

SPOKANE CONSERVATION DISTRICT
4422 E 8th Ave, Spokane Valley, WA 99212
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, March 14, 2023

Attendees

Supervisors in person: Chair Randy James, Tom Miller, Jaki Shrauger

Supervisors attending remotely: Jerry Scheele

Absent: Wendy Knopp

Associate Supervisors: Chris Mahelona, Sarah Schlake

SCD Staff: Vicki Carter, Jeannie Jesseph, Jeff Cunningham, Hilary Sepulveda, Eric Allen, Matt Stewart

Visitors: Melanie Meagher, Brian Werst, Melissa Pierce, Kris Neely

Visitors attending by phone or remote: Mike Baden

Opening of Meeting

The meeting was a hybrid of on-site and remote attendees using the Microsoft Teams app to connect the participants.

Chair Randy James called the meeting to order at 4:00 and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

James led the group in singing Happy Birthday to Scheele.

Minutes/Treasurer's Report

Acceptance of Consent Agenda

The Consent Agenda was previously distributed. The board accepted the Consent Agenda items consisting of:

- March 12, 2024, Board Agenda
- January 2024 Treasurer's Report
- February 6, 2024, Regular Board Meeting Minutes and Treasurer's Report
- March 1, 2024, Special Board Meeting Minutes
- March 2024 Payables Report

Motion Shrauger/Miller to accept the Consent Agenda, including the March Payables Report for \$124,873.20 as well as the January Treasurers Report for \$162.498.45 Motion carried.

Shrauger verified that the financial accounts matched the bank statements.

Chair James announced there would be an Executive Session beginning at 4:20 pm and is anticipated to last 25-30 minutes in accordance with RCW 42.30.110(1) regarding complaints or charges brought against a public employee and to discuss with legal counsel district matters relating to enforcement actions or potential litigation.

New Business/Linkage to Community

Public Comments

Chair James allowed the visitors and Associate Supervisors to introduce themselves.

Governance Culture

Baden presented the board with updates on the final supplemental budget received by the commission, highlighting the positive aspects such as the \$3.5 million in conservation technical assistance for the upcoming fiscal year that he expects will be split between all 45 Districts in Washington State. The

WSCC will make a final decision on how the funding is distributed next week. However, he noted that this funding was only one-time, not ongoing as hoped. Additionally, another \$1 million was secured for technical assistance at the beginning of the biennium which is \$4.5 million that Districts did not have last biennium, noting good momentum in these efforts. In addressing staffing and capacity needs, WSCC secured \$200,000 in funding to potentially hire one to two additional staff members. Baden also provided insights into recent legislative developments, including the unsuccessful proposal to codify an appointed commissioner as a tribal member. Looking ahead, Baden mentioned upcoming events like the conservation district roundtable where further discussions on budgeting and Climate Commitment Act funding and branding would take place. Additionally, there will be an all-districts roundtable meeting on March 26th and 27th where further discussions around the Climate Commitment Act will take place. Lastly, he noted May deadlines and provided updates on the midterm appointed position interviews.

Executive Session

Chair James called for an Executive Session using a separate on-line meeting, starting at 4:20 pm and in accordance with RCW 42.30.110(1). The meeting was estimated to take 30 minutes. The regular board meeting reconvened at 4:57.

Motion Miller/ Shrauger to approve the SCD be financially responsible for the legal expenses incurred on behalf of Director Vicki Carter as they relate to her personal safety as an SCD employee. Motion carried.

Financial Oversight/Review

The financial report was presented by Jeannie Jesseph. Jesseph highlighted February's budget position with an ending positive position of \$89,000. This surplus was primarily attributed to the receipt of substantial loan payments for equipment rentals and a reduction in unpaid invoices, particularly from the Department of Ecology. Jesseph noted that overall operational expenses remained within expectations, including annual payments to the WA DOE loans. In conclusion, February demonstrated commendable financial performance, marked by significant improvement from the previous month, with the Districts overall fiscal standing remaining robust. Jesseph closed stating that moving forward, a commitment to financial management practices will ensure sustained positive momentum.

Director's Report

Carter provided comprehensive updates on funding and ongoing projects. Beginning with funding updates, Carter highlighted receiving \$975,000 in fire recovery funds, noting the direct allocation to SCD and the responsibility it entails for distribution and administration. Carter commended Representative Suzanne Schmidt in her advocacy efforts, which resulted in securing \$300,000 for The Scale House Market project, despite a lower initial ask of \$750,000. Moving to project updates, Carter detailed the progress of The Scale House Market project, highlighting a recent news story produced by KHQ News. Additionally, she mentioned the recent hiring of Townsend Turner and Heery as our Owner Rep/Project Manager noting their role in navigating fluctuating finances through budgeting and alternate plans. Carter also touched on efforts to secure funding for solar panel installations in partnership with Avista Corp. Regarding the partnership building, construction is underway to build ten office spaces to accommodate growing demands. A loan of \$430,000 from Numerica Credit Union has been approved to fund the project, pending board approval.

