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

Monday, November 7th, 2022

6:04pm- Call to Order

Guebert called to order the regular meeting of the EMSWCD Board of Directors at 6:04pm on Monday, November 7th, 2022, at EMSWCD's Office.

6:04pm- Introductions, Review/revise agenda, Review previous action items

Zimmer-Stucky 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), Jim Carlson (At-Large 1 Director, Treasurer) (virtual), Laura Masterson (Zone 2 Director, Secretary)

Board of Directors Absent: Joe Rossi (Zone 1 Director)

Staff: Nancy Hamilton (Executive Director), Kathy Shearin (Urban Lands Program Supervisor), Heather Nelson Kent (Grants Program Manager), Rowan Steele (Headwaters Farm Program Manager), Jeremy Baker (Senior Rural Conservationist), Asianna Fernandez (Executive Assistant)

Guests: Chris Wallace Caldwell (Catalysis), Jamila Dozier (Consulting), Jennifer Aron (Blue Raven Farm)

Changes to the agenda: Adding updates from Guebert to ED Update

Previous action items: N/A

6:07pm- Approval of minutes

MOTION: Zimmer-Stucky moved to approve October 3, 2022, Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, Masterson 2nd. Motion passed unanimously (4-0, Rossi absent).

MOTION: Zimmer-Stucky moved to approve October 19, 2022, Special Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, Masterson 2nd. Motion passed unanimously (4-0, Rossi absent).

6:07pm- Time reserved for public comment

N/A

6:07pm- Executive Director Update

Guebert and Hamilton attended the OACD Conference. Not as many attendees as expected.

- NRCS offered so many resources, how could we make use of those funds?
- Impressed with the presentation on Biochar. Salem will be making a lot soon and will be looking for ideas to distribute it.
- Carbon Sequestration- **Guebert** suggested a Board level Climate Committee. If agreed on, the District could begin that in January.
 - **Action Item:** Fernandez to add to Climate Committee discussion to December Board Meeting Items.
- Nori, the Carbon removal marketplace, has money available for carbon credit, but they don't have properties. Can we aggregate lands for this to meet the minimum requirement to qualify for the program?
- Nellie McAdams from OAT and Taylor Larson from OAHP- resources are available for easements, assistance, etc.



- So many programmatic dollars and resources available to us, we just need to figure out how to make use of it.
- Bruce Buckmaster Co-chair for OWEB's Climate Committee talked a lot about the relationship between climate adaptation and volatility. How the work SWCDs do could change to reflect those ideas.
- Farm succession planning – rethinking what role SWCDs play.
- Reminded how SWCDs are charged with soil and water conservation practices and humans are the beneficiaries of that even though the work isn't directly done for human benefit. Therefore, farming alone doesn't necessarily constitute being a conservation practice.
- Soil scientist: "Soil can serve as one of the greatest carbon sequestration vehicles we have if we quite treating it like dirt."

Zimmer-Stucky How is the District working on becoming a leader in taking on these opportunities?

Hamilton The USDA Grant and use of federal dollars (not state dollars) through grants would help us find and implement next best practices. How we rethink collaborating across equity, climate, soil and water health, is where the highroad and money is. Is in touch with Ronald Harris to let us know when NRCS comes up with next steps after those 4 principles (equity, climate, S&W), and how they're being reflected in grant applications. Working on implementing staff training with other SWCDs on this topic and beginning lunch and learns for staff starting January.

Hamilton Doesn't make sense to hire a grant writer right now, but the team we have writing the USDA grant is really good at this. Hiring contract services and identifying the grants we want to pursue should be something we do next fiscal year.

Masterson It's exciting to see us go from scarcity to being more expansive in how we work together to bring in more money.

Hamilton

- Will be meeting quarterly with other SWCD Eds.
- We have done some math on the Comet Tracker on carbon sequestration within our riparian StreamCare work.
 - What's our (EMSWCD) role in this big question of carbon sequestration efforts?
- **Masterson** got appointed to Oregon Agriculture Heritage Program (OAHP) Commission.
- **Guebert** is now on the advocacy committee for Oregon Association of Conservation Districts (OACD).
- **Guebert** On the Oregon Soil and Water Conservation Commission meeting, scoring for surveys were done backwards so data may not be accurate. Guebert amongst others gave testimony that the 10-acre requirement didn't make sense. Commission presented proposed plan options: keep the requirements the same at status quo, each district chooses for themselves, do away with the requirement all together, or switch the requirements to at-large positions could keep the requirement and zones positions would not.
 - **Hamilton** If this comes to ODA, they'd have to analyze it and weigh in on the statute. ODA representative refused to give their opinion at the moment.
 - **Masterson** So many Districts are begging people to come on/stay on because they don't have anyone running for the positions.
 - No consensus from commission.
 - There was one from Tualatin and one Willamette who were very articulate on this topic.



