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

Monday, April 1, 2024

6:00pm- Call to Order

Zimmer-Stucky called to order the regular meeting of the EMSWCD Board of Directors at 6:00pm on Monday, April 1, 2024, at the EMSWCD Office in North Portland.

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, Chair), Laura Masterson (Zone 2 Director, Secretary), Jim Carlson (At-Large 1 Director, Treasurer), Joe Rossi (Zone 1 Director)

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

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 Program Supervisor), Chelsea White-Brainard (Senior Outreach and Engagement Coordinator), Katie Meckes (Senior Outreach and Engagement Coordinator), Alex Woolery (IT and Analytics Specialist), Jeremy Baker (Senior Rural Conservationist), Asianna Fernandez (Executive Assistant)

Guests: Mike Westling (Espousal Strategies)

Changes to the agenda:

- Remove Item 3: NRCS Urban Agricultural Program (Stephanie Payne unable to attend after all.)

Previous action items:

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

6:02pm- Approval of minutes

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

6:03pm- Public Comment: N/A

6:04pm- Communications and Message Development Update

Shearin introduced Mike Westling from Espousal Strategies. She, McAllister, White-Brainard, and Meckes are sitting on a team to help guide the effort that he is presenting. Kent (CO&E Program Supervisor) presented the communications plan to the Board at a previous meeting, but since then, the team has begun discussing core messaging for the District as a whole, as well as program-specific messaging. The team first identified some of the District's community partners who could serve as participants and then placed them into three core groups to reach out to for focus groups and survey participants.

Beamer added that it's good to remember that one of the most important aspects of communications is showing up for and listening to the community.



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Westling presented his listening session findings. He prefaced that the way he approaches communications is by the needs of the audience. Who are they, what are their needs and values, and how do they overlap with the District's needs and values?

Masterson Were the community organizations that you spoke to mostly in the urban or rural areas?

Westling Both, but mostly urban.

Rossi How did you arrive at the list of people to reach out to? There seems to be a perception that everyone who was surveyed knew about the District already.

Westling The list was created in collaboration with staff. Espousal Strategies reached out to community organizations and the staff reached out to residents, community organizations, and farmers. The goal was to reach out to folks who already had a relationship with the District. There are two ways we did the research, survey, and poll. Surveying folks who know about the District can lead to the next group of people who don't know about us yet but could find our resources helpful.

Beamer Did you find any outliers?

Westling Yes, the biggest takeaway was about how strong the emotional connection for District residents to their outdoors space was. He also assumed most would have one main issue to discuss, but some had more than one. He found that it's important for folks to see what that emotional connection looks like, and how it can be shared with the District and their neighbors. For farmers and growers, the District as a resource as an entry point is biggest. People seemed appreciative of the fact that the District isn't a regulatory body, even the ones who were skeptical about it.

Zimmer-Stucky liked that the themes from the community organizations included clear communication, as this will be a great opportunity for building trust with our community, to set boundaries for what resources can be offered without over-promising anything. This is something we can think about in every iteration of these listening sessions.

Zimmer-Stucky Did anyone decline to do the listening session or survey?

Westling Yes, mostly due to unavailability. This is especially since participants were offered a stipend for their time.

White-Brainard added that the survey is still live, so any extra messages will be able to be added.

Westling We collected 95 responses so far.

Masterson encouraged the rest of the Board Members to forward the survey on to their contacts- those who we could work with but aren't yet.

Westling We've been encouraging folks from the listening session to forward it to their contacts as well. We do have some filters so people can enter their zip code to ensure responses are only from within the District. This due date for the survey can also be extended to ensure others have time to add, without extending the whole timeline.

Zimmer-Stucky Which categories need more datapoints?

Westling We're pretty well covered, but we could use more farmers and growers. We're always looking for clear themes, and it seems like the themes have already emerged.



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Meckes We checked in with Espousal Strategies last week and got the numbers relaying how many people from each group have responded either by survey or listening session. From that data, we decided that we are not going to be sending reminders to our Urban constituents, but we did send reminders to farmers and growers, and rural residents. And she has seen a bump in responses after sending that reminder.

Action Item: Beamer to send the Rural and Grower survey to the Board, with the due date to be Monday April 8th

Beamer Reminded the Board that there will be two message development training courses and one media training in May. They will likely not coincide with the planned Board, as the staff is involved as well, and they should each take a few hours long.

6:34pm- NRCS Urban Agricultural Program – postponed.

6:35pm- ED and L-Team Updates

Beamer shared her Executive Director update:

- It's her third month as Executive Director, and she's still in listening and learning mode.
- She's continuing 1x1 meetings with each Staff member to learn more about their work.
- A reporter at Capital Press who is doing a profile on the services EMSWCD provides. They've had a few interviews with staff, Masterson, and Zimmer-Stucky. The reporter will come to the Soil Health Class in a couple of weeks. The final product should be posted in May.
- External Meetings:
 - Attended the recent Multnomah County Farm Bureau Meeting- Baker joined. Learned more about OSU Extension.
 - Met with Johnson Creek Watershed Council and Columbia Slough Watershed Council.
- At the end of April, she will bring a sample Executive Director workplan to the Board as well as a path for the District-wide workplan that gets submitted to the Oregon Department of Agriculture this summer.
- PC Meeting on April 15th. Has been working with Masterson to plan the agenda.

