion passed.*
- *6. Chris moved to submit voucher #4 for the VSP 5 grant in the amount of \$11,754.53 to the Conservation Commission. Braidy seconded. Motion passed.*

There were no VISA card statements available by the time of the meeting.

- *7. Chris moved to approve the Lincoln County Conservation District Co-Energy / Pacific Pride gas card statement with a closing date of October 15, 2023. The total amount owed was \$90.72. Braidy seconded. Motion passed.*
- *8. Chris moved to approve the Lincoln County Conservation District Co-Energy / Pacific Pride gas card statement with a closing date of October 31, 2023. The total amount owed was \$85.71. Braidy 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.

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

C. AGENDA

Annual NACD Investment Request

Elsa announced that the annual investment request from the National Association of Conservation Districts had been received. Lincoln County CD has given NACD annual support of \$775.00 for many years. The general consensus of the Board was for staff to send an investment check for \$775 to NACD for 2024.

Springbrook Accounting Renewal

Elsa reported that the District has received the invoice from Springbrook for \$6,303.49 to provide accounting software and assistance for 2024. Discussion was held. Elsa noted that the Springbrook software and assistance were well worth the money for the software and additional help with grants and tax assistance.

10. Braidy moved to approve renewing the contract with Springbrook for accounting software and assistance for 2024. Chris seconded. There was no further public comment. Motion passed.

Budget Review and Approval

Elsa distributed 11 X 17" hard copies of the Lincoln County CD Budget with the separate columns on the right for the 2023 budget, 2023 amended budget, and the draft proposed 2024 Budget. The 2023 amended budget is higher than the original approved 2023 budget primarily due to the fire recovery grant money received later in 2023. The amendments to the 2023 budget and the proposed 2024 Budget needed to be reviewed and approved.

New grant money available for 2024 for the DNR CWPP grant the Department of Health Source Water grant was discussed. The \$15,000 for office rent was included the same as what has been done in previous year's budgets, but since the District is not legally able to pay rent to NRCS according to the GAO, this expense is not expected to be paid in 2024 either. Elsa noted that employee annual leave and sick leave are not included on the budget sheet because they are not covered under the operational budget but instead are covered by a reserve budget. Elsa noted that there will be no WaterSMART grant for 2024 and the SIMS table grant was just a one-time grant for 2023. Elsa also noted that there is currently about \$869,000 total in the District bank accounts.

Jo asked if there was a COLA (Cost of Living Allowance) line item in the budget. Elsa reported that there is no COLA in the budget but that the Board typically approves a similar wage increase in employee salaries at the end of the year. Jo noted that Lincoln County just approved the maximum cap of 4.5% for the COLA increase for County Employees.

11. Chris moved to approve the 2023 Budget as amended and to approve the 2024 Budget as presented. Braidy seconded. Elsa reminded the Board that the new 2024 Budget can be amended at any time as needed by the Board. There was no further public comment. Motion passed.

Surplus Equipment Sale

Hardcopies of the surplus equipment sale bids received list were distributed. Bids were received for the 2008 white 4-door pickup, a Cannon camera, and a Garmin GPS unit. Bids ranged from \$600 to \$15,000 for the white pickup. Elsa noted that the Kelly Blue Book value for the white pickup ranged from \$9,000 to \$11,000. There still is some surplus computer equipment for sale or other disposal.

12. Chris moved to approve the highest bids as presented on the surplus equipment sale bid list. Braidy seconded. Braidy requested to see a list of other District property. Elsa noted that a list of small portable District property not including vehicles is kept and can be made available. There was no further public comment. Motion passed.

Building Update

Elsa reported that the ongoing remodeling of the Davenport Service Center is not expected to be finished until the end of January 2024. Elsa noted that the next scheduled meeting is Wednesday, December 13, and asked the Board if it wanted to meet in the upstairs room above the Auditorium again or find an alternative quieter meeting room such as the downstairs Public Works meeting room. Jo suggested that the County Commissioners Chambers in the Courthouse would be quieter and she would check to see if it was available for December 13 at 9 AM. The Board decided by general consensus that the plumbing/ventilation noise from the south end of the upstairs meeting room was too noisy for the next Board meeting and requested that the Commissioners Chambers or the Public Works meeting room be reserved if possible for the December meeting.