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- **Masterson** proposed EMSWCD be something of a lead on this discussion if no one else steps up.
- **Hamilton** suggested the Board propose a recommendation to the commission.
- **Action Item: Fernandez** to add this topic to agenda in the Spring Board Meeting.

6:32pm- Executive Director Update- Strategic Plan Outline

Hamilton Felt that the idea of farming was becoming a proxy for soil and water health. Outline is a brief framework to what the plan will include.

- Talked with Stan Dean from Jackson SWCD who just finished their plan recently.
 - Made climate change a core issue to look at all over programs through.
 - Talked about trends and forces that are coming at them.
- Looked at different SWCD's plans and got feedback from different people internally and externally. Got a lot of equity and inclusion information from Coalitions of Color.
- The plan will not be completely internally focused. Our Audience:
 - 1. Board – to act as a guideline to make decisions to offer to staff.
 - 2. Staff - to act as a guideline to come back to the Board with recommendations.
 - 3. Constituents – we have a responsibility to communicate and educate on what good stewardship means and what we do with their money.
- We will not be changing the Mission Statement.
- Will add information from OACD and NRCS about the 2 core lenses.
- Section IVB. Looking to redefine 3 programmatic areas:
 - Urban/Built environment
 - Agricultural/Working Lands
 - Natural Spaces
- How to think about the Urban Environment beyond tech assistance as we usually have. How to work with the built environment.
- Plan in Action: This plan will be a working document. What works, what can be changed?

Masterson What do you mean by using Farming as proxy?

Hamilton SWCDs history tends to be Farming focused, but we aren't. Being a farmer isn't the same as working towards soil and water health. Do we want to recommend and offer a broader suite of services for farmers who are actively working towards soil and water conservation, with carbon sequestration farming? Federal funding through grants is how this may be achieved.

Masterson How are we supporting farmers who are doing good conservation work, and how do we share best practices with the ones who aren't?

Zimmer-Stucky likes that we're in an action-oriented direction and asking ourselves these important questions of how we work with farmers, and when it comes to climate mitigation, suggested acting with urgency.

Masterson How do we do it in a way of teaching and bringing everyone along and not just doing it ourselves going forward. Ex. Cover cropping, which began a few years ago.

Hamilton Some of the gaps that existed before don't exist anymore, so it's a good idea to think about what else we need to look at now. Double down on easements? Give the money outwards to others who are doing the things we find important? Who are our partners now?

6:53pm- Headwaters Presentation

Steele presented about the Headwaters Farm Incubator Program (HIP).



Caldwell Prefers the Board get to discuss the key questions as today's main goal. The Board will have a chance to do the prioritization exercise in the upcoming poll that will be sent out.

Steele Getting confirmation from the Board that they do see an active role for Headwaters Farm (HWF) in the District going forward is the goal of this presentation. The other key question is do the 2018 program goals still address what we want to accomplish at HWF, and should we still go through with those? Who should we be serving in our Incubator Farm Program? How do we measure success at HWF? How do we incorporate the new strategic priorities of climate mitigation and equity?

EMSWCD bought HWF in 2011. Steele was hired as the HWF Manager, and the 1st farmer cohort began in 2013. Facilities manager hired in 2014. HWF's Operations Assistant was hired, and we graduated our first HIP farmers in 2017. In 2018, EMSWCD completed our last strategic process, in which the HWF and HIP's current goals and roadmap were initiated. This year, we're wrapping up our 10th season and graduating our 6th cohort of HIP farmers.

HWF also does education and demonstrations, outreach, and community building.

HIP's early concepts:

People who were interesting in farming would begin their journey in learning at one of our partner organizations (Zenger Farm, Rogue Farm, Pathways, etc.). Those who follow through and develop the skill and desire to start a farm would work on a local farm or join an apprenticeship program for a few years. Once they're ready to turn their knowledge and experience into establishing a successful farm, this is where HWF and HIP would help them become established through resources and community, and then help them reach the resources and services needed through USDA extension services and SWCDs. The model also allows for these established farms to hire farm workers/ managers or be a host site for tours and apprenticeships, thus following the cycle of creating more farmers and established farms. This model has mostly held true, except it's more of a web of opportunities instead of a linear path.

HWF and HIP's mission: increasing the number of new farmers locally, keeping local farmland in production, and ensuring both are well stewarded.

