



3/4/2024

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

Monday, March 4, 2024

6:05pm- Call to Order

Zimmer-Stucky called to order the regular meeting of the EMSWCD Board of Directors at 6:05pm on Monday, March 4, 2024, at the EMSWCD Office in North Portland.

6:06pm- 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, Chair), Mike Guebert (Zone 3 Director, Vice-Chair), Laura Masterson (Zone 2 Director, Secretary), Jim Carlson (At-Large 1 Director, Treasurer) (virtual), Joe Rossi (Zone 1 Director)

Staff: Kelley Beamer (Executive Director), Dan Mitten (Chief of Finance & Operations), Heather Nelson Kent (Community Outreach & Engagement Program Supervisor), Julie DiLeone (Rural Lands Program Supervisor), Kathy Shearin (Urban Lands Supervisor), Asianna Fernandez (Executive Assistant)

Guests: Beatriz Parga (Corbett Firewise)

Changes to the agenda:

- Remove Agenda Item 5: SB 1537
- Add Agenda Item: Oregon Climate Resilience Center Proposal

Previous action items:

- **Masterson** to work with Woolery (IT specialist) on email issues. – In progress
- **Fernandez** to send Budget Committee Meetings and TSCC Meeting invites to the Board. -Done
- **Fernandez** to edit the August and September Board Meeting Invites. -Done
- **Kent** to follow up with Masterson about ideas around the “An Oregon Story” showing. -In Progress
 - **Kent** has updates for Masterson. They will meet.

6:08pm- Approval of minutes

MOTION: Masterson moved to approve the February 4, 2024, Board Meeting Minutes, Guebert 2nd. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).

6:09pm- Public Comment

Parga On behalf of the Corbett Firewise community, she wanted to thank the District for their support via a SPACE Grant, which was used to create a mailer and a plant list to reach their community members.

Parga attended tonight’s meeting to discuss the invasive Blackberry growth issue, post Eagle Creek fire, which serves as a fire ladder for tree canopies, and once dried out can serve as kindling. As a resident and business owner with the Bridal Veil scenic corridor, she has watched state parks burn across the street from her. The Blackberry eroded the soil, not allowing anything else to grow in its place. Bridal Veil Lodge have worked to be Blackberry free and are active with maintenance. Post Eagle Creek fire and McKenzie fire, we know that fire laddering from Blackberry has created the hottest fires in Oregon and contribute to the loss of biodiversity. State agencies aren’t moving in the direction of Blackberry mitigation as a priority. She is asking EMSWCD to facilitate a plan with State funds and real goals to mitigate Blackberry while we still can.

Zimmer-Stucky thanked her for her participation.



6:11pm- ED and L-Team Updates

Beamer shared her Executive Director update:

- Now entering her second month as Executive Director.
- Has appreciated having one on one meetings with the Board to learn about their priorities, why they ran for the Board, what they want their legacy to be, and what the District is doing well or can improve on.
- Plant Sale was a highlight to onboarding, it was great to see what happens behind the scenes to make the event happen.
- Spent time looking through the foundational documents to help her navigate the FY 24-25 Budget season.
- Has been prioritizing internal meetings for a few weeks.
- Visited Headwater Farm with Mitten and got a tour from Steele.
- External Meetings:
 - Larry and Angie Bailey- Multnomah County Farm Bureau
 - Lisa Charpilloz Hanson -ODA (Oregon Department of Agriculture) Director (met with Masterson as well)
 - **Masterson** She talked a lot about climate resilient agriculture and talking to farmers about what we need. Since she ran OWEB previously, she's very interested in how easements work across the state.
 - Daniel Newberry- Johnson Creek Watershed Council – meeting soon.
 - Attending the March Multnomah County Farm Bureau Meeting

Parga left at 6:22pm

Shearin shared the Urban Lands Program updates:

- Helped Mount Hood Community College (MHCC) apply for the METRO Capital Grant – they received one of these grants a few years ago to kickstart this project, so we're applying again to continue the work. This money will help with some of the preliminary work for the dam project we'll be starting soon. For the dam project, we're also going for the Open Rivers Fund grant, but we have to wait for MHCC to finish their comprehensive plan.
- Plant Sale 2024 – Shearin and Woolery (IT Analytics Specialist) will be presenting stats at the April Board Meeting.
- Workshops - Going back to in person again, and as soon as we opened registration, they filled up quickly.

