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RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

820 Bay Avenue, Suite 136
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MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 14, 2022 BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING OF THE RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

The Regular Meeting of the Resource Conservation District (RCD) of Santa Cruz County Board of Directors was called to order at **6:32PM on September 14, 2022,** the meeting was conducted virtually per AB 361 and Executive Order N-35-20 via Zoom, Meeting ID: 708-386-048.

Directors Present:	Kelley Bell
	Howard Liebenberg
	Jim McKenna, President
	John Ricker
Directors Absent:	Mike Eaton
	Robert Ketley
	Mike Manfre, Vice President
Associate Directors Present:	Vasiliki Vasil
RCD Staff Present:	Tangi Chapman, Recorder
	Lisa Lurie, Executive Director
	Arianne Rettinger, Director of Finance
NRCS Staff Present:	Drew Mather, District Conservationist
Others Present:	Chris Berry, City of Santa Cruz Water Department

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:32PM, with a quorum present. Jim McKenna chaired the meeting. Roll was called and connectivity confirmed; Kelley Bell present; Mike Eaton absent; Robert Ketley absent; Howard Liebenberg present; Mike Manfre absent; Jim McKenna present; John Ricker present.

2. INTRODUCTIONS & WELCOME

Jim McKenna welcomed everyone to the meeting.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments given.

4. NRCS REPORT

Drew shared that the new NRCS Soil Conservationist Alanna Burhans started on Monday. He has been in the field with her over the past few days. Alanna has a background in horticulture with a minor in Forestry. She graduated from UC Davis and has been working for NRCS in Merced. He said that Jennifer Nowark's administrative position may be changing, she may continue to provide some assistance remotely, and in addition there may be a new Farm Bill Assistant, though much of this is still up in the air. Drew has completed his assignment as acting District Conservationist in Vacaville. Drew continues to work on obligated contracts and technical assistance visits with RCD staff.

5. CONSENT AGENDA

The Board reviewed the consent agenda items, including the August 10, 2022, Minutes and Resolution RCDSCC 2022-14 to extend remote meetings per AB 361 for an additional 30 days. John Ricker moved approval of the

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consent agenda items. Howard Liebenberg seconded the motion. The vote was by roll call; the ayes included Kelley Bell, Howard Liebenberg, Jim McKenna, and John Ricker. The motion passed unanimously.

6. ACTION ITEMS

6.1. Consider Approval of Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Final Budget

Arianne Rettinger presented the Board with the FY 2022-2023 Final Budget. She indicated that the budget has increased by about $600,000 since the draft budget was adopted in June. Several factors have contributed to the increase, including the hiring of three additional fulltime employees, a grant awarded since the draft budget with significant expenditures anticipated this fiscal year and payments from last fiscal year that have not yet been received. Additionally, the actuals vs the budgeted expenses tend to run about 30% under the estimate. John pointed out that this is standard. Ari added that the budget is developed with staff making their best estimates at what projects will be implemented in the fiscal year, sometimes there are roadblocks that must be overcome and the projects may get pushed to the next fiscal year. John shared that he met with Ari and Lisa and went through the budget in great detail and is comfortable with the numbers in the budget. After discussion, John Ricker moved approval of the Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Final Budget. Howard Liebenberg seconded the motion. The vote was by roll call; the ayes included Kelley Bell, Howard Liebenberg, Jim McKenna, and John Ricker. The motion passed unanimously.

6.2. Consider approval of an exemption from the informal bid process, as per section 1080.8.3 for consultant Camara Environmental Consulting

Lisa shared the procurement memo outlining the nature of Camara Environmental Consulting work and the importance her knowledge and support is to the District. Kelli Camara works on many different grants with the RCD and no single work program for a grant goes over the small or informal bid threshold in the procurement policy. Collectively her contract falls within the informal bid process as well. Per section 1080.8.3, given the unique nature of her skill set the services and knowledge she provides, the Board at it's discretion may exempt her contract from the informal bid process. It was explained that Kelli invoices each of her work programs separately by associated grant and provides discrete deliverables for each work program. After discussion, Kelley Bell moved approval of the exemption for the Camara Environmental Consulting contract from the informal bid process. John Ricker seconded the motion. The vote was by roll call; the ayes included Kelley Bell, Howard Liebenberg, Jim McKenna, and John Ricker. The motion passed unanimously.

6.3. Consider approval of adding Juneteenth as an RCD observed Holiday

Lisa explained that last year when the Board approved the updated Employee Handbook, adding Juneteenth had been considered, but since the County of Santa Cruz had not at the time adopted the holiday, the Board decided against adding. She reminded the Board that the District has historically aligned the paid holidays with the county. In the interim, the county has added the federal Holiday as an observed paid Holiday and she would like the Board to consider adding Juneteenth to the District's observed paid holidays. The Board discussed the cost to the District and how the District would recover the cost. Tangi shared that the cost to the District of the July 4th holiday was approximately $3,700. Ari explained that the cost would be rolled into the billable rate calculation and though it would not be incorporated into current grants, future grants would include cost. After discussion, Howard Liebenberg made a motion to approve adding Juneteenth as an observed paid holiday. Kelley Bell seconded the motion. The vote was by roll call; the ayes included Kelley Bell, Howard Liebenberg, Jim McKenna, and John Ricker. The motion passed unanimously.