Cost Share Update

Copies of the Cost Share Update spreadsheet were distributed. The sheet included the last application available for the Direct Seed 3 cost share grant to fund.

13. Braidy moved to approve the Cost Share Action spreadsheet as presented. Chris seconded. There was no public comment. Motion passed.

Direct Seed 3 Grant Update

Board members asked if District staff have had an opportunity to speak with Ecology staff about the possibility for future cost share rates provided by Ecology funded direct seed grants to be raised to help compensate for the increasing costs of implementing direct seeding on cropland. The answer was no. The current Direct Seed 3 grant cost share rate of \$28 per acre was the maximum allowable rate at the time that the grant agreement was made and will remain in place for the duration of the grant.

VSP Update

Delaini reported that she had recently met with the Lincoln County VSP Work Group and the local WDFW representative. Cost share rates for projects funded by the new VSP grant will remain the same. Ben and Delaini will participate in a Zoom meeting

before the next Work Group meeting. Delaini also reported that she had recently met with some Okanogan CD staff who had recently started working with the VSP program in their county. The Conservation Commission will be providing VSP monitoring training for CD staff in the near future.

Delaini also noted that Ryan Boylan with Palouse CD is in charge of the FLOURISH program (Farmers Leading Our United Revolution in Soil Health) in eastern Washington and is currently monitoring 40 sites primarily in Whitman County. One cooperater in eastern Lincoln County is participating in the FLOURISH program. Delaini and Ryan are planning to hold future discussions on the potential overlap between VSP and the FLOURISH program.

Fire Resiliency and Wildfire Protection

Elsa reported that the District has been working with Spokane CD to have some of their staff conduct Firewise/fire resiliency assessments for 20 home and property owners in the Lincoln area. Elsa has applied for \$75,000 in grant money for implementing new Firewise projects.

Elsa announced that DNR had recently awarded a \$64,983.00 grant to Lincoln County Emergency Management to update the county CWPP (Community Wildfire Protection Plan) plan over the next 5 years. Elsa is the Chairman for the Lincoln County CWPP work group and will be working with local fire districts, DNR, BLM, and WDFW to update the Lincoln County CWPP plan.

Elsa also announced that sims fire simulation table training will be held next Friday at Spokane CD and that all 5 NE Area CD's and DNR have been invited to attend the training and work with the 3 sims table setups that were obtained with the sims table grant funding obtained by Lincoln County CD. Mike Baden is also planning on attending the training on behalf of the Conservation Commission.

County Commissioners Report

Jo reported that Lincoln County had held its annual Budget meeting on Monday during a very long day in which the heads of all departments had 15 minutes to present work plans and request funding for their department in 2024. There is currently a \$1.5 million deficit between current revenues and expenses for the 2024 county budget.

Work is progressing on preparations for building the new arena at the Fairgrounds using the \$1 million in grant funding received by the county. The hog barn is being moved to the lawn area and will be placed on a new concrete pad. Large amounts of funding have recently been awarded to the Odessa Subaquifer project work. High priority Public Works projects for 2024 include renovation work on Duck Lake Road and Miles-Creston Road.

For the ongoing broadband installation project, Almira will be the first city to have new broadband service implemented before 2024. The Harrington to Sprague and Davenport to Hawk Creek areas will be the next locations to have broadband service turned on for them. Lincoln County has already spent \$25 million in grant funding on installing broadband infrastructure and another \$44 million from 2 funds are available to install more broadband service across the county.

Jeff congratulated Jo on being elected as County Commissioner during the recent elections.

Conservation Commission Report

Mike Baden reported that the Conservation Commission Executive Director Search Committee has approved negotiations with the top Executive Director candidate starting last week and that the new Executive Director will be selected at the November Conservation Commission meeting in Wenatchee following the conclusion of the annual WACD meeting. Mike also noted that there have been some discussions about the appointment of a Deputy Executive Director who might be based somewhere east of the Cascades. Elsa noted she had sent a letter to Governor Inslee on behalf of the District recommending that the supplemental budget request from the Conservation Commission be approved.

