

Washington Association of Conservation Districts

Remote Connection through Zoom

March 20th, 2023

Work Session Minutes

Members Remotely Present

Mike Mumford, President (Pend Oreille CD)
Barbara Bailey, Secretary (Underwood CD)
David Fenn, Treasurer (Lewis CD)
Jeanette Dorner, Past President (Pierce CD)
Alan Chapman, Northwest Area Director (Whatcom CD)
Chris Porter, Northwest Area Director (King CD)
Lisa Zaborac, Southwest Area Director (Grays Harbor CD)
Jerry Kolke, Southwest Area Director (Clark CD)
John Preston, North Central Area Director (Columbia Basin CD)
Jack Clark, South Central Area Director (Benton CD)
Jeff Schibel, Northeast Area Director (Lincoln County CD)
John Floyd, Northeast Area Director (Pend Oreille CD)
Mary Collins, Southeast Area Director (Palouse CD)
Cindy Pierce, WADE President (Skagit CD)

Others Remotely Present

Tom Salzer, WACD Executive Director
Jim Brown, WACD Director of Nursery Operations
Heather Wendt, Benton/Franklin CDs Assistant District Manager
Tova Tillinghast, Underwood CD District Manager
Bill Blake, Skagit CD District Manager
Mike Tobin, North Yakima CD District Manager
Shana Joy, WSCC Regional Manager

Area Focus

Tova Tillinghast of Underwood CD gave an update on UCD's plant sale and Tree Fest, as well as the district's work on Tree of Heaven control.

Heather Wendt, of Benton and Franklin CDs, talked about a new project, the STEM Academy. Other district projects included aquatic weed control: harvesting water star grass from the Yakima River and water quality testing. The Heritage Garden Program low water garden has expanded to include 7 CDs, bringing both water conservation and water quality benefits.

Mike Tobin of North Yakima CD reported on salmon recovery efforts, which are paying off and expanding into a new watershed. NYCD now has a Heritage Garden program, and is working on water quality in a community with PFAS in their groundwater. As part of SCC's nursery grant program, NYCD will become fall plant source this year for central WA.

Public Comment

Mike Tobin expressed his view that with new search for a new Commission Executive Director would soon be started and that the CD family needs to be involved. He asked WACD to give input to the Commission to that effect.

Legislative Update

WACD Lobbyist Brynn Brady reviewed the current status of the legislative process. She predicted most budget proposals will be at a sustaining level. She briefed the board on the Senate's released Capital Budget proposal and what is expected in the House's version. She answered questions about the CD election study bill and the likelihood of funding such a study in the operation budget through a proviso. Brynn was asked to comment on whether SCC ED Chris Pettit's departure was a source of concern for legislators, she felt there was no harm done and the Commission's standing was perhaps better because they showed the ability to act decisively.

Treasurer's Reprt

Dave Fenn gave the Treasurer's report, Tom Salzer reviewed recent information on investment gains and losses. He had pursued the question of WACD's eligibility to invest moneys in the state's LGIP program and learned that WACD is eligible. Mike Mumford asked the Finance Committee to have a meeting to determine the urgency of addressing the deposit limit and if they deem necessary, he would call a special meeting to discuss and approve any needed authorizations.

Tom Salzer then raised the topic of the current 65:35 mix in our investment portfolio at Edward Jones, versus the target of 60:40. There was a concern regarding the weekly rebalancing of accounts when policy specifies end of fiscal year only, which led to a discussion on market timing and current Edward Jones operating procedure.

PMC Report

Jim Brown conducted an overview of his report, which was included in the board packet. Harvest is over, over 1.8 million plants were harvested this year. Revenues exceeded \$1.65 million as of mid-March, which is over budget by 17%. PMC expects to be transplanting before the end of the week. Expenses are up, including \$35,000 in income tax and higher wages, shipping, and fuel expense. Demand remains strong and is increasing. There were questions about the Commission's Riparian Plant Propagation Program. Treasurer Fenn and President Mumford congratulated PMC on a job well done.

Update on Skagit CD Office Proposal

Tom Salzer gave an update on Skagit CD's proposal of building on PMC land, noting that counsel said creating a new parcel for Skagit CD and removing it from the lease agreement would be a straightforward way to allow for this. However, likely parcels would be in areas that flood on occasion. Bill Blake expressed his concern about filling in what is effectively, though not officially, a floodplain. Jim Brown talked about potential resistance from the county. He said PMC's focus is on production. Bill Blake emphasized the priority of PMC operations.

Partner Reports

Shana Joy talked about the previous week's Commission meeting and the decision to terminate Chris Pettit. Ron Schultz was acting interim ED for this week. Commissioners will have to make a decision on what the hiring process will look like, and will have meetings for that purpose upon their return. She expects there will be opportunity to give input on process. There were grants awarded for native plant

propagation to 12 districts, including North Yakima CD, for infrastructure and buying plants to grow out for that program.

WADE President Cindy Pierce said WADE is in full swing planning the annual meeting in June. Price will be going up to \$600 for registration due to a dramatic increase in food prices. Sessions are getting lined up, registration will go out soon.

Preparing for FY2024

Tom Salzer talked about preparing for the 23/24 budget proposal. Lori at the PMC is working on a timeline for budgeting. Topic, Activity, and Measurable concepts were included in the briefing mem, with Tom asking for feedback to bring to April meeting.

LandUp Proposal

Tom Salzer informed the Board that one of sponsors of last year's conference, LandUp, wants to sign letter of intent with WACD regarding carbon markets and would share revenues with CDs as a finder's fee. Tom had contacted our counterparts in Oregon, who indicated that the Oregon Association is leaving it up to districts whether or not to participate. Comments by the Board were all in agreement that WACD should not signing letter of intent, citing concerns about the carbon market, risking the impartiality of districts, and endorsing one commercial enterprise over another.

Announcements

Mike Mumford confirmed that last Thursday the SCC board voted to terminate its relationship with Chris Pettit. Most of the meeting was in executive session, which had to be extended twice, reflecting the extensive discussion and deep consideration before a vote was taken. They will ask Kirk Robinson to be interim director; he had been Interim Director after Carol Smith left. Last time the search was run by Conservation Commission, but there is interest to get a professional headhunting agency. Mike asked everyone to be patient.

President Mumford adjourned the meeting at 7:55 pm.