



541.883.6924 | 1945 Main Street, Suite 200 | Klamath Falls, Oregon 97601 | www.klamathswcd.org

KSWCD BOARD MEETING MINUTES

May 8th, 2024

In Attendance:

Board Members: Earl Miller, Martin Kerns, David Cone, Charles Dehlinger, Jolene Robison

District Staff: Will Natividad/DM, Alex Sharp/PM, Sam Fletcher/PM, Hanna Chittenden/PM

Community/Agencies: Michelle Sharp/SBC, Julie Jespersen/SBC, Josh Elke/NRCS

Meeting called to order at 12:32pm – Vice Chair Jolene Moxon

Agenda Additions/Changes: Move Approval of April Financials to the next meeting, the board received them the day before the meeting and would like more time to review the statements.

Old Business:

- Approve April Minutes

Motion 1: Motion to Approve April Minutes.

Motion: Miller

Second: Kerns

Discussion: None.

Vote: 5 Yes - Unanimous, Motion Passes

Motion 2: Motion to Suspend the Equipment Rental Program effective immediately, to be re-evaluated at the September Board meeting.

Motion: Cone

Second: Moxon

Discussion: Josh Elke raised some concerns about the sustainability of the No-Till and rental programs, as well as the strain on currently limited staffing resources. Will explained that the aerator currently has a cracked axle that may not be able to be repaired, and both drills are also missing parts and none of the equipment is in great condition. The program is also realistically not profitable or self-sustaining with all the administrative costs and resources it requires to operate, without a volunteer doing everything as the district had done in the past. The board agreed that this is an important service for the community, but at this time, due to the state of the equipment, lack of resources, and time and funding needed to successfully operate the program, it would need to be paused and reevaluated in September for the fall planting season. David Cone and some other members knew of landowners with equipment who either currently rent it, or may be interested in renting it to other landowners. The board decided to work on compiling a list with alternative resources for landowners interested in No-Till or Aerating.

Vote: 4 Yes, Abstained: Dehlinger, Motion Passes

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Motion 3: Motion to review contracts next week, including a revised contract from SBC for just bookkeeping services, and a contract for payroll as well as potentially payroll and bookkeeping from Sargent CPA.

Motion: Miller

Second: None

Discussion: There was no consensus on whether the board should keep all services with SBC, split them, or move all services elsewhere, since SBC will only be providing payroll for Oregon employees moving forward, and Hanna's status is still currently unclear. David Cone wanted all services to stay with SBC. Jolene also expressed wanting to at least keep bookkeeping with SBC, as they have the experience with it and have been successfully handling it so far. There are also pending coverage issues for workers compensation insurance for Hanna, SBC informed the board that per WHA Insurance, Hanna is not currently covered under the district's Oregon policy while teleworking in NY. Will said he did receive forms from WHA to fill out to obtain coverage for Hanna, and he is working to resolve the situation, and will keep the board and SBC updated.

Vote: No Vote, motion was incomplete.

Reports:

SBC Report: Michelle Sharp

The credit card statement was mailed on the 25th, but has still not arrived, and there is one missing receipt, so the financials are missing that information. Michelle was working on finishing updating the workers compensation policy this morning, and did tell the board that Hanna is not currently covered while working remotely in NY on this insurance policy. Michelle and Julie brought up concerns that Hanna may not have been covered since she left the state of OR on April 16th, and she will also be moving to Germany this coming Monday May 13th.

NRCS Report: Josh Elke

Josh Elke shared the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between NRCS and KSWCD. Although this document is not regularly used or reviewed, he said it would be good for everyone to look over at some point, especially with new board members. There are 6 total positions available with NRCS right now, 2 have been filled and the employees are expected to arrive within a couple of weeks. NRCS is still focusing on shorter turnaround times for projects, being completed in 3 years or less. For the Irrigation and Juniper Removal EQIP programs, there is a much larger demand and more planned projects than funding currently available. David Cone asked Josh if NRCS considers the source and the water rights of landowners interested in irrigation projects, and they do. All NRCS projects are reviewed and signed off on by either the Watermaster, or someone from OWRD. To be eligible, properties must also have been irrigated

