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**East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District  
Board of Directors *APPROVED* Meeting Minutes**

Monday, October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022

**6:00pm- Call to Order**

**Zimmer-Stucky, in Guebert's absence**, called to order the regular meeting of the EMSWCD Board of Directors at 6:00pm on Monday, October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022, via videoconference.

**6:00pm- Introductions, Review/revise agenda, Review previous action items**

**Zimmer-Stucky conducted introductions for the record. The following persons were present:**

Board of Directors: Jasmine Zimmer-Stucky (At-Large 2 Director, Vice-Chair), Joe Rossi (Zone 1 Director), Jim Carlson (At-Large 1 Director, Treasurer) (6:45pm virtual), Laura Masterson (Zone 2 Director, Secretary) (7:00pm virtual)

Board of Directors Absent: Mike Guebert (Zone 3 Director, Chair)

Staff: Nancy Hamilton (Executive Director), Kathy Shearin (Urban Lands Program Supervisor), Julie DiLeone (Rural Lands Program Supervisor), Dan Mitten (Chief of Finance & Operations), Matt Shipkey (Land Legacy Program Manager), Heather Nelson Kent (Grants Program Manager), Rowan Steele (Headwaters Farm Program Manager), Alex Woolery (Marketing and Media Manager), Asianna Fernandez (Executive Assistant)

Guests: Don Kloft (Oregon Department of Agriculture) (virtual)

Changes to the agenda: Item 2: PIC 2023 Timeline & Outreach Update, Item 3: Monthly Financial Reports for July and August 2022, Item 4: FY 21-22 Annual Meeting Resolution, Item 5: USDA Increasing Land, Capital, and Market Access Grant Application Update, Item 6 (if time permits): Board of Directors Discussion.

Previous action items: N/A

**6:03pm- Time reserved for public comment**

**Kloft** introduced himself as the new Ag Water Quality Specialist for North Valley and North Coast at ODA. Plans on visiting Headwaters Farm on Thursday. Biannual review for Lower Willamette area on December 1<sup>st</sup>, no changes to the rules. Looking for more members for Local Advisory Committee (LAC).

**6:07pm- Executive Director Update**

- Hamilton has been on vacation for most of September. DiLeone acted as interim ED, oversaw her responsibilities, no major updates.
- Continuing to organize informal meetings with other SWCDs EDs (Yamhill, West Multnomah, Clackamas, Tualatin, Upper Willamette, etc.)
- October 17<sup>th</sup> LLC meeting to discuss strategic planning efforts for the Land Legacy Program.

**6:09pm- PIC 2023 Timeline & Outreach Update**

**Kent** gave an overview of the Partners In Conservation (PIC) Grant process for 2023

- October 19<sup>th</sup> to December 15<sup>th</sup>: Application process open.
- February to March: Grant Review Committee meets to form recommendations.
- Hoping for a Board member to join the committee again this year.
- The applications will be broken up into two categories: sustainable ag and community garden category, and conservation, nature scaping, forestry category.



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- Will have postcards to send out to the public to promote the open application process.
- Highlight of the small grant process

**Zimmer-Stucky** Have there been any grants coming through that were particularly exciting or interesting?

**Kent** Most of the urban ag projects tend to be up and running pretty quickly after being accepted. The upfront 30% funding option helped many grantees get started earlier, especially the smaller, culturally specific groups. For example, Play, Grow, Learn with Adam Kohl from Outgrowing Hunger as a fiscal sponsor, was able to use the upfront funds to pay their apprentice youth right when they started.

**Rossi** Is there a scoring criterion for choosing grantees? Do you feel good about it?

**Kent** We updated it recently, brought it down to 6 questions. The Grant Reviewing Committee came very prepared and did a good job of scoring each application. The committee is asked to allot about 20-25 hours for application reviewing and meetings. Each application is about 6 pages of reading. ZoomGrants is used to store all the applications and manage all grant documents and requests.

**Zimmer-Stucky** Reminded that multiple Board members are allowed to join. Any updates on the Portland Clean Energy Fund affecting the grant landscape in Portland?

**Kent** A couple grantees were pretty strategic about applying for what they need – focusing on areas outside of Portland's boundary but within the urban portion of our district. Kohl of Outgrowing Hunger is a great example. We don't think we'll see applications from some of the grantees from this last round again.

- Example: ELSO, Inc and Blueprint Foundation who both received relatively large grants from PCEF
- More applicants this year from urban ag and community garden organizations. We were only able to fund \$1 for every \$2 requested.

