

SAN JUAN ISLANDS CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Regular Monthly Meeting of the Board of Supervisors

September 23, 2020

Location: Zoom Meeting

In Attendance (Via Zoom)

Supervisors: Deanna Eltinge, Vicki Heater

David Bill, Lynn Bahrych, Carson Sprenger

Staff: Tony Fyrqvist, Matt Claussen, Cathi Winings, Bruce Gregory, Ryan Palmateer,
Erin Licata

Partners: Jean Fike, WSCC Puget Sound Regional Manager

Public: Kai Hoffman-Krull, SJICD Contractor

Location: Zoom Meeting

MEETING SUMMARY-Final

Vicki Heater convened the regular meeting at 10:00 am via Zoom and announced that the Board of Supervisors will also conduct an Executive Session per RCW 42.30.110 (1) (g) (to evaluate the qualifications of an applicant for public employment or to review the performance of a public employee. However, subject to RCW [42.30.140\(4\)](#), discussion by a governing body of salaries, wages, and other conditions of employment to be generally applied within the agency shall occur in a meeting open to the public, and when a governing body elects to take final action hiring, setting the salary of an individual employee or class of employees, or discharging or disciplining an employee, that action shall be taken in a meeting open to the public) after the regular meeting which would last for 45 minutes – the regular meeting was to continue after the Executive Session.

1. August 26th Meeting Summary – Action Item:

David moved to approve the August 26th Meeting Summary. Deanna moved to second. Motion passed.

2. September 3rd Special Meeting Summary – Action Item:

Carson moved to approve the September 3rd Special Meeting Summary, the motion was seconded by David. Motion passed.

3. September 9th Special Meeting Summary – Action Item:

David moved to approve the September 9th Special Meeting Summary, the motion was seconded by Deanna. A correction was made to the minutes referring to the next meeting as Regular Monthly Meeting instead of Special Monthly Meeting. Motion passed.

4. August Financial Statements Review – Action Item:

Vicki asked Tony to discuss the financial statements and he made the following comments:

- The monthly P&L continues to show fluctuations due to collection cycles of various grants and should not be overly emphasized as a financial tool. There was large surplus in August offsetting the deficit of July.
- Standard Board Reports prepared by R&R Accounting also include a brief synopsis of each grant with income and expenses (located behind the Grant Tracking Sheet) which contain valuable information.
- The budget process is ongoing and the final budget will be live and modified with new and expiring grants.
- Another standard report shows labor costs against Assessment.

Matt stressed the importance of the development of an accurate budget for each grant. As an example he stated that at an average Compensation Rate of \$55/hr the district could produce 99 farm plans – but there are other costs which may not be clearly evident to the district. Grant expenses should not run beyond organizational or grant parameters. Discussed assessment, implementation and built in buffers.

Other discussion centered around the algorithm used in computing the Compensation Rate and assuring that it covers all expenses. Tony made a statement that with the reduction in staff working hours and unchanged costs of medical insurance premiums the Compensation Rates increased substantially, but a decision was made to use the existing rates from 1/1/20 as these were more reasonably in line with grant budgets. However, this action resulted in nonrecovery of all labor costs, particularly the cost of health insurance.

Vicki commented that the Assessment is a “Slush Fund” for temporarily covering some staffing costs such as vacation, holiday pay and sick leave as most of these costs should be recovered from grant invoicing over the longer term.

Deanna made a motion to approve the financial statements, Carson seconded and the motion carried.

Deanna made a motion to approve the bank reconciliation which was seconded by Carson. Motion passed.

David made a motion to approve the Credit Card Details report and was seconded by Carson. Lynn asked about the \$1,018.39 expense to Friday Harbor Labs. It was for housing for 3 individuals for 3 days to work on the Eelgrass project. It was confirmed that it was reimbursable from the Eelgrass Grant.

5. Cost Share Projects Review – Action Item:

Matt noted that there have been no substantial changes from last month.

We have received the extension paperwork from DOH extending the DOH-NEP grant for 6 months from 11/30/2020 until 5/31/20. Review of financial information and TA is acceptable. Clients are recovering from the COVID induced slowdown and are back to work now and are starting to ask questions. Identified 6 possible new properties for CPDS.

Vicki stated that Kathy Smith from NRCS, who reviews stewardship projects, misses attending our meetings and is looking forward to seeing us.

Erin submitted a report on YCC. Summer 2020 was successful and she is now working on next years budget.