Carter provided further insight into various program-specific updates, including The Nest School application for a Department of Commerce grant to expand their capacity to facilitate programming for 18-month-olds. Carter has submitted a letter of support. Vets on the Farm celebrated its 9th anniversary, with two years remaining on their land lease; however, potential plans for selling the land by the owner's prompt consideration of future actions.

In addition to program specific updates, Carter provided information on community initiatives, including a public hearing for zoning changes and collaborations with local organizations, demonstrate ongoing community engagement and development efforts. Carter also discussed engagements with government officials, including support for legislative initiatives such as SB 5934, a pollinator bill and a potential visit to The Quarry from Governor Inslee. Additionally, she highlighted key takeaways from her attendance at the NACD conference in San Diego, particularly gaining momentum with the BioFarming program, which will also affect the proposed RCPP project. Furthermore, Carter mentioned the impending submission of the Climate Smart Commodity Grant by Ty Meyer and Alex Case-Cohen.

Concluding the report, Carter provided updates on the community garden on the south side of the SCD campus, noting a site plan has been developed including a storage structure for storage and plant materials. Carter thanked the board for the special meeting that allowed for eligibility to apply for the RCO grant to expand educational sites, restrooms, etc. on the campus. Finally, she noted the nomination of the SRF program for the PICIS which will be presented in Washington DC, along with the commission's funding allocation for the Science HUB led by Levi Keesker and task order work assisting Ty's projects in the regenerative ag world.

Motion Shrauger/Miller to approve Carter to move forward with the loan from NCU TI Loan for the construction on the west wing of the partnership building in the amount of \$430,000. Motion carried.

Staff Reports

Eric Allen, representing Water Resources, discussed various updates and plans. He began by noting the departure of a crew member and upcoming revisions to the VSP market plans. Additionally, he mentioned the adoption of a general water resource monitoring plan and a macroinvertebrate study on Little Spokane and Hangman Creek. This study aims to update previous research from 2003 to assess changes over the past 20 years. Emphasizing the significance of assessing project impacts on the environment, Allen stressed the importance of planning for watershed monitoring on a larger scale. He also mentioned ongoing efforts to reevaluate partnerships, particularly considering staffing changes outside our organization. Allen also discussed efforts to address fish passage barriers, with a specific focus on Marshall Creek. During discussions, the Spokane Salmon Restoration Collaboratives role in EDT modeling efforts. They anticipate further details on funding but acknowledge the collaboratives recent legalization and its relevance to broader salmon recovery efforts.

Matt Stewart from the Forestry department made mention of the upcoming pick-up days for the Annual Tree sale. A shipment of trees has been received, with additional inventory expected to arrive soon. 325 shade trees have been acquired through a Forest Service grant, with more expected to arrive. The plan is to plant these trees throughout the city and in partnership with the Expo 74 celebration.

Jeff Cunningham reported on the 2015 Chevy Silverado 2500 HD and Polaris Ranger for the Water Resources Department. Currently, Cunningham is searching for an enclosed trailer to transport plants safely, preferring a new tandem axle model with additional features like increased clearance and stabilizer jacks. He noted the importance of cross ventilation for airflow during transportation. Despite considering used options, he is leaning towards a new trailer due to concerns about the condition and safety of used ones.

Hilary Gonzalez reported that the Tree sale pre-order period concluded with 1,236 orders and over 92,000 seedlings sold through the SCD website. This results in a significant increase in total sales of 24.22% compared to the previous year.

Election Update

Jesseph reported that today marked the deadline for returning ballots, with 36 received out of the 86 sent out. With only one candidate, Wendy Knopp, the election cannot be canceled under the new WSCC protocol, but voters did have the option to write-in their own candidate. Mike McLaughlin from the Spokane County Elections Office will assist in counting the ballots, although scheduling conflicts may delay the process by almost two weeks. Nonetheless, Jesseph expressed gratitude for their assistance and aims to provide preliminary results via email, with results pending announcement by WSCC in their May meeting.

Close of Meeting

Correspondence & Announcements

No additional comments or announcements were made.

Reading of the Motions

Gonzalez read the motions.

Motion Shrauger/Miller to accept the Consent Agenda, including the March Payables Report for \$124,873.20 as well as the January Treasurers Report for \$162,498.45 Motion carried.

Motion Miller/ Shrauger to approve the SCD be financially responsible for the legal expenses incurred on behalf of Director Vicki Carter as they relate to her personal safety as an SCD employee. Motion carried.

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Meeting adjourned at 5:46 pm.
Respectfully submitted by Hilary Gonzalez.

Randy James, Chair

Tom Miller, Vice Chair