

Washington Association of Conservation Districts

Remote Connection through Zoom

June 23, 2020

Summary of Board Actions

- **Motion:** Dean Longrie moved to adopt the meeting agenda as amended. Second by Jeff Schibel. Motion carried.
- **Motion:** Cindy Reed moved to approve the April and May meeting minutes as corrected. Second by John Preston. Motion carried with one abstention.
- **Motion:** Alan Chapman moved to approve the two draft policies as presented. Second by Dean Longrie. Motion carried with one abstention.
- **Motion:** Doug Rushton moved to adopt the draft FY2020-2021 budgets. Second by Amy McKay. Motion carried.

Board of Directors June Meeting Minutes

Members Remotely Present

Jeanette Dorner, President (Pierce CD)
Amy McKay, Secretary (Whitman CD)
Doug Rushton, National Director (Thurston CD)
Mark Craven, Past President (Snohomish CD)
Alan Chapman, Northwest Area Director (Whatcom CD)
Dean Longrie, Southwest Area Director (Clark CD)
John Keatley, Southwest Area Director (Cowlitz CD)
John Preston, North Central Area Director (Grant County CD)
John McLean, North Central Area Director (Foster Creek CD)
Cindy Reed, South Central Area Director (North Yakima CD)
Barbara Bailey, South Central Area Director (Underwood CD)
Mike Mumford, Northeast Area Director (Pend Oreille CD)
Jeff Schibel, Northeast Area Director (Lincoln County CD)
Mary Collins, Southeast Area Director (Palouse CD)
Renee Hadley, WADE Past President (Walla Walla County CD)

Others Remotely Present

Tom Salzer, WACD Executive Director
Ryan Baye, WACD Legislative & Membership Lead
Jim Brown, WACD PMC Nursery Manager
Carol Smith, WSCC Executive Director
Roylene Rides at the Door, NRCS State Conservationist

President Jeanette Dorner called the meeting to order at 9:02, welcoming the board and guests as well as thanking folks for attending. Ryan Baye conducted a roll call to confirm a quorum was present.

Area Director Reports

The Southwest Area Directors reported their districts were successfully adjusting their operations to the new normal. There were concerns about confusing health protocols, shortened hydraulic windows for installing projects, and a back log in permit applications. There was also a longer-term concern about state funding.

The Southeast Area Director present shared updates from the Whitman County area districts and their adjustments to social distancing requirements. She also heard concerns about state funding from her member-districts.

The South Central Area Directors echoed many of the concerns of their Southwest counterparts: hydraulic permit windows; future state funding; and addressing the impact from the coronavirus on district operations.

The Northwest Area Director present described the impact of the economic downturn and coronavirus on the districts he heard from, as well as future state funding.

The Northeast Area Directors communicated the ways their five districts were adjusting to teleworking and social distancing, as well as the new projects happening in Spokane and Pend Oreille CDs. They also reported a position announcement for a new Pend Oreille CD manager would go out soon, as the current manager was moving.

The North Central Directors had also heard concerns about maintaining funding support for their district but morale among all the districts' staff seemed to be high.

Approving the Agenda

Jeanette Dorner apologized for skipping over this step and asked for any changes to the meeting's agenda. Staff presented a change to the Strategic Plan agenda item at 10:40, renaming it slightly to reflect the Strategic Plan Work Group's activity since the preliminary agenda was sent out. (renaming the bullets: Adopting WACD Mission, Vision, and Priorities & WACD Goals, Action Plan, and Scorecard). Dean Longrie moved to adopt the meeting agenda as amended. Second by Jeff Schibel. Motion carried.

Approving Previous Minutes

Amy McKay presented the draft minutes generated by staff from the April and special May meetings, asking for any corrections. Cindy Reed asked if the May meeting was the 19th or 20th, John Preston and Dean Longrie noted their presence was not recorded in the May minutes. Cindy Reed moved to approve the April and May meeting minutes with corrections noted. Second by John Preston. Motion carried with one abstention.

Treasurer's Report

Jim Brown walked through the May Financial Report as it related to the PMC for the Board's benefit and answered questions about the details behind specific line-items.

Ryan Baye drew the Board's attention to two items from the Executive side – that the dues for the next fiscal year were sent to the membership on June 15th as per the bylaws and confirmed the Executive Office would end the year with an overage.