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for at least 2 of the last 5 years, and any project can not expand the acreage irrigated. Alex has been training, and will soon be a Level 1 Certified Planner for NRCS. Josh also raised concerns about the No-Till and rental programs, saying the equipment is in poor shape, and the time commitment to answer calls and coordinate the program is putting a strain on already limited staffing resources. There is no employee or individual at the district who currently has the time or capability to successfully run this program. The board ultimately decided to pause the program until a more effective solution is found. Josh also brought up the idea of having quarterly performance meetings, to ensure the district is on track with goals and objectives, and to also review progress accomplished by the SWCD and NRCS. Sam will send out a poll within the next 2 weeks to find a date that will work for everyone for the first quarterly meeting.

FSA Report: Laura Hall

The FSA is still awaiting a date for the CRP Grasslands program signups. This is a 15 year long commitment for landowners, but it does allow for grazing. According to the Drought Monitor, we are currently in a D1 drought. For any drought response programs to kick in, Klamath would need to be in a D2 drought for at least two months.

District Staff Report: Will Natividad

The district should be able to request funds from the BIL agreement at the end of this month, according to Larry Nichols at UKBAC, who is managing the funding. The Cooperative Agreement with NRCS has been completed, sent off, and is pending NRCS approval. The Algoma project is almost done, there is still some minor work remaining for the subcontractor to complete. The SWCD has also been working with Brad Moore from Wy'East and Energy Trust of Oregon, to figure out how to implement some projects involving irrigation upgrades and energy savings. The IM-11 funding, managed by OWEB, is also supposed to be available soon, but there are still no set timelines or much detail. Will also brought up that the new board member, Charles Dehlinger, will need to be added as an authorized signer for checks on the bank account. Will did also find another local business able to do both bookkeeping and payroll, Sargent CPA LLC.

New Business:

Payroll Services

Per the last board meeting, SBC will only be doing payroll for Oregon employees moving forward, and the status of Hanna, with moving overseas, is still unclear. David Cone wanted all services, bookkeeping and payroll, to stay with SBC. Jolene also expressed wanting to at least keep bookkeeping with SBC, as they have the experience with it and have been successfully handling it so far. There is also the issue with lack of workers compensation insurance coverage for Hanna currently, while teleworking in NY, and also when she moves to Germany on May

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13th. Will said he did receive forms from WHA to fill out to obtain coverage for Hanna, and he is working on these and will keep everyone updated. Jolene said that if Hanna is not covered under the district's current workers comp policy, she needs to be on leave until she has coverage. Hanna explained that she still has OR taxes, and this would support the fact her actual residence will not change when they move. The board requested a letter from Hanna's accountant or CPA clarifying the situation, so her state of employment could be better determined for payroll and workers comp insurance purposes. David Cone expressed frustration with all the barriers and all the additional work required to keep Hanna employed while overseas. Will said that Sargent CPA was comfortable doing payroll, including Hanna, and had experience with military members or spouses working remotely, and believed having them do both bookkeeping and payroll would make things more efficient. The board agreed that to switch to a different company for this, or sign any sort of long term contract, it would require board approval. Will has the ability to retain services, and could use a different company for payroll temporarily if needed, but to sign any kind of longer term contract, the board would need to approve it. The board requested that Will find a solution for the workers compensation coverage for Hanna within a week, as it is a high priority to make sure the district is covered for liability purposes.

Audit Status

Ken has been the one in contact with the accountant, but was not present at this meeting. The audit is due at the end of this month. Michelle said she could reach out to the accountant to find out the status.

Tax Base

Will brought up the idea of the district starting the process to obtain a tax base. He has been in contact with Eric Nusbaum at ODA about the process, and believes it would be very beneficial to the district, and a lot of other SWCD's around the state have tax bases as well. The board was worried about the politics and difficulty of getting the votes, especially in rural areas of the county. The board agreed that this would have to be a very well planned and executed process, and decided to hold off on this for now, and circle back to the idea of a tax base at another point in time.

Public Comment:

None.

Meeting is adjourned at 2:27 pm – Vice Chair Jolene Moxon.

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Klamath
Soil & Water
Conservation District

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Minutes Approved as Written or Amended:

DRAFT

KSWCD Chair **Date**

KSWCD Secretary/Treasurer **Date**

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