Kai commented on cooperation with Cathi on cost share programs and possible new funding from NRCS or DNR for next year. USDA and NRCS also have potential available programs.

Bruce and Matt discussed Forest Plans in general and the limited availability of funding. Lynn mentioned a specific plan on Shaw Island with neighbors getting together for a possible forest plan, establishment of a “field break” between the forest and the roadway and pre commercial thinning. NRCS has provided funding in the past, however, currently funding has been more limited.

6. Executive Director Transition – Discussion:

David made a motion in form of a memo “hire Dona Wuthnow, as a temporary employee on a half time basis to fulfill managerial duties at the district” (a full copy is attached). Seconded by Carson.

Vicki asked for a discussion by Board and Staff:

Lynn - restated her opinion about of putting the “cart before the horse”. She wanted to know what the District could afford before making a commitment to hire an Executive Director. She acknowledged, however, that sometimes it is preferable to “seize the moment” to capture the assistance of a qualified individual. She stated needing reassurance about funding and confirmation that District resources are efficiently used for grant management and other commitments.

Carson – stated the mission of the district and need for facilitating and fostering stability. The motion presents the District with an opportunity to obtain an individual with solid skill set to motivate and inspire staff, but the timing has to be correct. He has no problem with pursuing Dona for a contractual temporary situation. He also complimented Matt for stepping up to the plate to keep the organization going without currently having an Executive Director.

Deanna – wants to be comfortable with the funding and stated the need for solid financial numbers to justify the hiring. But she also stated that like Carson she is split on her decision and can see the positive side of the motion too.

Vicki – her position is that it has been beneficial to have all financial information be out in the open. This has been a good transition point and an opportunity to do some house cleaning. She asked the question of why hire an interim position if we can hire a permanent position.

David – discussed his past conversations about the money aspect with Bob Brunkow and Vicki as stated on the written memo. He talked about the new CCC grant and funding brought in by Kai along with other new grants. He also stated that his motion would involve a “Temporary Position” which would reduce the risk of not working out over the longer term.

Matt – presented the spreadsheet with indirect costs (spreadsheet attached) from each grant showing what is left for administrative costs along with the Assessment and Implementation funds.

Tony – discussed budget and emphasized the importance of a continuous grant pipeline to assure successful future operations. Most of our present grants will end by 6/30/21. Hiring a Director with grant writing/management experience would be important as a portion of the salary can be covered by grant invoicing.

Lynn – expressed her concern for existing staff with shortened hours and the district not having a sufficient reserve allotment.

Matt – presented a detailed spreadsheet outlining (attached) staff costs by Compensation Rates. He emphasized again the complexity of District finances with each grant having its own budget and administrative pool of funds.

David – made a comment about the volunteer nature of the District Board Members and the fact that many have other jobs. The Board should not be spending large amounts of time going over financial minutiae, this is the job of the Executive Director.

Vicki – stated that the information presented looks promising and she is at the edge of her comfort level to move forward. She asked for a time frame to put last financial details together. Matt and Tony agreed that 2 weeks should be sufficient to wrap up the financial details.

David – stated that he is not rushed for time with his motion.

Carson – emphasized the importance of grant writing skills of the possible new Executive Director and the Board’s fiduciary duty to cast a wide net to see who the District can attract to apply for the position.

Lynn – would vote no to hiring an Interim Director at this point.

Vicki – is also in favor of advertising and seeing who would apply, she is not in favor of hiring a specific person at this time.

7. Budget Review Status – Discussion

Covered in Financial Statement review.

8. Ag Viability Study Status – Action Item

Correction to Agenda - this is not an Action Item – only for Discussion.

Bruce mentioned the availability of \$5,000 into the study. In the ARC meeting of 9/22/20 there was conversation about shutting down the project. There was a question as to who would perform the study.

9. Grants/ Application Status (RCPP, WSCC Shellfish NTA) – Action Item

Matt discussed support letters to RCPP. By 10/5/20 all support letters should be in place. Grant amount is \$41,000. Mason county CD has not used all funding and looking to forward some to San Juan County.

WSCC Shellfish NTA is being picked up by Matt where Mike left it off. Discussion ensued about watersheds and livestock components. Two main watersheds being False Bay on San Juan Island and Judd Bay on Orcas Island.