**Action Item: Kent** to reach out to Kohl to get a meeting with Rossi set up and keep Rossi updated about becoming a Grant review committee member.

**Kent** SPACE Grants: 62k, funded 32 projects last year. Small community event/project grants. Rolling application process. Awarded all funding by end of May, had to turn some of the later applicants away. Only receive a few every month. Hamilton has been quick in reading through and approving them. Seeing a trend in more applications being sent in after email outreach is sent out. A few applicants who were not rewarded with PIC grants did end up applying for SPACE grants and were awarded smaller grants. Ex:

- Leach Botanical Gardens educator for a forest bathing walk
- Zenger Farms Family Festival event
- Irvington Elderplace community garden project

#### **6:31pm- Monthly Financial Reports: July 2022**

**Mitten** For July, there weren't many variances since it's the beginning of the fiscal year. Healthy Balance Sheet. Checking account is higher by \$600,000 mostly due to more property tax income as well as interest rates raising again (1.9%). Balance sheet is 4.3% higher than last year at this time. P&L budget performance shows some higher lines due to buying some office and computer equipment and a social media archiving subscription, that we've been budgeted and planned on buying we just didn't know when. The training and development line is due to the CONNECT Conference registration. There also shows some capital outlay for the purchase of a Power Ox at Headwaters Farm. The P&L by Class looked good with no update given.

#### **6:35pm- Monthly Financial Reports: August 2022**

**Mitten** August Balance Sheet shows very little difference. P&L Budget performance shows higher rebates due to grant funds that wasn't completely used by a grantee and returned, as well as COBRA reimbursements. Office supplies are higher due to office and computer peripheral equipment needs. Publications and promos slightly higher due to co-sponsoring funds for the Multnomah County Farm



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Bureau BBQ. Training and development line higher as in previous month due to the CONNECT Conference. PL by class is on track.

#### **6:37pm – District Event Update**

- OAT event at Headwaters Farm: 30-40 attendees. Masterson and Guebert attended. Nick Pfiel, Headwaters Farm Operations Assistant, gave a presentation on Headwaters Incubator Farm. OAT found that there were a lot of outreach opportunities.
- Farm Bureau event: **Rossi** For next year, would like a speaking opportunity for the District to break the barriers between farmers and resources. Purpose was to host a BBQ and bring farmers out to boost morale. Upwards of a hundred people attended.
- Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership Annual Fundraiser: PIC Grant recipient for some of the estuary restoration work they do. **Rossi** A lot of energy, focused mission, got a lot of ideas to bring for future Farm Bureau events. **Zimmer-Stucky (who works at LCEP)** 140+ tickets sold, most showed up.
- OCEAN Connect Conference: **Hamilton** 12 EMSWCD staff members attended. Conference was well designed, workshop tracks (8) were spread out between staff. Highlight on the USDA carbon tracker, Comet Company, and Comet Farm. Jeremy Baker from staff is very involved and led the opening message and Q&A with the keynote speaker. **Shearin** This conference is meant for all SWCDs, Land Trusts, Watershed Councils.

#### **6:50pm- FY 21-22 Annual Meeting Resolution**

**Mitten** presented Resolution 2022-10-01 to the Board. This resolution establishes the date and time of the FY21-22 Annual Meeting. The date and time on the resolution is Monday, December 5, 2022, at 6:00 pm.

**MOTION: Rossi moved to approve the Annual Meeting Resolution No. 2022-10-01, Zimmer-Stucky 2<sup>nd</sup>. Motion passed unanimously (3-0, Guebert and Masterson absent).**

#### **6:51pm- Approval of minutes**

**MOTION: Carlson moved to approve August 1, 2022, Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, Rossi 2<sup>nd</sup>. Motion passed unanimously (3-0, Guebert and Masterson absent).**

**MOTION: Carlson moved to approve August 3, 2022, Special Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, Rossi 2<sup>nd</sup>. Motion passed unanimously (3-0, Guebert and Masterson absent).**

**MOTION: Carlson moved to approve August 24, 2022, Special Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, Rossi 2<sup>nd</sup>. Motion passed (3-0, Guebert and Masterson absent).**

#### **6:55pm- Break**

#### **7:05pm- USDA Increasing Land, Capital, and Market Access Grant Application Update**

**Hamilton** introduced Shipkey and Steele. Thanked everyone on the Board for the informal okay to pursue this grant opportunity. This kind of opportunity for significant funding without competing with other SWCDs is rare, and the kind of applicants the USDA is looking for seems to align with who EMSWCD is as a soil and water district as well as the work we're doing in strategic planning now.

