



**Columbia  
Soil & Water  
Conservation District**

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**Minutes of the  
Columbia SWCD Board of Directors  
Meeting December 18, 2024**

**Directors Present:**

Debra Brimacombe, Vice Chair  
Dave Freytag, Director  
Michael Calhoun, Chair  
Bill Eagle, Secretary  
Jason Busch, Director

**Associate Directors:**

David Taylor (via Zoom)

**Public:**

Claudia Eagle

**CSWCD Staff:**

Malysa Legg, District Manager (via Zoom)  
Jennifer Chavez, Operations & Outreach  
Coordinator  
Crystalyn Bush, Resource Conservationist

**Natural Resources Conservations Service  
(NRCS):**

Hannah Isaacs, District Conservationist  
Rebekah Gaxiola, Natural Resource Specialist

**Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA):**

Rick Cowlshaw, Regional Water Quality  
Specialist

***CALL TO ORDER OF BOARD MEETING: 4:00 PM***

**Prior Month's Minutes: Motion Brimacombe/Eagle** to approve the Minutes from 11-20-24 as presented. **Approved Motion passed by unanimous vote.**

**Financial Report: Motion Busch/Eagle** to accept the Financial Report from 11-30-24. **Approved Motion passed by unanimous vote.**

**Bills to Pay:** There were no bills to pay

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

**ODA – Rick Cowlshaw**

Rick introduced himself to the board. He is the new Water Quality Specialist for the North Coast and North Willamette regions. He has already been working closely with Amber and Crystalyn on projects as well as the Scappoose Strategic Implementation Area (SIA) on North and South Scappoose Creek. His office is in Salem, and he has been in the position since May. Rick added that ODA has a new website and a new online reporting portal that they are piloting with the SIA annual reports. Brief discussion was held. Rick also provided a handout on ODA's Ag. Drainage maintenance program.

**REPORTS**

- **NRCS:** Hannah informed the board that NRCS will have a summer intern. The start date is yet to be determined but she will let them know once she knows. She would like the intern to be included in site visits and outreach events with the SWCD when possible. She also mentioned that the Farm Bill is expiring this year. The new bill could cause changes to programs and/or

funding. The Local Work Group has been scheduled for February 13<sup>th</sup> at the SWCD office from 9:30 AM – noon and will be available to attend virtually also.

- **Staff:** Crys explained that she and Amber are staying busy with the projects recently presented at a previous board meeting. She added that the Oak Habitat project in Scappoose received funding and that this project has opened a lot of opportunities, including a demonstration on new burning technology for weeds. Brief discussion was held.

Jenn mentioned that the directors should have received the Annual Report in the mail and gave copies to Bill to give at an upcoming Chamber of Commerce meeting.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

- **District Manager Job:** Jason expressed his concern with including a duty for the District Manager to take lead on climate change. His concern is that landowners may stop coming to the CSWCD for help. Discussion was held. Bill also mentioned that he would like to see education in agriculture listed with the qualifications.

**Motion Busch/Eagle** to approve changing the wording from “climate change” to “climate resiliency”. **Approved Motion passed by unanimous vote.**

**Motion Eagle/Busch** to approve adding agriculture education to the qualifications for the job description. **Approved Motion passed by unanimous vote.**

- **Financial/HR Manager Job Description:** Jason requested to revisit the topic from last month’s meeting regarding the Financial/HR Manager job description, noting that the proposed position’s description has many changes from the current position’s description, different than what was expressed during the discussion leading up to a motion. Malysa said that she made a mistake last month and forgot that changes had indeed been made to the description.

Jason asked what duties were taken away/added between the old and new descriptions.

Malysa explained that the District Manager (DM) has the final say/approval on financial decisions. The DM will no longer be included in building the budget with the Financial Manager (FM), the FM will work on the budget and then present it to the DM for final approval. A similar process would be used for the annual audit. Malysa added that it is easier if only one person is working on the draft during the process.

Deb mentioned that the description states that the position primarily works from home. She questioned if that should be changed, adding that she would like Malysa’s presence in the office, especially until a new DM is hired. Malysa stated that the description should follow the new work-from-home policy, adding that this might have been left in from the previous description by mistake and she will correct it. Jason referenced a copy of the old description which states that the position requires work to be done primarily from the office. He added that this condition was previously added specifically due to past issues.

Jason also mentioned that the new description is now listed as an exempt (salaried) position. Malysa said that she believes this additional revision makes sense to be a salaried position because of the hours required to perform these duties, especially during the budget and audit. Jason added that the salary chart that was approved in March did not list this new Financial Manager position, especially at compensation step 7. Deb mentioned that a new salary chart might be needed.

Malysa added that there were minimum wage and COLA increases since she was previously the FM. Jason expressed his concern that the FM used to be on compensation step 4/5 on the salary chart but is now on step 7, adding that he doesn’t agree with an office of five employees having two employees making around \$100k.

*Dave left around 4:45 pm.*

Malysa explained that the FM salary was discussed in the previous Executive Session.

Further discussion on this was held. Jason added that he was unaware that the FM salary was discussed.

**Motion Brimacombe/Eagle** to approve the Financial/HR Manager job description with the removal of “primarily works from home” and replacing it with “follows the telework policy”.

David Taylor, Associate Director, mentioned that he has previous experience with audits and budgets and asked if those are the primary duties for this position or if there are more included since the office is so small. Jason stated that he can not support the district having two employees at that salary level when one person has adequately handled both positions for the past two years. Yes votes: Deb, Bill. No Votes: Jason. **Motion failed.** Michael would like to table the discussion.

- **Annual Meeting Guests:** Malyssa asked that the board let her know if there is anyone they would like her to invite to the annual meeting.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

- **SDAO Conference Who wants to go?:** Malyssa asked if anyone would like to attend the SDAO (Special Districts Association of Oregon) conference in Bend in February, adding that she and Jenn plan to attend.
- **SWCD Certifications:**
  - **Storm Ready from National Weather Service:** Michael explained that if the District had the certificate, we could apply for a grant if there was ever storm damage to the building. He added that the city of Vernonia is certified. Discussion was held. Jason asked if the District could become a storm-ready partner, allowing use of the meeting room if needed. Deb would like the board to look into this further and discuss later. Michael mentioned that it might be helpful to have a guest speaker from the National Weather Service at an upcoming meeting.
  - **National Wildlife Federation (NWF):** Michael would like the District to apply for a certificate with the NWF and install signage to promote the “wildlife sanctuary” that surrounds the office to the public. Brief discussion held. Jenn will look into applying for the certificate.

**Motion: Busch/Eagle** to approve certifying the SWCD with the National Wildlife Federation.

**Approved Motion passed by unanimous vote.**

- **Contracts:** N/A.

### **BOARD REPORTS**

- Bill is concerned that the Board has two unfilled positions heading into next year. Jason mentioned that tonight is technically his last meeting. He explained that he didn't run in the election because he felt guilty about his attendance recently, but he would like to be reappointed if no one else is running for his position.  
Michael would like to thank Jeff for his service on the board. Jason added that the VanNatta's as a whole deserve recognition and is sad that they will no longer be on the board.
- Jason explained that the Nehalem has crested and his property has a lot of water on it. Brief discussion was held.

***REGULAR MEETING ADJOURNED AT 5:08 PM***

Respectfully Submitted by: *Jennifer Chavez*  
Jennifer Chavez, Operations & Outreach Coordinator