No-Till was discussed by Bruce along with final seed planting, the 6 repeat sites, the possibility extra seed available if requested by recipients and the \$5,000 in funding availability with the BioAg award in conjunction with WSU Extension. He also mentioned fall planting being more successful than spring planting in conjunction with the March 2021 end date of the grant. There is still work left on the educational program. He also discussed potential rental of the drill on a user fee basis or per acre charge.

Vicki commented that the No-Till program has been very successful in the county. And Bruce responded that farmers tend to be conservative in adopting new methods and ideas.

Lynn also stated that the No-Till program is one of the District's success stories. Soil Health Committee has a favorable view of this program. David echoed the sentiment of success of the program.

Matt commented on the development of a rental program for the drill with successful results.

10. Program Reports

Kelsey discussed Orca Recovery Day which is set for October 17th. It will be ½ virtual and ½ in person.

She also explained the Eco Challenges with teams adopting challenges and competing with other teams/districts with events such as "Leave no Trace". The Eco Challenges will run from October 5 until November 5 and she is trying to line up 3-5 speakers with ½ hr to 1 hr presentations. There would be a Q&A session at the end. She is also coordinating with Sierra O'Connell from the San Juan Preservation Trust about an event on Turtleback Mountain on Orcas or a beach cleanup on San Juan Island.

Discussion ensued with Vicki hoping for pictures or videos and Matt offering help from District Office. Kelsey stated that she will be obtaining posters of the event. Deanna asked about volunteer opportunities and possible scholarship hours. Kai made a comment about Kelsey's involvement in CCC.

Kai described the launch of CCC as of October 1 and staff already obtaining housing in Moran. He also discussed other grant opportunities with Fish & Wildlife and working on projects with Erin. Other opportunities include San Juan Community Foundation grant

for safety gear for YCC and CCC, Burning Foundation grant for \$15,000 for educational for CCC & YCC, and a DNR grant through 2021. There maybe be an opportunity for a FEMA grant too.

Erin stated that she is in a fundraising stage securing additional grants patterning YCC as a sustainable model. She is in process of writing several grant applications.

Deanna asked about the impact of COVID on grant applications. Kai answered that he is presenting his applications as workforce and economic development projects with no direct impact by COVID, but he also stated that the impact will most likely be felt in 2021.

Erin presented YCC Budget and projection (enclosed spreadsheets) showing funding for 2021. This year YCC showed the highest youth service hours. There were 20 less youth participants but the attendance and dedication were at record highs.

Carson had his son and nephew participate with very positive experiences.

Bruce asked about the Environmental Curriculum being incorporated into YCC. Erin replied that this would need internal funding.

Lynn complimented the YCC Program.

At 12:15PM Board Members exited the Regular Monthly Meeting for the 45 minute Executive Session

The Public Meeting resumed at 12:45PM.

Vicki called the meeting to order and stated that there will be additional motions:

1. Lynn made a motion to establish a permanent ½ time job for Kai Hoffman-Krull with the District for 20hrs/wk at \$30/hr. David seconded and the motion passed.
2. Lynn made a motion to reinstate Erin to 20hrs/wk, Kathi to 20hrs/wk and Tony to 40hrs/wk. There will be a compensation review to parallel other districts; and a review of the possibility of reinstating Matt's and Bruce's hours. The motion was seconded by Deanna. The motion passed.
3. There was a vote on David's earlier motion to "hire Dona Wuthnow, as a temporary employee on a half time basis to fulfill managerial duties at the district" (a full copy is attached). David and Carson voted in favor. Vicki, Deanna and Lynn were opposed. Motion did not pass.

4. David made a motion for a 2-week time period to develop sufficient financial numbers to decide on hiring a new Executive Director. Carson seconded. The motion passed.
5. David also made a motion to have another Special Meeting in 2 weeks which was seconded by Deanna. The motion passed.

There was a conversation about developing a Letter to the Commission as well as paying the WA Association of Conservation District Dues of \$3,888.89. Many smaller districts have objected to the increased dues as they were particularly applied to them while the dues for larger districts did not increase. Tony mentioned that with the Accrual Basis Accounting used by the District the dues have been input as an expense in the Income Statement as the check has been written but has not been mailed out. The funds are still in the District's checking account.

11. Partner Reports: None.

12. Public Comments: None.

Meeting Adjourned at 1:20PM.

**Next Special Meeting via Zoom: Wednesday, October 7, 2020.
From 10:00AM to 12:00NOON**