As a SWCD, it's important to ensure farmers are centering resource management on farms to positively impact natural resources and assist the future transition of land from an aging farmer population to new growers, who are super focused on soil and water health. According to a recent National Young Farmers Coalition study from 10,000 young farmers, 86% indicated they're using regenerative farming, and 97% indicated they're using sustainable agriculture.

Impacts beyond HIP: New farmers; viability of farms who can withstand farming issues; education and demonstration benefits for HIP, other local farmers, and constituents; a developing farmers ecosystem; community hub for farmers on site, grads, beginner farm and small farm communities; visibility for the District and our programs/projects; healthy resources within our District and benefits that ripple outwards of the District.

Program Goals from our last strategic planning session for HWF:

1. Maintain and improve the natural resources at HWF to support sustainable agriculture.
2. Facilitate the establishment of viable new farm businesses, that are good stewards of the land.
3. Increase visibility of conservation farming practices
4. Headwaters Farm facilities: infrastructure and equipment that supports HIP and EMSWCD's mission.



1-3= soil and water health oriented.

4= site set-up and management oriented.

Headwaters Farm Budget over 11 years:

3 columns: personnel and materials costs, services and operating costs, capital outlay improvements in land and equipment costs.

2019-2020 spike in budget: solar panels (will pay for themselves in 8 years) and equipment shed built.

2021 spike in personnel: HWF employees became full time.

To date, about \$5.3million has been invested in HWF and HIP, including property purchase.

FY22-23 HIP Budget=9% EMSWCD's Total FY Budget

To date, we've worked with 38 different farm businesses. 13 are still at HIP. 16 of our 18 farm graduates are still farming. 13 of those are still farming, selling, and/or buying within the District. Looking at the demographics of our 49 total farmers from those 38 farms, 20% have been BIPOC identifying. This demographic is also trending upwards in the last year. Gender breakdown shows 60% of all the farmers at HIP are female.

Farmer Net Income: The difference between highest and lowest net incomes per farmer shows the difference between HIP farmers who are established in their markets and those who are just starting out within the program. Difference in 2020 and 2021 also show the social and climate issues faced in both years – COVID pandemic in 2019 and 2020, wildfire smoke in 2020 and 2021, and the 2021 Heat Dome. Will have data on the late spring and wet start of the growing season issues in 2022 soon.

Zimmer-Stucky How well do you think this program has or has not achieved those 2018 goals?

Steele We've done an excellent job on goal 1. On goal 2, there's still work to be done on launching viable farm businesses and increasing visibility on conservation practices. We've done well on goal 4.

Masterson Is it possible to further breakdown the HWF budget? Seems like this budget we looked at is directly showing costs towards HIP. How do we see the other budget items for HWF per year? What is or isn't a direct cost of running HIP per year compared to the number of farmers we host?

7:20pm- Board Discussion Questions

- **Board** Yes. 4 thumbs up, Rossi absent.

Carlson What's the average acreage that each HIP farmer is farming?

Steele It vary per farmer. The average graduate finishes on an acre and a half usually, but right now it varies from half an acre to 4.5 acres.

Guebert Do graduates tend to increase on acreage when they leave?

Steele Depends on what the farmer wants and can afford. Most would like to scale up, but it depends on a few factors.

Carlson Is there land that is fallow every year?

Steele Yes, we do that mostly as a strategic way to restart land that recent grads have left for the new farmers coming in. We focus on skill level and viability of the individual farms who come in, not on 100% farm capacity and maximizing output of the land.

- **Guebert** Are these 2018 goals the right goals to have for HWF still? Only has an issue with number 2, it's not important or helpful to focus on having a certain amount of people. Taking advantage of opportunities that are present at the time, it makes more sense to allow bigger or smaller farms.



Zimmer-Stucky Staff should be able to set the number that's right for the land, depending on applicants' acreage ask, HIP community need, and staffing.

Zimmer-Stucky Are there, or should we be setting, different goals for HIP and HWF?

Masterson We could be clearer going forward about what all of HWF projects are, including DPNA, HIP, StreamCare, etc.

Masterson was imagining that most of the conversation tonight was about HIP only. Would like to see that be more fine-tuned.

Guebert wants to recognize that if we want to reach existing farmers and increase the viability of our farms, we're not doing enough of that now. How do we change the message that it's for newer farmers? Can we do trials of specific practices at different partnering locations?