Guebert What are the new workshops?

Shearin Invasive Weeds, Native Plants, Intro to Raingardens. They're all planned to be held in partnership with Portland Nursery.

Mitten shared the F&O updates:

- Budget Process– It's been Mitten's primary focus in the past few months.
- Plant Sale 2024– the F&O team helped a lot throughout the whole process.
- Hiring processes – F&O has been helping Rural Lands and CO&E programs in their individual hiring processes, as well as onboarding Beamer.

Kent shared her Community Outreach and Engagement (CO&E) program and Grants program updates:
CO&E:



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- Continuing to implement the Communications Plan – currently working on updating and developing our messaging. We're starting with community engagement. Espousal Strategies will be doing listening sessions with three groups: community-based organizations, farmers and growers, and landowners (rural and urban).
- Hiring Communications Assistant process – Working with a hiring committee to evaluate applications and interviews will take place within the next couple of weeks.
 - **Guebert** had two farmers reach out to him asking about the position.

Grants:

- Partners In Conservation (PIC) Grants – progress reports are due soon. It's nice to see that all of the 2021 grants are completed and closed out. Half of the 2022 grants are completed and closed out. All of the 2023 grantees are making great progress.
- A few SPACE Grants have been awarded: an urban garden, a community garden, a naturescaping project.

Masterson When do you expect to give an update on the partner listening sessions (to inform our messaging work)? **Kent** April.

Action Item: Fernandez to add a Communications Plan update to the April Board Meeting Agenda.

DiLeone shared the Rural Lands Program updates:

- Eat and Greet with Farmers: April 4th from noon to 3pm at the Columbia Grange. The focus is on commercial workers, of all sizes and crops. The mailer will go out soon.
- Three workshops' series with Jen Aron (Blue Raven Farm) for Headwaters (HIP) Farmers. The Soil Health Analysis workshop will be open to all farmers, though.
- Pasture Management training with Guebert on May 11th.
- Cal Farms has decided to break their lease on Big Creek Farm, starting this summer. We're not sure if we'll find someone who wants to farm on that site any time soon, so for now we're focusing on keeping it covered and controlling weeds. This work will likely have to be contracted out to another farmer.

Rossi recommended DiLeone speak to the Kerslake family (Hilltop Produce) about the maintenance of Big Creek Farm in the meantime.

DiLeone Is only a little hesitant about that because the team though it might be better if a farmer is not leasing a property while we're in the middle replacing the irrigation system, working on the farm road, and barn reconstruction. If we decide to delay this work, we'll have to take it out of the Budget, and the Board has expressed concern about owning properties for too long.

Rossi There could be some quality in leasing the property as is and marketing that it will need some work done on it because it could change the type of irrigation the site will need depending on what kind of farming the new owner will be doing.

- Our new employee to fill the Weed Control position will begin on April 8th.
- Obtaining the Multnomah County permits for the HWF office has been a difficult process. We're in a Rural Residential zone within the Rural Center zone, which you can't put an office in. In the county's code, they mentioned school and fire districts, so we are hoping to also get added to the list. It's up to the planning director. Every other possible route would be very expensive and take a lot of time. More updates to come.
- We're finally getting the electric tractor from our PGE grant! We put the deposit down today.
- Pfiel is now on parental leave.



Action Item: Fernandez to send the Board the calendar invites for the Eat n Greet, Soil Health Analysis workshop, and Pasture Management workshop.

Zimmer-Stucky asked about the Vive NW Grant from the Equity Team section.

Beamer This was the first grant she signed! The purpose involves passing responsibility of the Big Float event, at the Willamette River, from the Human Access Project to Vive NW.

Kent It's been used as an advocacy tool for the Willamette River to encourage folks that it is safe to go in the river again. The two organizations have a partnership, and Vive NW has strong connections to the Hispanic community, so they're hoping to broaden their reach of participants. The grant request was \$25,000 for this year and again for next year. She's been working with Mitten to navigate how to fund them for both years.

6:46pm- Beamer's 30-60-90-day Work Plan

Beamer It is a living document. Walked the Board through it.