**Shipkey** This is a \$300 million USDA grant opportunity open to non-profits and government entities across the US. Grant purpose is to advance farm access opportunities for underserved growers, so an application must be focused on that. The funds may be spent over a term of up to 5 years. There are 3 categories of applicants, we're in the category with a \$2.5 million grant ask ceiling. Unclear whether USDA might consider partial funding.

**Steele** gave a brief overview of how he and Shipkey approached this grant opportunity:



- The Grant application is due on October 28<sup>th</sup>.
- It's a unique opportunity to create access for underserved farmers and soil and water health victories at the same time.
- These initiatives are not new ideas, they've been informed by feedback from different organizations, Headwaters graduates and farmers, and the Board.
- Suite of offerings to help us do what we're already doing: align services and programs, looking for gaps to fill, leveraging existing resources.
- The initiatives work to help farmers in different stages. They're designed to work together but are individual offerings.
- **Zimmer-Stucky** In the timeline, it says there's a fast turn around and funding should be given out by January 2023, and since the District is in budget season at the same time, even if we don't get accepted, we can still consider these initiatives in our own budget too? **Steele** replied that we can manage for this.

**Steele and Shipkey** presented the 5 elements (initiatives) of the grant.

1. Future HIP Farmer Development Scholarships: A collaboration between an underserved farmer (coming from other entry level farm programs), an established farm, and the District. The underserved farmer would work on the established farm for a couple years in a position where they get hands on experience and with some kind of management responsibilities. The mentor farmer will pay the underserved farmer minimum wage and the District will use the grant funds to cost share the wages (ex. \$8 per hour on top). The underserved farmer gets the experience needed to become a successful farmer and work towards the Headwaters Farm Incubator Program (HIP), the mentor gets a reliable employee who's motivated, and the District is feeding that pipeline of farmers and creating opportunities for folks who might not otherwise have them.

**Masterson** For managers who are already being paid above minimum wage, how does that play into this idea?

**Steele** Labor is the biggest cost for a lot of farms, so looking to drive down that cost would help them as well. The mentor farms would also take on additional commitments as mentors and teachers, which could be a learning curve and take more time.

**Masterson** This sounds a lot like Rogue's internship program. Would rather leverage partnerships instead of reinventing the same idea.

**Steele** Rogue's intern farmers are employees of the host farm but are also paying the farm for the education they're receiving from working. The underserved farmers in this initiative would not have to pay for the education/mentorship. It might work parallel to Rogue's second year program a little more than expected.

**Masterson** How many managers would we sponsor per year? Are we prioritizing BIPOC/marginalized communities?

**Steele** There would be 4 positions per year over the 5-year grant. First initial form of vetting would be through those internship programs who already have a strong consideration around creating opportunities for underserved growers.

**Rossi** Would the cost of carrying the program be carried through the grant or through us? Including the additional staffing requirements, and all other costs associated with us carrying the program?

**Steele** This initiative wouldn't require any additional capacity on our end, so it would be 100% covered by the grant. The grant will come through the District, managed by Steele, the Grants program, and CFO.

**Zimmer-Stucky** We do have 2 open positions that we could re-create to manage the capacity.



**Hamilton** There are various opportunities/options for the management of this program: a general manager across all initiatives to oversee everything, discrete consultants where we don't have capacity or expertise, etc. Considering this is something we already have as a priority for the District, these are things we already want to continue working on even if we don't get the grant.

**Rossi** suggested that we ask for the capacity in the grant.

**Zimmer-Stucky** Does the grant fund staff time for implementation and administration?

**Shipkey** We could fund the time that is already committed to this as well as bring on extra capacity.

**Steele** No funding match is required for this grant.

**Masterson** This is an amazing opportunity, thanked Steele and Shipkey for finding this opportunity and working through it. Are farm wage scholarships for multiple years? How long will this manager level last for each farmer and how ready do you think each would be to launch a successful farm business after this?

**Steele** It's more reasonable to expect these farm workers to have about 3 years of experience and exposure. We'd expect a farmer to go through a year or more with the outside entry level program, and 2 years of farm management experience on an established farm before being able to fully benefit from HIP's resources.

**Zimmer Stucky** Would you consider providing wage share to farm workers and farms for 3+years if it's a good fit?

**Steele** We were thinking 2 years for each farm worker as to load the pipeline with more farmers who are ready to start a farm business.

