



Luckiamute Watershed Council Board Meeting

April 13, 2023 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. via Zoom

Minutes

Attendance

Board: Britton Castor, Dave Ehlers, George Grosch, Nick Hazelton, Jackson Stalley, Karin Stutzman, Jay Tappen

Staff: Maya Cook (minutes), Kristen Larson

Call to Order & Introductions

March 9, 2023, Minutes APPROVED

Mission Moments:

Nick: got to do a site check-in with Suzanne for the upcoming cultural burn event with Polk SWCD – really cool!

Karin: shared a picture of a herd of about 50 elk of all ages come through her front yard (1 of at least 3 local herds: her area, on Elkins Rd between 99 & Airlie, on Soap Creek near Coffin Butte)

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) - Jay Tappen

- Discussion about Audubon [name change op-ed](#).

Jay: Not everyone in an organization are on the same page, and some are more ready to move with the times. As a birder for decades, those groups can be intimidating – some snobs, but others are inclusive.

Kristen: Attachments to Audubon brand recognition means nothing to young people & being inclusive doesn't need the name. We're having an inclusive bilingual bird walk with no assumptions and no barriers. Brought to mind good advice from Straub Outdoors: don't try to alter your activities to attract & hope for participation, but learn about what people like to do & where they like to go & modify to go to them.

Karin: I have no idea what priorities are for people of different ethnicities; I need to get to know them, help with their needs, and then propose collaborative events, if appropriate.

Nick: Smithfield Oaks burn event is being done in a really respectful way to tribes. They have goals & interests, and time scales that are different from ours. If we can approach them differently, surely we can approach our local immigrant community.

- How do we proceed from here? Standing DEI Committee, or other? Jay found a DEI progress report from Johnson Creek WC that seemed more applicable to us than larger nonprofits. He shared this with Kristen. We need a process to satisfy the goals we made in our statement.

Karin: we don't have to reinvent everything – let's borrow & modify.

Kristen: we had a big discussion in the Executive Committee about how to approach groups, motivations and context for starting the dialogue. Lots of different thoughts about how to grapple with that, and we're still working it through.

We may need to build structure & curriculum around what we're doing. At EC meeting, we identified 3 groups to work with: Tribes, local Latinx immigrant community, and Letitia Carson Legacy Project / Oregon Black Pioneers / local NAACP chapter. Also we're looking at creating our equity lens. Discussion about whether or not to have a dedicated group.

Nick: as to the question of whether we need another committee, we talk about it a lot in EnO with Suzanne & Morgan. Short meetings that don't always cover & focus in-depth.

Dave: we don't need another committee. Can't do any more (busy with Mac-Dunn project). But it's his intention to attend NAACP meetings & reach out to Letitia Carson folks (may not happen until fall – someone else can pick up to do sooner if they want). Finding out what's of interest, how we can support, collaborate.

Kristen: Gail Oberst & her partner Michael have been involved with NAACP in the past, can reach out & talk to her.

Project Review Committee – Miller / West Fork Project Proposal – Kristen Larson

Overview of upcoming OWEB Technical Assistance (TA) Project Proposal due May 1. Grant would support a contracted engineer for an alternatives analysis around the old railroad berm plus surveys, design, & other pre-implementation tasks. Discussion at March 2 Project Review Committee. Miller creek is tributary of main-stem Luckiamute, and (locally called) “West Fork” is a tributary of Miller. Most of our NetMap creeks have had projects since 2016, but there are remaining areas to investigate – Miller is a big one, split between Starker & Manulife. Starker is now interested in going forward, so we get to re-prioritize. The big reason we need technical help with this project is the remnant berm of an old railroad. West Fork particularly is trapped between berm & road. By removing & modifying, we may be able to unconfine the West Fork & restore. Temperature monitoring shows WF below confluence is >1 degree warmer than Miller even though they’re right next to each other, and below confluence is still higher than Miller so there’s potential for temperature improvements. We’d work with a design group and consult with timber companies, survey streams for other elements. Alternative analysis, picking alternative, and partial design can be covered, may need a 2nd TA to finish design, permitting, etc. Not requesting approval because the process had been changed a few years ago to give PRC more flexibility, but we want to share what’s going on. May need to build some new processes in around sharing.