The first 30 days were internally focused.

- Grounding herself with the Leadership Team and all the programs and projects they run. As well as meeting with and introducing herself to the Board.
- Building fluency of the District's Board and Committee meeting processes and the TSCC processes.
- Reading through all the documents that make up the District: Strategic Goals, ODA goals, historic plans, etc.

The next 60 days:

- Hamilton shared a document of external partners with over 100 constituents, who she has been working on meeting with over time.
- Meeting with each staff member individually, learning about each person.
- Building a workplan as she figures out what needs attention right away, what is coming up, and what's on autopilot or hasn't taken off yet. Realizes she's stepping into a highly functional staff culture with clear workplans.
- Starting conversations with the Leadership Team on the District Work Plan as the Budget finishes up, will be holding a Leadership Team retreat to do this work in line with the Strategic Plan.
- Site visits with Staff. Her visit to HWF with Steele was very insightful and helpful.

Guebert This seems like an appropriate balance of internal and external work.

Zimmer-Stucky would suggest adding attending District events, like workshops, meetings, etc. and introducing herself and getting acquainted with the people who attend these events. As a way to familiarize yourself with programs and projects.

Masterson also suggested attending other external events where our constituents might already be gathered.

Kent agreed, and expressed how exciting it was to attend the CSA Share Fair, where she saw a few of the Board Members, HIP Graduates, and some of our partners.

Rossi Is the Leadership retreat for staff?

Beamer This would just be for the Leadership Team since they were the architects in crafting the Strategic Plan.

Guebert The Board can have a similar work session too if we'd like.

Rossi always saw the Strategic Plan as something broad for the District, without specific ways to prioritize work. Is excited to see the Leadership Team take that step.



6:34pm – Oregon Climate Resilience Center Proposal

Zimmer-Stucky This item is replacing our discussion regarding SB 1735, as it has been passed already and it is now too late for us to act upon them. Let's keep this in mind though to continue to discuss these bills as they come up in December and January.

Masterson reminded the Board that they have already given staff allowance to watch and facilitate acting upon bills like these as they impact our programs and the mission.

Rossi asked how the Board supported the SB 775 bill?

Zimmer-Stucky The Board had a Work Session and voted on sending in a letter of approval. Reminded the Board that it affects the six SWCDs in Oregon that have a population of over 250,000 people.

Rossi does not feel comfortable having Staff weighing in on bills like these.

Beamer Staff cannot legally weigh in without the Board's approval.

Masterson clarified that when she mentioned empowering staff to act upon bills, and use of the bill support flow chart that the Board was referring to during the last session, staff would understand where the Board's support lies and which ones they should help with in crafting a letter, but the Board does ultimately decide on whether they move forward with it.

Oregon Climate Resilience Center Proposal

Beamer We were approached by Portland State University, who is partnering with Eastern and Southern Oregon Universities, to apply to the US Department of Energy for a grant regarding climate modeling for extreme weather conditions. They want to create a model regarding climate resilience in the Willamette, Rogue, and Grand Ronde river valleys. It aligns with our Strategic Plan as it has the opportunity for climate action that is responsive to the ways our constituents are experiencing extreme weather. At this point, it would be a letter of participation from the District with their application for the grant. It would state that the District would help them identify important community voices and constituents who could help form how this model should be developed. This understanding of the future modeling of extreme climate events can help communities create mitigation efforts. At this point, this is an FYI that we did send in a letter of cooperation, and we'll provide an update as we know whether the grant gets awarded or not.

Guebert What would our involvement look like?

Beamer This would give them the funds to go to the community groups we suggest to collect information for the modeling. Community groups would be paid for their participation. We're working as a community connector for Portland State.

7:03pm – Updates to Board of Directors Handbook

Zimmer-Stucky The changes reflect the passing of SB 775 in Section 2.2.2. This was done with the support of Eileen Eakins, who helped us with updates last year, to bring us up to compliance.

MOTION: Guebert moved to approve the updates to the Board of Directors Handbook, Rossi 2nd. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).

