

**SPOKANE CONSERVATION DISTRICT**  
4422 E 8<sup>th</sup> 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, Wendy Knopp

**Absent:** None

**Associate Supervisors:** Chris Mahelona, Jaime Rohrbach

**SCD Staff:** Vicki Carter, Jeannie Jesseph, Jeff Cunningham, Hilary Sepulveda, Ty Meyer, Garth Davis, Dan Ross

**Visitors:** Rich Edlund from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Bill Jackman from Inland Sod, and citizen Stephanie Zurenko

**Visitors attending by phone or remote:**

**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 14, 2023, Board Agenda
- February 9, 2023, Regular Board Meeting Minutes
- February 2023 Treasurer's Report
- March 2023 Payables Report
- February 28, 2023, Special Board Meeting Minutes

**Motion Miller/Scheele to accept the Consent Agenda, including the March Payables Report for \$144,161.46.**

**Motion carried.**

Shrauger verified that the financial accounts matched the bank statements.

Chair James announced there would be an Executive Session beginning around 5:30 and is anticipated to last 20 minutes in accordance with RCW 42.30.110 regarding the performance of a public employee.

**New Business/Linkage to Community**

**Public Comments**

Chair James introduced the visitors and Associate Supervisors.

Zurenko, who has a history of supporting conservation in our area, came by to see the new office and changes to the campus.

Edlund gave an update on NRCS activities. Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) applications are being contracted. The applications covered many areas, including range, forest, and riparian zone. The Inflation Reduction Act has funded additional EQIP projects. Applicants that weren't successful in the first EQIP round

may be eligible under this new funding.

### **Governance Culture**

James and Miller attended the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) in New Orleans. Miller said it was like “old home week” because so many of his conservation friends were in attendance. Some of the most impactful programs he felt included soil health, legislature committee, and regional meetings. One breakout session was led by a local Washington state group regarding water rights. James talked about highlights from the leadership sessions. One session spoke about Regenerative Ag and the value of biodiversity. There was a presentation on the Urban farm scene that documented a large number of back-yard gardens and their impact on the availability of nutritional high-density food. There is a push to educate people on best practices for their gardens to maximize their harvests. He had many takeaways regarding the potential for increased conservation in our area. The Secretary of Agriculture spoke about the increased funding for conservation practices. USFW is looking at the impact of best management practices in land management on wildlife. There is a coalition to encourage best practices on water from its source to the sea across state, county, and tribal boundaries. Two of the most impactful practices to improve water are reduced fertilization on yards and planting more trees. Miller thanked Carter for making it possible for him to attend. James later shared how special SCD is after visiting with other supervisors around the nation and hearing about their experiences within their districts. He feels very blessed to work with the SCD. He shared how our Governance Model positively impacts the direction of our district. He believes that we are in the top 10 districts in the nation.

### **Financial Oversight/Review**

Jesseph reviewed the financial reports. SCD is under budget by over \$80,000 so far this year. The Spokane County assessment is less than expected. The payment came in from the University of Idaho for the truck they purchased from SCD. Over \$380,000 was paid out for agricultural equipment loans. The district ended February in a great financial position.

### **Director’s Report**

The prospective tenant for the Partnership Building canceled their letter of intent at the last minute. WSU Small Business Development Center has submitted a letter of intent for the smaller side of the building. If this agreement moves forward, SCD will have to pay for the tenant’s improvements. The cost of the improvements would be recovered through the monthly lease payments. The cost for the improvements is around \$450,000. Carter is working with Numerica Credit Union on getting a line of credit to do this work.

Carter went to Olympia to request \$750,000 for improvements to the Scalehouse. She received overwhelming support for this project. Senator Padden and House Representative Schmidt will move this request forward in the state budget process. SCD will begin a capital program if this funding comes through. Charlie’s Produce, Numerica Credit Union and the Spokane Valley Chamber of Commerce are interested in investing in this project.