Discussion:

Jay: removing the berm is a huge undertaking, what about just breaching strategic sections?

Kristen: that’s what we mean by modifications. Lower section & area where creek is pushing against it particularly.

Finance Committee & Treasurer Report – George Grosch

January & February 2023 Preliminary Financial Reports:

- Haven’t fully closed out FY - monthlies are good but SOFP will change over time due to unbilled revenue.
- Finance committee reviews monthly reports & nothing unusual, so we’ve been fine with going ahead with existing rate of spending.
- Still struggling with payroll transition issues with bookkeeper, so can’t promise a particular date.
 - Karin: why is it taking so long? Complex system, lots of grants, lots of moving parts.
 - Kristen: two changes: WHO does the payroll, and shift from manual to automated. QuickBooks constraints of dates & accounts & payroll taxes & split apart & show up on our books’ statement of activities correctly has been complicated. Everything is happening on time, but making it track right is taking a lot of time to tease apart.
- Not seeking approval for financial report yet, but for budget. If we adopt a budget we don’t need to extend current spending.
- Reflects a big growth spurt for the council. We’re adding staff & considering more. This budget reflects moving in that direction. Asking for \$15k from General Fund. We have the balance to use (that’s what it’s there for), but not sustainable over time. We’ll have to kick up our fundraising & seek other grants.
 - Federally Negotiated Indirect Cost rate may give us more than 10% (current cap)

Draft budget shows 2023 draft budget next to 2022 proposed & actual; narrative references budget letters.

Revenues

- \$8k is for Love Your Watershed donations, Most grants are secured, but OWEB biennial Council Capacity grant is biggest portion of unsecured, but it’s all but guaranteed.
- Revenues are basically: “cash” reimbursements or up-front grants. Negative revenue is releasing for use in this FY.
- Unrestricted donations: \$20k. A projected increase. We will need to work on this!

Expenses

- Personnel expenses are the highest ever:

- Due to higher overall FTE, inflation, plus commitment to providing fair & competitive wages.
- Overall, more project work & more spending
- Mileage reimbursements for more people, traveling again post-COVID and more staff, higher rate.
- New payroll costs for setup & maintenance since Earl retired. New costs are actually pretty standard – we got a huge break for years.
- Used a large donation to seed the Ops Coord position, but it doesn't cover everything so it's an investment in increased capacity going forward.
- Health insurance covers more people, & new policy extending medical benefits to part time staff. New rate increase estimate written in, but not concrete (scheduling meeting with Rich Allm, he warned us it would be bad because of how Oregon regulates insurance & premiums are accounting for Covid costs. Renewal of same plan increases 19% in 1 year). With Jonah starting, there will be 4 of us & we'll be paying \$900 extra per staff person for the year. Estimating \$3k increase from before. We may have to cost-share premiums with employees at some point in the future.
 - Karin: Don't want to take away new competitive rates by charging for health insurance, so we have to find a way to balance fairly for living wage. Rolling back benefits is hard & we'll have to look at retention strategies. Stressing about money reduces productivity, so taking care of hires feeds motivation. If we can find a way to bring in the money & can afford it, we should.
 - Kristen: Kaiser isn't great for Corvallis residents (Salem or Eugene or Telehealth). May be able to add on option to widen KP network. They may prefer to get different insurer & bridge the cost. It's still being hashed through.
- Inflation, plus standard increases to rent & utilities. Last year there were 13 rent payments due to ownership change-over so that number was artificially inflated.
- Spending for our portion of regional partnership grants. For the grants we manage, we do get extra for overhead management.

Action: Adopt Fiscal Year 2023 Budget **APPROVED** by consensus.

Governance Committee Annual Report to the Board – George Grosch

We dug deep since it's been a while. Began with operating & fiscal policy updates, personnel policy updates, benefits change; has expanded to EDI, recruiting & retention, and other issues as they arise.