Mitten shared the F&O updates:

- A lot of Budget work!
- He's been working on a renewal analysis for Staff's healthcare premiums – it's the second year in a row that we've had a double digit increase in premiums. He's been spending time shopping around for other plans and benefit designs but is finding similar rates cross the board.
- Starting to plan for the website updating project.
- F&O staff have been working on implementing accounting software upgrade, addressing some IT issues, and providing email tech help, including email bounce backs that you may have been receiving when emailing with staff.
- Onboarding the new Rural Lands employee and supporting CO&E's hire process.
- The team has been helping out with finishing up the 2024 Plant Sale and other office projects.

White-Brainard and Meckes left at 6:40pm.

Shearin shared the Urban Lands Program updates:



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- The pre-application for METRO's capital grant for Mount Hood Community College's DePave project got accepted, so she'll be helping them continue with the rest of the application process. This is being used to help to pay for a pervious pavement installation on another side of the campus.
- The Hardy Plant Society requested to interview her about urban weeds and how to get people to think correctly about weeds we should care about vs. invasive weeds.
- McAllister has been invited to sit on the council panel for the Flourishing Oregon Conference related to pulling together community members to kickstart an understanding of building change within the community. She was also asked to join during her previous position at Nadaka, which the District also funded.
- The city of Gresham requested a letter of support for improvements to the Southwest community park, which is part of the Shaull property, and they are applying for a grant for parking and other amenities.

DiLeone shared the Rural Lands Program updates:

- Baker is working with seven commercial farms on potential cost share projects. There's a lot of interest in rainwater harvesting right now, which NRCS is not sharing information on. Other projects include farm road repair, conversion to drip irrigation, and a composting project.
- A significant portion of the irrigation system at the Big creek was owned by the previous renting tenants, so they removed a large amount of it, thus limiting our options for renters.

Rossi The irrigation is owned by three different parties. The main line and one headline came with the farm when we bought it, Cal Farms owned the wheel lines and a main line, and three headlines were owned by Rossi farms to help increase capacity. He offered his help to ensure the District could easily complete the set. He would also like to leave his lines for the next tenant.

Baker The renters took what was theirs, but we have a complete mainline from the Northern part of the property to the middle part of the property only right now.

Action Item: Baker to reach out to Rossi to visit Big Creek Farm to discuss irrigation lines.

Beamer The CO&E Team is down to the final two candidates for the new Assistant position.

6:53pm- Plant Sale 2023 Insights

Shearin is always looking to improve the event and be responsive to the community. She presented insights with Woolery. There was a little over 1,000 orders in 2024. All staff help to make this event happen, from behind the scenes planning, to marketing, to meals, to plant sorting, to event set up and tear down! We also worked with Wisdom of the Elders for plant sorting, which was a great experience again this year.

Carlson Who is the general demographic of buyers?

Shearin The buyers are mostly Urban, but some Rural.

Woolery We also have many orders that have a large number of big trees, so they must have a large plot of land for them.

Shearin This year, we sent targeted mailers to zip code 97233 like last year, but also added 97266 and 97030, which are all communities who lack tree cover.

Shearin asked the Board if they had any suggestions or thoughts for improvement to the event.



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Zimmer-Stucky appreciated how Shearin sends folks with large orders to wholesalers or nurseries instead.

Masterson appreciates how targeted the audience is and how well the targeted marketing is working. That's a great trend for the District.

Shearin We didn't expect to see the big spike in purchases, from those target zip codes, that we saw.

Woolery Even non-targeted zip code's sale numbers shot above our record sales. Our top number of orders were from the 97206-zip code at around 155 orders.

Carlson Can we contact some of the local gardening clubs who also do plant sale events? They get donated plants from nurseries who use the funds for student scholarships too. Can EMSWCD have a presence at these events for outreach, if not for providing plants?

Shearin We want to be careful with left over plants, because they can't go to for-profit organizations or to individual homeowners. But she'd love to hear more about the scholarship part of their work.

7:15pm – Recommendations from the Land Legacy Committee

Shipkey The Board has three resolutions and one motion to consider tonight, based on the Land Legacy Committee's recommendations from their meeting last week.

Resolution 2024-04-01: For the acquisition of two working farmland easement interests.

MOTION: Masterson moved to approve Resolution 2024-04-01. Carlson 2nd. Motion passed unanimously (4-0, Guebert absent).

Resolution 2024-04-02: For the acquisition of a property on Division Drive, authorizing the District to make the purchase and authorizes the Executive Director to review the due diligence investigations, determine whether to proceed with the purchase, and to follow through with the transaction.