NRCS and FSA Report

Lauren Samaniego, Soil Conservationist in the Davenport office, introduced Rayne Roberts and Samantha Lopez, two new NRCS employees recently hired for the Davenport office, and Mitchell Hughes, a new employee hired for the Davenport FSA office.

WACD Update

Jeff reported that the WACD Board meeting was held recently on Zoom. Jon Wyss from FSA covered some FSA programs. The focus of the meeting was on NW CD's with some presentations on Orca conservation and on rates and charges issues. WACD stocks are down about \$25,000 due to the down stock market. Only 4 CD's have not paid the annual WACD dues. Two CD's are currently using the available WACD legal team services.

It was noted that a lot of NRCS employees attended the NE Area Meeting held in October in Spokane, but not a lot of CD Board Supervisors attended. There was also not a lot of resolutions presented at the meeting to approve. The NE Area meeting will be held by Spokane CD next year at their office in Spokane.

The Annual WACD Meeting will be held in Wenatchee on November 27 – 29. Elsa has been working on registrations for Board members. At this time Jeff, Chris and Elsa are planning on attending and Braidy will be attending by Zoom.

Ag Burn Update

Dean reported that he remotely attended the recent November 1 Ag Burn Task Force meeting by Microsoft Teams. There were no complaints on any ag burns conducted in the east and central areas of the state this year so far but that there were some complaints and some fines for residential outdoor burns primarily for the burning of illegal materials. Lincoln County did have 3 relatively large field burns this fall, but the total acres burned were still small compared to the ag burns conducted in Columbia, Whitman and Walla Walla counties. It was noted during the meeting that CD staff have done a good job of consulting with the local Ecology office on how to properly work with and issue burn permits for requested ag burns that don't meet the standard Ag Burn Task Force criteria, and these included a field burn conducted in southeast Lincoln County.

Miscellaneous

Elsa and Jeff proposed that Board members hold a 1-hour strategic planning session to discuss and plan future District programs and goals such as educational training for local school kids.

Elsa reported that Delaini is working with the Harrington dairy on needed updates to its operating resources. The Hutterite dairy southeast of Odessa may also benefit from assistance on dairy operation updates, but District staff have not been able yet to make contact with the dairy.

The next EQIP Local Working Group (LWG) meeting is scheduled for February 24, 2024 at the WAWG building in Ritzville. Mike Baden will facilitate the LWG meeting again.

Elsa will give a presentation on District programs and services at the Lincoln County Weed Board meeting at the Davenport Memorial Hall on November 14.

The 2024 PNW Direct Seed Association meeting will be held in the Three Rivers Convention Center in Kennewick on January 9 and 10. The Advanced Soil Health Day will be held on January 8. The PNW Canola Association meeting will be held in Moscow on January 24 and 25. Some District staff may attend these meetings. Board members were asked if they were planning on attending either of these meetings.

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 10:22 AM. The next meeting is currently scheduled for Wednesday, December 13 starting slightly later at 9:00 AM in the Lincoln County Commissioners Chambers in the Courthouse in Davenport. The general consensus of the Board was that the upstairs meeting room above the Auditorium was too noisy due to the plumbing/ventilation equipment to hold future Board meetings and that other alternatives for quieter meeting rooms for board meetings should be sought until the remodeling of the Davenport USDA Service Center is completed at or about the end of January.

Respectfully submitted,

Josh Sherwood, Secretary

Dean White, Minute Taker

SUMMARY:

All 13 motions were reviewed:

- 1. M/S/P to approve the October 10, 2023 minutes as presented.
- 2. M/S/P to pay and approve vouchers #12234 to #12262, along with 15 EFT's, totaling \$84,069.32.
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- 10. M/S/P to approve renewing the contract with Springbrook for accounting software and assistance for 2024.
- 11. M/S/P to approve the 2023 Budget as amended and to approve the 2024 Budget as presented.
- 12. M/S/P to approve the highest bids as presented on the surplus equipment sale bid list.
- 13. M/S/P to approve the Cost Share Action spreadsheet as presented.