Visible document edits show the thinking of the committee rather than something for Board adoption.

Executive Director Update – Kristen Larson

Since there's no written report yet, Kristen provided verbal updates in more detail than normal. Written report to come to the Board soon via email.

- It's worth reading through all the committee minutes to see what's happening (at least for changes to the meeting schedule). Particularly read the EnO report – lots going on there to be aware of. Good to see collaborative dynamic with our partner SWCDs.
- Jonah is our new Monitoring Coordinator! He started yesterday & hopefully will stay awhile. Invited him to attend in-person meetings to connect with everyone.
- Ross & Maya are still technically in training, which means half our staff is new & the other half is putting in extra time teaching. Patience & forgiveness appreciated.
- YAY, budget!
- Next: close 2022. 990 due May 15 & we're requesting an extension (which is common).
- Payroll transitions slowed because of Tax Day. We'll get there. Staff like the new system, Kristen can see capabilities, & will like it when it's all sorted.
- Plant materials checks are coming soon.
- Adopted EDI statement, Suzanne made cover story on newsletter. No feedback about it, but curious how it was received.
- Ross scheduled training time with Steve Trask to talk about past projects & share his incredibly extensive background in habitat restoration. Wound up expanding to a 5-day advisory consult with Marys for all our PMs, which will no doubt yield some great intelligence.

- Budgeted includes \$20k with BEF for Jean-Paul time –used to be the only one the Board officially approves because it cut through so many grants, but now it’s much smaller & mostly MWBP work, so proposing to treat like any other contract if Board agrees. Current contracting policy: anything over \$5k gets reviewed by a 2nd signer; the extra oversight was the exception. Still wanted to flag it for Board to be aware.
 - General feeling: new contract should work under regular contracting policy, no problems with changes. George will see a copy of the contract before it’s signed & we will revert to run-of-the-mill contract process with BEF going forward.
- NOAA Grant: Ross put out an RFQ for process assistance to corral all the cats required for a big-budget partnership grant, and is already getting some interest. It’s too heavy a lift otherwise.
- Greenbelt Land Trust closed on the property between 2 LSNA areas. Plan to connect & fill the gap, but much collaboration to come. We are providing a letter of recommendation for acquisition grant.
- A private resident on SF Pedee project who has been engaged since the beginning (only reveg on her property), just withdrew. We offered to make changes to keep her participation, but she didn’t respond. We left the door open in case she changes her mind.
- Uptick in landowner inquiries lately, seeking options for Riparian Reveg & Restoration.
- Kristen & Nick will be at Meet & Greet with Polk SWCD at Pedee on May 20.
 - Karin: Olivia at ODA Ag Water Quality program trying to shift to be more educational (more like an extension). Would like to participate if possible.
 - She should reach out to Morgan. It’s a pretty casual meet & greet.
- George, Nick, & Kristen coffee meeting this Monday morning with Rickreall WC people. Updates to come.
- Coffin Butte landfill expansion process just wrapped & there’s a summary if anyone wants to read it. There was disappointment that we didn’t participate more, but we just don’t have the capacity. George: the Board of Commissioners did what they wanted to do anyway, so we wouldn’t have changed anything in participating.
- Long list of upcoming grants will be in ED report.

New Topics

Kristen has raised a suggestion of shifting to every other month Board meetings and shifting several of the committees to meet in the intervening months. To discuss at the May Board meeting. Governance plans to explore possibilities, options, pros/cons of changing meeting frequency. Once it’s semi-cogent, it will be brought to the Board to discuss; in the meantime, if you have any comments for the committee before Wednesday, feel free to pass them along.

Upcoming Meetings

May 18th: Karin will give a tour of Western Skies Ranch for those who can come around 4:30.

June 8th: In-person at J2e Tree Farm, also with optional pre-meeting tour.

August 3rd: Britton has a conflict & she’s the one facilitating – agreed to restore meeting to regular August 10th date.

Maya will update website.