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

Wednesday, August 3, 2022

**4:30pm- Call to Order**

Guebert called to order the special meeting of the EMSWCD Board of Directors at 4:30pm on Wednesday, August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022, at Rossi Farms.

**4:30pm- Introductions, Review/review agenda, Review previous action items**

**Guebert conducted introductions for the record. The following persons were present:**

**Board of Directors:** Mike Guebert (Zone 3 Director, Chair), Jasmine Zimmer-Stucky (At-Large 2 Director, Vice-Chair), Laura Masterson (Zone 2 Director, Secretary), Jim Carlson (At-Large 1 Director, Treasurer), Joe Rossi (Zone 1 Director)

**Staff:** Nancy Hamilton (Executive Director), Dan Mitten (Chief of Finance & Operations) (virtual), Julie DiLeone (Rural Lands Coordinator), Kathy Shearin (Urban Lands Coordinator), Rowan Steele (Headwaters Farm Program Manager) (virtual), Chelsea White-Brainard (Senior Rural Outreach & Education Specialist), Chris Aldassy (Senior Rural Conservationist), Katie Meckes (Urban Lands Planner), Whitney Bailey (Senior Urban Conservationist), Asianna Fernandez (Executive Assistant)

**Public:** Chris Wallace Caldwell (Catalysis Consulting), Jamila Dozier (New Theory Consulting)

**4:30pm- Board Member Discussion about Strategic Planning:**

**Guebert** invited the Board to speak on how they started as Board Members for EMSWCD and to give an overview of their thoughts after the August 1<sup>st</sup> Board Meeting and Farm Access Equity Advisory Group's recommendations at Headwaters Farms.

**Zimmer-Stucky** When it comes to farmland, priorities are accessibility, sustainability, viability. No strong theory on urban areas besides density and how not to degrade soil and water health. Doesn't have a good enough sense of what is or isn't working, or what could change in the district, so doesn't feel ready to make big decisions yet.

**Masterson** Was interested in the intersection of farming and conservation that the District was doing when she first joined. Would also like to know more about which projects are or aren't working and the data on Headwaters Farm and other projects successes. Is open to big changes and is an advocate for how the programs are set up now, but how do we fine tune them?

**Rossi** Looks at this kind of planning through the lens of maximizing what we can do with the resources we have. Started with the District through a StreamCare project on his property, and then through seeing his daughter on the District's Board. Feels like the District is too inwardly focused. Headwater's teachings are not transferrable to farms. Suggests having staff go to farms instead to act as a resource and to push knowledge and resources outwards. For every dollar the District is spending, how much soil and water health are we getting in return?

**Carlson** Previously on Johnson Creek Watershed and Farm Service Agency for Multnomah County Boards. Was interested in the Farm Access Equity Advisory Group's (FAEAG) recommendation as he's looking for ideas for his own 60-acre farm. Suggests sending staff to farms as a resource as well, to assess what does and doesn't work and offer advice. Would like more information about Headwaters Farm, including how do farmers find out about HIP?

**Guebert** Joined the Board as a scientist with an interest in farm opportunities. Has new questions regarding Headwaters and other programs after hearing from the HIP farmers on August 1<sup>st</sup>. Wants to



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focus more on what's next, how to get farmers into place, carbon sequestration, and climate change initiatives. As a Board member, he's interested in helping people try new farming techniques, and doesn't want to stay satisfied with the status quo. He wants to see more sustainable farming practices being used in the District and sees a lot more opportunities for it in urban farming.

**The Board** discussed their desired outcome for today's discussion.

**Masterson** pointed out that the Board has mostly been having discussions about agricultural practices and plans rather than any of the other program areas that the District is comprised of.

**Zimmer-Stucky** suggested studying where each program's resources are being maximized in relation to soil and water health.

**Masterson** wants staff to see the Board's discussions as constructive instead of intimidating.

**Rossi** reminded that he's not trying to challenge anyone when he talks about certain projects or programs. Believes we do have an amazing staff but wants to consider what's the best use of our resources for soil and water health.

**Dileone** We do site (farm) visits but they're not fully focused on farm business needs. They're more focused on agricultural objectives like soil and water conservation, and climate change mitigation techniques.

**Guebert** Where can we be a facilitator for farmers to talk to each other?

**Hamilton** asked the Board, which big picture objectives are you each most interested in? Consider them as "high level goals." If staff understood that, we could come back to you with more projects that double down on those goals.

**Masterson** agrees with the 3 broad buckets: Soil and Water health, Equity, and Climate Change mitigation.

**Zimmer-Stucky** Where do we (the Board) all rank the objectives as important; high or low?

**Masterson** thinks about how sometimes the objective that has the most votes isn't doing the best job at addressing everything necessary. So, choosing the best DEI option might not be the best option for ag concerns and choosing the best ag option might not be the best option for DEI concerns. Climate seems like an obvious outcome.

**Hamilton** Not necessarily, if we focus on one project for soil and water health, climate mitigation could be a side benefit, but if we choose a different project, it might double down on both and directly address climate mitigation as well.

**Zimmer-Stucky** Are we thinking 3-year plan or the long run?

**Masterson** Historically, we've approached strategic planning with the long run in mind and then think about short term steps to get to that long term goal.

**Rossi** Soil and water health is our core mission for all the work we do. All other outcomes would be a biproduct of the work we do. If we look at them all as equal, we start to dilute what's most important, the District's core mission. **Carlson** agrees.

**Zimmer-Stucky** We have to think about it as how do we want to improve soil and water health? Which way do we want to look at it from (with the overarching priorities in mind)?

**Guebert** asked which high level goals resonate the most with each of the Board members?

**Masterson** Air quality is low on the priority list for the District. It can be a biproduct, but especially since knowing what the state can do in terms of air quality, it shouldn't be a main focus for us.