**Rossi** suggested turning these farmers into contract workers. A farm owner/producer doesn't want to add more workers to payroll and acquire more liabilities, they'd be more enticed to ensure they're able to get a worker who fills the niche needs they're looking for, and they'd pay a premium for it.

**Steele** As long as they get the experience to be a successful farm owner, that sounds feasible.

**Hamilton** We should be clear about the goal of the program. If it's to benefit the established farm owner, that would be a justifiable program, but if we're trying to benefit the new farm business owner with experience and knowledge, that would be accomplished differently.

2. "Seed" Capital for HIP Farmers: Incoming HIP farmers would get a one-time grant funded cash infusion into their business to cover all insurance, seeds, supplies, etc. that they'd usually have to pay out of pocket for before they even begin planting anything. We see \$8k per farmer as a meaningful amount. It would cover 4 farmers a year for 5 years through the incubator farm. This would avoid starting a farm under capitalization, which we see a lot at HWF. This assistance would put incoming farmers in a better position to leverage the resources from HWF, making it more attractive to high quality incubator applicants.

**Zimmer-Stucky** appreciates Shipkey and Steele's focus on how these programs would bring us the most qualified applicants.

**Masterson** is excited about this option. Is there anything you're doing differently in terms of outreach or recruitment to find qualified applicants?

**Steele** We've expanded the geography, which we haven't done much in the past.

3. Big Creek Farm as an Interim HIP Graduate Landing Site: Program the recent Big Creek acquisition and turn it into an interim landing spot for mature/established farmers who have capital to invest in the site already to allow them to build capital and identify options for the purchase of their own farm property. This would also be a chance to use outside funding to realize some soil and water protection. The space would potentially hold 7-8 farming operations. Half the investment would go towards realizing an uplift in soil and water outcomes on site; updates to



irrigation system efficiency, and upgrades to farm roads to address erosion on site and create a new layout more conducive to multiple users. The other half would be limited investment in basic infrastructure needs (building slab, electrical upgrades, cooler, etc.). Additional structural improvements, equipment, drip tubing, etc. would be on the farmers to invest in for the site, with a buy-out of their investment at the time they leave.

**Zimmer-Stucky** How tied is this proposed budget tied to this property? Can you put one of these 7-8 farmers into the management role with stipend or reduce rent? Therefore, could the Gordon Creek Farm property work for this idea instead?

**Shipkey** The grant would allow us to fund having a farmer in a management role. The grant application has to be specific about the investment, so while we could look into using Gordon Creek instead, we can't be vague about the site, and likely couldn't redirect to a site with less capacity if the grant was awarded. (Gordon Creek is a much smaller site). We were thinking of the idea of bringing a housing solution to Big Creek as well.

**Masterson** Do you think having farmers at this Big Creek property for a few more years before coming to HWF would help them be more ready to launch?

**Hamilton** The intention isn't to provide more time for farmers to launch, but to instead provide access to land for farmers to grow capital, to then purchase their own land. District staff would be relatively hands off.

**Masterson** If we put an easement on the property, we could create a space for farmers to purchase (e.g., Buy-Protect-Sell).

**Zimmer-Stucky** Do we have farmers now who are ready to buy if we put Big Creek on the market now, and by instead retaining it for this program, would we be taking away that opportunity from someone who is ready?

**Shipkey** There are folks who would be able to purchase the property, but this grant is focused on assisting underserved producers.

**Hamilton** Does the Board want to just sell the land to a farmer and not have the District retain it for this option?

**Zimmer-Stucky** While it's not a bad thing, this takes a property acquired for buy, protect, sell, and turns it into a buy, protect, manage. How do our (the District's) priorities feed into one another and in what order?

**Masterson** Sounds like there's two tracks:

- 1) Due to our equity goals, we can help underserved farmers who are coming in with less experience, by giving them more time and space to get ready for the HIP program.
- 2) Providing land for advantaged farmers who would come in with more experience and don't need as much support but do need land.

How many farmers are we imagining to be on the Gordon Creek land?

**Shipkey** 7-8 farmers approximately at any one time, but if folks are cycling through, then more than that.

**Rossi** Concerned with using the Big Creek property for this project when HWF still seems to be under capacity with vacant land, and we already have to manage it.