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6.4. Consider entering into a Forbearance Agreement to track the City of Santa Cruz's compliance with the forbearance and monitoring requirements in the Pogonip Creek and Redwood Creek systems for fisheries enhancement in the San Lorenzo River Lagoon

Lisa introduced Chris Berry from the City of Santa Cruz Water Department to give context to the Forbearance Agreement before the Board. As part of the City of Santa Cruz's grant agreement with the Wildlife Conservation Board to construct a water control structure that will create a freshwater impoundment for steelhead and tidewater goby and maintain a 5 foot water elevation in the San Lorenzo Lagoon, the City has agreed to dedicate a total of approximately 0.5 cfs of summer instream flows from Pognip and Redwood Creeks, both cold water tributaries of the San Lorenzo River. Chris said that maintaining instream flows will benefit habitat for several local species including the steelhead, coho, and tidewater goby. The RCD has been identified as an eligible entity to enter into a forbearance agreement with the City. If approved, the RCD will track the City's compliance with the Forbearance requirement to voluntarily forbear their water rights in Pognip and Redwood Creeks to maintain approximately 0.5 cfs combined instream flow for a minimum of 20 years. John Ricker commented that this was an excellent project. After discussion, John Ricker moved to approve the Forbearance Agreement to track the City of Santa Cruz's compliance with the forbearance and monitoring requirements in the Pogonip Creek and Redwood Creek systems for fisheries enhancement in the San Lorenzo Lagoon. Kelley Bell seconded the motion. The vote was by roll call; the ayes included Kelley Bell, Howard Liebenberg, Jim McKenna, and John Ricker. The motion passed unanimously.

6.5. Consider approval of staff recommendation memo to enter a construction contract for implementation of the Summit Road Shaded Fuel Break Project per section 1080.7.1.3 formal bid procedure

Lisa reviewed the staff recommendation memo for procurement to implement the Summit Road Shaded Fuel Break Project. She shared that Matt Abernathy is managing the project and had gone out to bid on the project, with a budgeted cost of $615,000. The bid has been advertised and sent to a list of contractors. The mandatory bid walk was well attended, and sealed bids are due tomorrow, September 15. Staff is recommending entering into contact with the lowest responsible bidder. Lisa explained that the bid was structured in such a way that depending on the bid price, the project can be expanded or contracted to stay within budget and optional bid items were included for hazardous tree removal. The project is also planned in phases, such that additional funding may be sought if required. After discussion, John Ricker moved approval of the staff memo to enter into contract with the lowest responsible bidder for the implementation of the Summit Road Shaded Fuel Break project per section 1080.7.1.3 formal bid procedure. Kelley Bell seconded the motion. The vote was by roll call; the ayes included Kelley Bell, Howard Liebenberg, Jim McKenna, and John Ricker. The motion passed unanimously.

7. DISCUSSION ITEMS

7.1. Santa Cruz Civil Grand Jury Report "Reducing our Community's Risk from Wildfire"

Lisa presented the Board with the Santa Cruz Civil Grand Jury Report "Reducing our Community's Risk from Wildfire." She explained that though the report was not specific to any

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one agency, it highlights the many agencies that are involved with reducing wildfire risk. The RCD is mentioned repeatedly throughout the document and highlights the many efforts that the RCD has undertaken to address forest health and fuel load reduction. She expressed some concern that the document narrowly focusses on vegetation removal rather than more nuanced management of vegetation, together with home hardening, defensible space creation, and other community strategies. Staff see this as an opportunity to communicate our mission and the work we do, including our collaboration with other agencies. The County of Santa Cruz will be preparing a formal response to the Report, nothing is required of the District, but Lisa felt like this provided an opportunity for the District to put together a communications plan that prioritizes outreach and coordination with partners.

7.2. Memorial planning for Director Roberta Smith

Vasiliki shared that Mike Eaton sent her a YouTube link to a video with many photos of Roberta throughout her life, created by Susan Galaway. Vasiliki suggested that having the memorial event on November 4th, in honor of "Roberta Smith Day." Lisa said that she liked the idea and will work on getting the date on the calendar.

7.3. Executive Director Report

Lisa said over the past month we have seen a marked increase in the number of in-person meetings and field tours that have taken place, which has been great for reconnecting with partners and staff. Additionally, she highlighted that the new Program Assistant for Forest Health, Laurel Bard, will be starting on September 26.

7.4. Director/Associate Director Reports

Kelley Bell suggested that having a listing of upcoming calendar dates at the meeting would be helpful.

8. ADJOURN

The next regular meeting of the RCD Board will be October 12 2022, at 6:30PM via Zoom. John Ricker moved to adjourn the meeting. Howard Liebenberg seconded the motion. The vote was by roll call; the ayes included Kelley Bell, Howard Liebenberg, Jim McKenna, and John Ricker. The meeting was adjourned.

DocuSigned by:
Mike Manfre
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(TC:JM)