Some budget adjustments will need to be made. Over \$1.5M in grant money has come in that wasn’t included in the 2023 budget. Most of this money will need to be spent by June 30, 2023. The Riparian Plant Propagation grant for \$170,000 was awarded yesterday. The Sustainable Farm and Fields program was awarded \$86,000. A \$5,000 grant was awarded to work on the Scalehouse project. Water Resources has been awarded \$400,000 on a Drumheller project, \$205,000 for Stream flow restoration, \$30,000 for a Waikiki project, a Blanchard creek project and a \$114,000 Flowering Rush project. The Hangman Creek Riparian Pilot program is \$2.9M. Urban Forestry has a \$25,000 DNR program. Production Ag requested \$5M for the loan program, which includes \$197,000 for administration, and a large portion of the loan funds are forgivable. Meyer explained that our loan program funds could be used as match for other grants.

The WSCC has awarded a Riparian Plant Propagation grant to SCD. This grant will be used to install infrastructure and purchase greenhouse materials to create a hub to provide plants to other conservation districts.

**Motion Miller/Shrauger to approve the 23-40-RPP WSCC Riparian Plant Propagation grant award for \$170,391.00. Motion carried.**

**Election Update**

Today is the last day to submit a ballot. Ballots received in the mail must be postmarked on March 14. There are two candidates for the position of Elected Supervisor for the SCD Board of Supervisors, incumbent Randy James and Michaela Kelso. Mike McLaughlin will bring a team from Spokane County on March 20 to count the ballots. The WSCC will announce the official results in their May meeting.

**Staff Reports**

Davis gave an update on the Tree Sale that closed today. Over 87,000 seedlings were sold in 1,036 orders. This doesn't include any surplus sales. Orders will be picked up on April 7 and 8.

Ross emphasized Carter's report about all the grants and the very busy season coming up. He is just wrapping up plans on the Hangman Riparian Conservation Pilot program. Seven contracts are completed in this 15-year program. Plants and seeds have been ordered, and equipment purchases are being researched. The RM17 II project is going well and seems to be weathering the storm. Most of the plants have survived, and the area continues to be monitored. The area handled the latest runoff event just fine. Ross expressed his appreciation for the engineer and contractor that did such a great job on this streambank.

Meyers reported that the restructuring of the Bio-Farming program is going well. A regenerative ag leadership training went great. The training aims to build farmers into strong leaders for the Regenerative Ag movement. He anticipates another \$500,000 in loans going out in the next month. He believes the average loan has doubled over the last eight months due to equipment cost increases. He is building a regenerative ag curriculum using grant money from the WSCC.

Cunningham wants to install a gate kit to automatically open when people leave the campus after hours.

**Public Comments Revisited**

Chair James introduced Bill Jackman, who had arrived later in the meeting. Mr. Jackman manages Inland Sod and Seed. He explained how the sod market is moving away from bluegrass toward fescues, which require half of the water, fertilizer, and maintenance. He invited board members to visit his farm.

Jesseph has been setting up the new grants, submitting vouchers, and creating budget reports for SCD departments. She also coordinated the election process with Spokane County.

**Close of Meeting**

**Correspondence & Announcements**

March 20, 2023 Election ballots counted

April 7-8, 2023 Tree Sale Pickup & Surplus Sale

April 11, 2023 SCD Board Meeting

April 14, 2023 SCD Rain Barrel Workshop

April 26, 2023 Earth Day Friends of the Quarry Volunteer Group

April 28-29, 2023 Willow Warriors Planting Event

April 27-28, 2023 MRSC Contracting and Procurement Training – specifically for CDs

WADE Employee of the Year application is available online.

**Executive Session**

An Executive Session in a separate on-line meeting began at 5:05 in accordance with RCW 42.30.110 regarding the performance of a public employee. The meeting was estimated to take 20 minutes. The regular board meeting reconvened at 5:25.

**Motion Knopp/Shrauger to give SCD Director a 5.5% COLA pay increase. Motion carried.**

**Reading of the Motions**

Jesseph read the motions.

**Motion Miller/Scheele to accept the Consent Agenda, including the March Payables Report for \$144,161.46.**

**Motion carried.**

**Motion Miller/Shrauger to approve the 23-40-RPP WSCC Riparian Plant Propagation grant award for \$170,391.00. Motion carried.**

**Motion Knopp/Shrauger to give SCD Director a 5.5% COLA pay increase. Motion carried.**

Meeting adjourned at 5:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Jeannie Jesseph.

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**Randy James, Chair**

**Tom Miller, Vice Chair**