**Zimmer-Stucky** There was a decision made a few years ago to welcome farmers with less experience to HIP. It sounds like here we are trying to change the criteria for those who will apply to HIP. Is HWF at capacity or is some of the ground in its fallow year?

**Rowan** confirmed this, and the bottom line is that the amount of water on the location for our irrigation system limits how many farmers we can bring in. Hasn't yet been able to present data on Headwaters to the Board. Would like to shift back to a few years ago when we were graduating farms who were ready to move on to their own farm property.



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**Rossi** suggested figuring out how to be at capacity at least before trying to start a new program.

**Hamilton** The intent of the grant is to mitigate the issue of having farmers coming to us who are not really ready to launch. Then once these farmers are ready to leave HIP, they're looking for access instead of training, which is where the Big Creek property would come in to play as a midpoint landing location until they're saved up enough to buy their own land.

4. Underserved Farmer Down Payment Pilot Program: We would use the grant to support underserved producers in bridging the gap between what an underserved producer has in terms of capital or a loan to put towards their own property, and the actual purchase price of the property. The underserved producers would be responsible for taking the initiative to find a suitable farm property, but we would be facilitating access in the form of a grant (perhaps 30-50% of the purchase price). In exchange we would secure an easement that ensures the site stays in active production, remains affordable and that soil and water resources are being protected. Applicants would be preapproved and then they would come to us once they find their desired land, since real estate moves so fast. We would have templates for easements. This is the majority of the grant ask at \$1.3million. There's no way of assuming how many outcomes that would fund but we assume perhaps 5 projects in 5 years.

**Hamilton** Do the farmers need to be in district?

**Shipkey** Not necessary for the grant, we can make that decision internally.

**Masterson** has no qualms in funding a farm outside our district like this. If folks were buying property from our buy, protect, sell program, would they be eligible to use this money?

**Shipkey** Sure.

**Zimmer-Stucky** Are we reimbursing farmers for the cost of the easement if there wasn't one on the property already? Is looking to keep farmers in the District, especially if we have to manage easements on them.

**Shipkey** We are via the grant. That doesn't need to be defined with the grant, but these smaller sites wouldn't have much easement value in them, so our grant would likely exceed easement value.

5. Retiring Producer Transition Support Pilot Program: Oregon Agricultural Trust is creating a video series on farm succession and farm access via the tool of easements for beginning and retiring producers. This initiative would fund the production of those videos, as well as supplemental materials and several workshops. The District has been supporting farm succession planning work for a long time, and we often find that the biggest barrier is the cost of hiring support professionals (attorney, accountant, etc.). The second part of this initiative would be to fund the cost to hire support professionals for retired producers who will be making their property available for long term lease or purchase to underserved producers. There would also be potential partners interested in doing the sourcing of those farmers.

**Zimmer-Stucky** likes the idea of funding these issues to overcome barriers of understanding legalities.

**Rossi** agrees with this need. **Masterson** agrees with this need.

**Hamilton** could see this being implemented in partnership with the Farm Bureau.

**Rossi** Many Farm Bureau members would be interested in this.

**Hamilton** Last announcement on this grant proposal: We've already acquired a qualified grant writer who is ready to start writing as soon as possible to finish it before the closing date of October 28,2022. We do have money to hire them already. We don't have time to debate the details, so we would go through with writing the grant application as it is proposed here, and if the Board decides that they do not want



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a part of the initiatives to go through, we will not expend funds for that initiative. We're also unsure with which initiatives the USDA may choose as well.

**7:50pm- Board of Directors Discussion – used for Item 5.**

**8:20pm- Announcements, Action Items, and Adjournment**

**Masterson** announced that Dianna Pope has passed away over the weekend. She was an important person in carrying the continuity of the District forward for so many years. She was on the Board for 30+ years. Noted that we named the Dianna Pope Natural Area at Headwaters after she stepped down from the Board. Suggested putting a card together for her husband and that she would announce when her service will be.

**Hamilton** The Land Legacy Committee Meeting is on October 17<sup>th</sup> in person at the Office. Hamilton's performance evaluation meeting with Jill Critchfield on October 19<sup>th</sup> at 5pm at the office.

**Action Items**

- **Kent** to reach out to Kohl to get a meeting with Rossi set up and keep Rossi updated about becoming a Grant review committee member.
- **Masterson** to check in with Guebert and Critchfield about Hamilton's performance evaluation.
- **Fernandez** to add a virtual option to Hamilton's performance evaluation.

**Zimmer-Stucky** adjourned the meeting at 8:28 pm.