MOTION: Masterson moved to approve Resolution 2024-04-02. Carlson 2nd. Motion passed unanimously (3-1, Rossi no, Guebert absent).

Resolution 2024-04-03: To support Outgrowing Hunger in acquiring one or more agriculture sites, a contingent commitment of \$100,000 for a period of one year. This commitment is contingent on Outgrowing Hunger securing additional grant funds. This would be a conceptual approval of a 20-year simple easement, pending Metro's grant funding conditions for Outgrowing Hunger. Staff and Board would weigh in on further language.

MOTION: Masterson moved to approve Resolution 2024-04-03. Carlson 2nd. Motion passed unanimously (4-0, Guebert absent).

Motion for a District property disposition.

MOTION: Masterson moved to advance the disposition of District property as discussed in Executive Session at the March 25th, 2024, Land Legacy Committee Meeting. Carlson 2nd. Motion passed unanimously (4-0, Guebert absent).

7:20pm- Board Discussion

Zimmer-Stucky is addressing the Board's interest in bringing back scheduled Work Sessions for EMSWCD Board Members, to do deeper dives into certain topics. The goal is to get approval of the idea here and then have the Board come up with topics for Work Sessions and present them at the May Board Meeting to see what kind of staff or external resources would be necessary.



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Masterson How many are we hoping to plan for the year? Should we let the topic list dictate that?

Zimmer-Stucky was intending to hold two Work Sessions for the rest of 2024 but doesn't mind adding another one if necessary.

Masterson, Rossi, and Carlson agree.

Beamer added that this idea did come up in her meetings with the Board. Staff have been thinking about how to bring Staff and Board together on the strategic goals. There are some goals that are flagged as new, so she is hoping the Work Sessions will act as a way to keep the Board up to date on how to move forward with them.

Action Item: Board Members to send Work Session topic ideas and information for planning each idea to Zimmer-Stucky and Beamer by April 26th.

Action Item: Fernandez to add a Work Session item to the May Board Meeting Agenda.

Beamer Guebert has registered to attend a national conference regarding regenerative agriculture and soil health this summer, in Montana. He'd like to represent the District, and bring the learnings back to the Board, setting up a cohort to continue with the class he'll be teaching this summer on soil health. There is a budget line item for continuing education for Board Members, which he would use for this.

Masterson The Board hasn't taken much advantage of that budget item, so this is great. She fully supports Guebert and other Board members to do similar.

Rossi and Carlson agree.

Beamer He'd like to work with Baker on how to bring the learnings back to the District.

Motion: Masterson moved to approve Guebert's reimbursement for the conference ticket from the Board Training and Development budget. Motion passed unanimously (4-0, Guebert Absent).

Beamer CONNECT+ Conference is an annual summit that is put on by Oregon Conservation Education & Assistance Network (OCEAN), who does technical training for the SWCD community. It's the place for SWCDs, Watershed Councils, and Land Trusts to come together to network and learn from each other. Some Board Members from across the state attend, as well as NRCS, ODA, and OWEB representatives.

Masterson encouraged staff to bring other relevant information and conference invitations to the Board as well.

7:32pm- February 2024 Financial Reports

Mitten Balance sheet shows the LGIP account at \$15.182 million, over \$2 million change from last year. In that account, our interest rates are at 5.2%. Our total assets are just over \$22 million, which is a change of over 7.5% from last year. We have over \$6 million in assets. Liability and Equity sheet shows little to no debt. The balance sheet shows a very healthy balance at \$21.8 million. The Profit and Loss budget performance shows the property tax revenue received at \$5.77 million, year to date. In March alone, we received over \$166,000 in property taxes. The overall annual budget is \$5.72 million. For the Native Plant Sale, Net is \$49,952, and Gross is over \$51,000 due to refunds and fees. State grants are coming in, federal and city are on the way. In Profit and Loss by performance, nothing stands out. Under the Admin line, Bank Changes shows \$3,200, which comes from Shopify Plant Sale fees. In Line 9030, the Improvements in Real Property is due to the cost of building renovations. The Purchase of Real Property



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line covers an easement, title, and insurance policy for the Gordon Creek property. In Profit and Loss by Class, percentage of Fiscal Year passed is 67%, F&O is at 62% due to Executive Director search and capital outlay for the office, and Headwaters Farm is at 32% since the funds for the office building haven't been spent.

7:40pm- Announcements, Action Items, and Adjournment

Masterson The Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program funding has been approved for their state-wide program. Another meeting is coming up soon to talk about how the funds will be allocated. The Land Legacy Committee helped get this funding for more farmland protection.

Action Items:

- **Beamer** to send the Rural and Grower survey to the Board, with the due date to be Monday, April 8th.
- **Baker** to reach out to Rossi to visit Big Creek Farm to discuss irrigation lines.
- **Board Members** to send Work Session topic ideas and information for planning each idea to Zimmer-Stucky and Beamer by April 26th.
- **Fernandez** to add a Work Session item to the May Board Meeting Agenda.

Zimmer-Stucky adjourned the meeting at 7:43pm.