- **Masterson** Using all resources of district, staff can bring recommendations of where different farm levels work/stay.
- **Steele** We could do more to leverage the program we have at HIP, it could be a demonstration farm, mentorships, etc. That might be more challenging due to staffing needs.
- **Caldwell** to the Board, What might be missing from the goals that could create an increased focus for existing farmers?
- **Zimmer-Stucky** Some of those farmers who want workshops might not be at HIP, they could work on other farms.
- **Guebert** Happy to eliminate the goal bullet on farmers staying within District. **Board** agrees. It's okay to keep an eye on, but if graduates are successful and learn climate mitigating practices, that's an achievement.
- **Masterson** HIP has amazing resources, probably some of the best in the country, the more established incoming HIP farmers are, the more bandwidth they'll have to focus more on using those resources to create the most viable business.

Guebert Do you think the farmers who fit that vision, are not hearing about us, not applying, or not being accepted?

Masterson Not sure why we're not attracting those established farmers. Afraid that HIP may be seen as a place for farmers who are just starting out. There's nothing wrong with engaging with farmers nationally to find those established farmers. It feels like the resources at HIP are for those who are ready to launch.

Steele In all but a few cases, applicants have met that criterion, but not all levels of experience (years) meet those kinds of exposure that we want. Years of working on a farm is a crude metric, but the years of management would be better to judge from.

Guebert reminded about our equity goals and the need within our community.

Zimmer-Stucky If we make this shift, we want to make sure that those programs for newer farmers are still supported by us in the same way so that they still have the same level of resources.

Masterson The pool where we're pulling from now are much more diverse than they were when we started this program. The District's Hispanic farmworker community aren't reached within our equity roles. Why aren't they participating in our programs at all? Culturally, what are the challenges that create that gap?

Guebert Who is working with that community, how do we reach out to them? How do we fit their needs?

Carlson Notices from the data presented, that the program is more diverse, but how do we target the Hispanic community more?

Steele Viva Farms would be an amazing group to work with to engage the Hispanic Farmworker community. That would come with a whole new host of resource needs too.



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Zimmer-Stucky Agrees that this would fit that idea that we're looking for in finding more farmers with more farming experience.

Dozier Is the HIP application only in English? **Steele** Yes.

Hamilton If we move more into the experienced farmers who are ready to launch, are we filling a gap by bringing them to HIP? What resources do we have that are not at HWF to help launch them?

Zimmer-Stucky HIP is not a place for people to learn to farm, it's to learn to operate a farm business and the time is spent getting farmland at an incredibly reduced rate. Farmers come in with farm skills, leave with equity to find own farmland.

Caldwell Sounds like we've landed on what's called a Wicked Question: complex and paradox questions that businesses land on that can come with solutions that help you solve both. How do we find a solid solution to help experienced farmers and farmers from marginalized backgrounds at the same time?

Steele We can do both, bring in farmers who are ready to launch their business and remind them that this is a working farm community with farmers of varying abilities and skill levels, such to ensure we're not forgetting about the local pipeline. There's a concern that focusing on bringing in farmers from outside areas could outcompete the local farmers. Do we have a responsibility to the local small farms that may be different than the typical 5+ acre farm?

On Measuring success:

Steele The success of HWF and of HIP is probably 2 different conversations. Focusing on HIP now would be more beneficial for feedback.

Zimmer-Stucky Would like to see HWF work more with Rural Lands on some overlapping education/workshop opportunities.

Carlson It's about using resources to the fullest as well as quantifying success. It's also about knowledge sharing outside of HWF.

Zimmer-Stucky The program is still young. It's okay to look at the number of graduates as a metric of success, just not the only metric.

Hamilton We have plenty of good feedback for the Strategic Plan, we might have more questions as well as recommendations later.

Steele There is more conversation to be had but got enough information to run with now to go forward. What is our role if any before and after the program?

Zimmer-Stucky This is an opportunity to fill both ends of the pipeline through Rural Lands, Grants, and HIP. How to advertise to get our HIP graduates as farmers that landowners want working on their land and working with LLP to bring open land to HIP graduates who are ready to buy.

Masterson Staff, where are our gaps? Do we want to, and how do we push into both directions?

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

Hamilton A survey is being sent out to the Board tomorrow on all criteria and beneficiaries to give final data for the Strategic Plan. Will be due very soon. Should take 7-10 minutes.

Guebert is sending Hamilton's Eval Perf tomorrow morning.

Hamilton November 21st LLC Meeting to be rescheduled.

Action Items:

Action Item: Fernandez to add to Climate Committee discussion to December Board Meeting Items.

Action Item: Fernandez to add topic of Board Membership qualifications around land ownership as an agenda item in Spring Board Meetings.

Guebert adjourned the meeting at 8:27 pm