**Guebert** METRO handles waste reduction already.



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**Zimmer-Stucky** A lot of other groups already address heat islands. What was the outcome in the Friends of Trees dispute with the City of Portland? Can staff give a case on why Heat Islands should stay as a priority for the District? Maybe a different perspective for that is to focus on our parks?

**Guebert** Food Banks in the District handle food insecurity issues.

**Masterson** Keep it on the list if it's in terms of farmer production, though.

**Masterson** Community Health is a biproduct of our work.

**Carlson** Many of these goals feel interrelated, how can we better our partnerships with those who are working in the areas that we see as low priority for our district?

**Rossi** Water quality, water quantity, soil quality, and habitat are high level goals for the district and education should be a priority as well.

**Zimmer-Stucky** wants to bring established and new farmers together. Extension agents can build that bridge between them and between them and us.

**Rossi** saw the use of extension agents as bringing resources outwards and is a good route for education.

**Guebert** Agriculture and climate change should be high priority.

**Rossi** Is climate change a priority on its own or a biproduct?

**Guebert** Both, we should work on carbon sequestration, it's more than clean air.

**Hamilton** reminded that the language used at the beginning of this exercise was "climate impacts on soil and water health and people." For example, this year, super wet spring and super hot summer heatwaves, what do we do for people in our urban core, for our people trying to grow things? These things change based of climate change resiliency.

**Zimmer-Stucky** suggested an example for how the Board thinks about our priorities. Soil quality, water quality, and water conservation are tier 1 priorities. Things like climate change mitigation, land access, and heat island are 2<sup>nd</sup> tier or subcategories. There's a table with all the projects we were going to consider, and we know they all address soil and water health (tier 1). We want to choose the projects that check off the priorities that we decide (today) are the highest (tier 2).

**Masterson** Land access should be a priority. Reducing barriers to farming is important, wants to continue thinking about Headwaters Farm and how to bring great farmers to the area, our usage of easements, etc.

**Zimmer-Stucky** Are there other things that are preventing people from farming besides land access?

Heard at the August 1<sup>st</sup> Board meeting that navigating leases, water rights, etc. are a huge barrier as well.

**Masterson** Easements also are a part of land access.

**Guebert** added urban green spaces and community gardens can be a part of land access.

**Hamilton** Staff can come back with some data around what we're doing that other organizations aren't. On land access, do we also consider natural areas like the Nestwood property instead of only focusing on agricultural land?

**Masterson** does not think that should be a high priority.

**The Board** asked the Strategic Planning Team, where are we addressing projects that other organizations aren't? Where are we focusing our resources and energy that no one else is?

**Rossi** How do we score projects?

**Guebert** Would we (the Board) rather staff bring a ton of ideas to us or bring 1 good idea?

Economic Resiliency scored as high on the priority list by all Board members.

**Zimmer-Stucky** Anything we ask someone to do (new ideas, changing practices, etc.) shouldn't be a financial burden to them.



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**Masterson** That's just a component of sustainability. Maybe cost share is an idea we can explore. Could see this as a benefit for new farmers: business or economic training and knowledge for Headwaters Farmers.

**Hamilton** Only hearing economic resiliency in farming and cost shares, not in the rest of what the District does.

**Zimmer-Stucky** Equity is mid to high on the list. Joined the Board because she felt that there was a lot of momentum to do things differently at the District. With a stable funding source, that momentum can be maintained unlike it could in the non-profit/private sector. In the long run, when we choose projects that are equitable, a lot of the other benefits come naturally.

**Masterson** Equity goes in the category with climate change and land access, priority wise. We're not a social service agency, but we do have the power to make a bigger impact, so how do we do that better in the areas we are already working in?

**DiLeone** Habitat consists of riparian reforestation and plays a big part in our StreamCare efforts. The Columbia Gorge is a resource for the District, it brings in tourists. We only get a small fund from forestry.

**Zimmer-Stucky** Feels like it's in its own category. We've been very focused on working lands, so maybe natural areas are their own category.

**Guebert** Habitat feels like a side benefit of what we're doing.

**White-Brainard** Similar to how you'd rank pollinators?

**Masterson** When talking about sustainability in agricultural areas, sees them as important to soil and water health, but wouldn't consider prioritizing them for their own sake. NRCS and collaborators can and do handle that. Can't decide fully.

**DiLeone** What about weed control? One of the main reasons we control weeds, is for habitat.

**Carlson** Push back on putting habitat in the low priority, it could be a middle priority.

**Masterson** How do middle priority areas link to the top 3 priority areas? Where can grants come in to catch what's not at high priority?

**Rossi** Keep in mind the sunk cost fallacy if we keep doing what we're doing just because it's what we've done for a long time. Of course, everything applies, but to what degree?

**Masterson** is still lost in where the middle is and what's in it. There are a few programs she'd like to dig into. Agrees about the sunk cost theory and would be open to new directions and ideas. Would like to conduct a gap analysis on current programs.

**Zimmer-Stucky** would like to learn more about the District's current programs. The more that the Board knows about the work, the easier it is for everyone to make good choices and come up with great ideas.

**Carlson** Thanked the strategic planning team for the work they've done to get to this point. How many of these boxes (priorities) can we check off for each program? Where do we see cost share outside of agriculture?

**Guebert** suggests a 20–30-minute block in all future board meetings just for the Board to discuss with each other.

**The Board** agrees that they'd like to visit sites and see the projects that the District already has in place.

#### **7:30pm- Closing items: announcements, reminders, and action items**

No announcements or reminders.

**7:32pm- Adjournment:** **Guebert** adjourned the meeting at 7:32 pm.