7:05pm- January 2024 Financial Reports

Mitten Through January, the reports look great. On the balance sheet, total Checking and Saving are at \$15.6 Million, while last year at this time it was at \$15.5 Million. LGIP means Local Government Investment Pool that holds the distribution of property taxes by the County to taxing districts, like us. Total Assets are \$22 Million, while last year at this time was \$20 Million. The Liabilities and Equity section



of the balance sheet shows no abnormalities. For the Profit and Loss budget performance, a large reflection of what's in our account is because we continue to receive more property tax than we anticipated. On the first line, our property tax revenues through January are \$5.5 Million while our overall annual budget reflects \$5.7 Million as revenue. Through January, interest earned is over \$361,000. This includes LCF, Grants, and the General Fund. Expenditures are all in line or are already noted if line items are above 100% for various reasons, all of which are informational and not substantive. On Profit and Loss by Class, the highest spend rate with 58% of the fiscal year passed is 53% of the entire year's appropriation by F&O; 82% of F&O's spend is through the end of January's appropriation.

Zimmer-Stucky If we allocated \$85,000 in Interest, how much would be allocated for the rest of this Fiscal Year?

Mitten With our interest revenue being higher than anticipated and only halfway through the fiscal year, we don't know what will be received yet. We appropriated \$85,000 to the General Fund in last month's budget amendment though.

7:12pm- Announcements, Action Items, and Adjournment

Rossi announced that he did some work and studying on the Headwaters Farm and has been since his daughter was a Director. The presentations about HWF in the Board Meetings, and to the public, do not reflect what he sees out there, as we're underperforming there. There's no judgment to farm type, but what matters to him is how they are producing: economically, and soil production wise. Our Board was set up as a working Board, who brings in soil and water knowledge through their occupations. He would like a staff viewpoint on his report that he's presenting tonight. He's asked a lot of peers about the Headwaters Farm Incubator Program (HIP) and has collected seven written reports and 14 farm visits. He is asking for Staff time to respond to it. OSU's scope connects to this because it is something that involves the farming community, and trying to figure out how the program can be exciting and dynamic for the farming community and all farmers we serve. When he asks local farmers about this, they seem to get excited because they feel like they have some ownership of it. He's had some people ask him for the results of his work, but he wants Staff's point of view first. This is important to him, and he is hoping to make the program the best it can be, and he's not looking to ask for any money for any of the initiatives.

Masterson feels troubled by this report. The Board has agreed that we're in support of continued improvement. The full Board was onboard with improvements that we asked staff to make this Fall and Winter. They are going to report back to us. This report feels like a run around Board consensus and undermines Staff and our new Executive Director's ability to do their job. Would like to see Rossi stay in more conversation with the Board about these efforts.

Rossi This is his opinion, as a result of a lot of interviews and on-site visits. He agrees with the proposals drafted, though they're incremental and aren't enough to solve the problems at HWF. He sympathizes with the farmers in the program because the issues going on at the farm are foundational, and they might have a negative experience with farming as a result of the program. He'd like to hear the Board's feedback as well, as this is a conversation starter. He approved the plan as it was a step in the right direction, but without a part two, it's not going to lead to success.

Guebert agreed to read the report, but it is difficult for the Board to agree on a plan and have one Board member change direction. We all know that farming is a long-term process.

Rossi His excitement, when he joined the Board, and goal was to bring farmers out to HWF for an exchange of knowledge to make HWF as successful as possible. There haven't been any transmittible elements to the agricultural community at all. There's zero success, and a lot of mid-season abandonment of operations.

Zimmer-Stucky is looking forward to hearing updates about HWF after this season's efforts have been implemented.

Zimmer-Stucky Corbett Firewise got an update from the State Fire Marshall's office. The state has shown a lot of interest in biochar and bringing in biochar equipment to go in-hand with hazard reduction efforts.



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Firewise will host a Biochar demonstration on May 4th (National Wildfire Preparedness day) in Corbett. They'll do a demonstration of fire watch practices and have a biochar facility on site. She will continue to give updates about this event. It's exciting to see State agencies who aren't typically on the forefront of ecological resource management come to this conclusion.

Action Items

- **Fernandez** to add a Communications Plan update to the April Board Meeting Agenda.
- **Fernandez** to send the Board the calendar invites for the Eat n Greet, Soil Health Analysis workshop, and Pasture Management workshop.

Zimmer-Stucky adjourned the meeting at 7:25pm.