Investment Account Briefing and Performance

Tim Price spoke about WACD's Investment Account, it's performance over the last couple years, and WACD's risk investment strategy. He answered questions about tax payments, additional options available to WACD, fee structures, and other subjects. Jeanette Dorner suggested a future work session on the topic might be necessary.

PMC Nursery Session

Jim Brown discussed the results at the end of the season for the PMC and looked ahead to the next growing year. He noted the changing patterns in new orders, likely based on the coronavirus. He spoke about the nursery's interest in new USDA crop insurance products and answered several questions about the details of that program.

There was a break from 10:45 to 11:00

Lobbyist Report

Brynn Brady was able to attend the meeting and spoke on several legislative topics – the likelihood of a special session, the results of the economic revenue forecast meeting the prior week, and new coronavirus related government actions. She answered questions about the impact on other state agencies, potential upcoming topics for the 2021 legislative session, and the economic impact of the coronavirus on various state budgets.

WACD Strategic Plan

Tom Salzer presented draft versions of WACD's Vision, Mission, and Priorities on behalf of the Strategic Plan Work Group. He also outlined a timeline for dissemination to the Association for comment and ultimate adoption of six components.

Several board members shared their opinions on the different version of the Vision and Mission, what to focus on as well as the exact language to be used. There was also a discussion on including additional priorities and directly naming several important partners. There was consensus to release the Vision, Mission, and Priorities for comment to the Association.

FY2021 Draft Budget

Tom Salzer presented the recommendations of the Finance Committee, as well as his breakdown of WACD's budget based on assumptions, volatility, and the magnitude of some line items. He also introduced two draft policies for board approval – around new cost of living preferences and additional language on the Executive Director's budget spending authority.

The Board asked for background on WACD's current cost of living adjustment policies, discussed the value of merit increases rather than automatic salary raises, and debated salary structures. Alan Chapman voted to adopted to two draft policies as presented. Second by Dean Longrie. John Keatley moved to amend the proposed COLA policy by removing the second paragraph and the language around "flat COLAs". Second by Cindy Reed. Several board members spoke against the amendment. Motion to amend appeared to fail with one abstention. Division was called by President Jeanette Dorner for a raising vote. Motion to amend failed with one abstention. Main motion adopted with one abstention.

There was a lunch break from 12:50 – 1:20

Partner Reports

Carol Smith reported for the Washington State Conservation Commission. Among other topics she spoke to the Commission's budget response to COVID-19, updated the Board on the Voluntary Stewardship Program, and introduced new staff members.

Roylene Comes at Night reported for the Natural Resource Conservation Service. Among other topics, she reported several NRCS offices were to remain closed to the public but all but five were in Phase 2 of re-opening. She also reported on CRP sign-ups and task orders, then answered questions.

Renee Hadley reported for the Washington Association of District Employees. She shared the outcomes from their traditional yearly conference including the election of a new WADE President who would be attending future WACD meetings.

Doug Rushton reported for the Washington Conservation Society and the National Association of Conservation Districts. He encouraged those present to join the Society and referred folks to his written NACD report.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Jeanette Dorner spoke about the success from the listening session at last fall's WACD Annual Conference and some of the feedback from the letter written by Tom Salzer earlier in June on the subject. She shared her thoughts on the role of conservation districts serving their local communities.

Several board members communicated their interest in the subject among conservation districts and helping structure that conversation within individual communities. There were questions about what new initiatives might look like, concerns about adding another priority to district workloads without financial support, and what steps have already been taken by Washington's CDs.

There was discussion on the outreach among CDs to non-traditional groups, how historical events shape current practices, the need to make people consider new ideas, and ensuring this would be a statewide conversation with no pre-defined assumptions.

Discussion on the Roles and Responsibilities of Area Directors

Tom Salzer and Ryan Baye presented their thoughts on the role of Area Directors within WACD, sharing excerpts from a memo written by Ryan Baye on the various duties defined by the Bylaws. They expressed a goal to start a conversation on the topic and hear from the Area Directors.

Several Area Directors shared their experiences and their challenges in the position. They suggested ways of improving communication and being explicit with member districts the responsibilities of their elected area directors. There was a conversation on what could change and how to continue the conversation.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:31.