RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

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MINUTES OF THE MARCH 13, 2024 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 **6:47PM on March 13 2024,** the meeting was conducted in person at the RCD Office conference room and virtually via Zoom, Meeting ID: 708-386-048.

Directors Present:	Robert Ketley, (Zoom due to illness)
	Mike Manfre, Vice President
	Jim McKenna, President
	John Ricker
	Howard Liebenberg
Directors Absent:	Kelley Bell
	Mike Eaton
RCD Staff Present:	Tangi Chapman, Recorder
	Lisa Lurie, Executive Director
NRCS Present:	Drew Mather, District Conservationist
Others Present:	Rose Madison
	Bill Schwegler

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:47PM, with a quorum present. Jim McKenna chaired the meeting. Roll was called and connectivity confirmed; Kelley Bell absent; Mike Eaton absent; Robert Ketley present via Zoom due to illness; Howard Liebenberg present; Mike Manfre present; Jim McKenna present; John Ricker present.

2. INTRODUCTIONS & WELCOME

Jim McKenna welcomed everyone to the hybrid meeting. Rose Madison and Bill Schwegler were introduced to the meeting. Mr. Schwegler shared that he is with a non-profit organization called the Cultivar Foundation. He said that Cultivar is an environmental organization and among other efforts, is interested in reintroducing Beaver into Watsonville Slough and that the group is organizing a symposium of regional stakeholders to further the feasibility of the effort. He invited the Board to attend the symposium, which is scheduled for June 25, 2024, at the Seymour Center in Santa Cruz. He will send additional information once the agenda is set.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

There were none given.

4. NRCS REPORT

Drew Mather circulated a report. He shared that there are many staff changes occurring at the regional level and there is a new Conservation Stewardship community planner that has been hired and will be based out of the Hollister Office. The Conservation Stewardship program is a five-year commitment and NRCS is working to promote this program for those landowners that are implementing conservation practices and rewarding them with incentives. The range of awards has increased from $1,500/year to $4,000/year over 5 years. Drew shared that the 16 projects that that have been approved for the Emergency Watershed Program are now moving quickly through the process and all should be implemented by this September. He said that there are twenty new applications for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program. All have been screened, ranked, and submitted to the State Office for funding consideration. Additional applications are awaiting ranking. NRCS

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continue to wrap up a Regional Conservation Partnership Program project which is now finishing up on the construction punch-list. Drew attended the press-only event to open the Muzzio Park's Community Garden space in Watsonville. The event was attended by local and state NRCS folks as well as Zoe Lofgren, US House Representative and the Mayor of Watsonville and City Council members. This was the opening of the first of three community gardens which have received funding from the USDA's Urban Agriculture Initiative.

5. CONSENT AGENDA

John Ricker requested that the communications be pulled out of the consent agenda items and listed as their own category. John Ricker moved approval of the Consent Agenda which included the corrected January 10, 2024 Minutes, the February 21, 2024 Minutes and the February Vendor Expenditures. Mike Manfre seconded the motion. The ayes included Robert Ketley, Howard Liebenberg, Mike Manfre, Jim McKenna and John Ricker. The motion passed unanimously.

6. COMMUNICATIONS

Communications were received from the California Special District Association regarding their Nomination Timeline and Procedure for Board Officer positions. The RCD FY 2022-2023 Annual Report was entered into the record; Howard praised the publication and requested that the Associate Directors be listed by name since they are in the group picture.

7. ACTION ITEMS

7.1. Review and consider approval of a Staff Recommendation Memo to enter into a negotiated contract with Alnus Ecological for $157,900 per Procurement Policy 1080.8.4 exception

Lisa Lurie presented the Board with the Staff Recommendation Memo to enter into a negotiated contract. She explained that Alnus Ecological will be helping with the next phase of the Scott Creek Coastal Resiliency project which is currently being funded by a grant from the California Coastal Conservancy. Alnus has been involved with the technical analysis of the proposed project as well as previous phases of the project since 2013. Lisa shared that the planning process for the bridge reconstruction and ecological restoration at Scott Creek will provide a template for future efforts at other coastal stream crossings such as Waddell and San Vicente. Lisa explained that staff recommend an exemption under 1080.8.4 of the procurement policy as the services must integrate and be compatible with existing work and processes involved in this project and the consultant has previously provided these services in support of this project with excellence. After discussion, Mike Manfre moved to approve the Staff Recommendation Memo to enter into a negotiated contract with Alnus Ecological for $157,900 per Procurement Policy 1080.8.4 exception. Howard Liebenberg seconded the motion. The ayes included Robert Ketley, Howard Liebenberg, Mike Manfre, Jim McKenna and John Ricker. There were none opposed. The motion passed unanimously.

8. DISCUSSION ITEMS

8.1. Board Member Recruitment

Lisa requested that the Board have a discussion regarding Board Member recruitment. While she hopes that all are willing to continue serving, she understands that there may be some who will not be able to continue, and as an organization we should be actively working to build

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future leadership. Considering that, she would like to have the board think about how we want to intentionally build the leadership into the future. She suggested that perhaps utilizing the Associate Director position would help to create a pipeline for new members, though it was acknowledged that the position currently seems to be utilized by former Board members stepping down into a support role rather than the other way around. The Board suggested that once we know who is planning on retiring we can then identify the specific attributes of the departing member that we might want to be sure is represented, and identify attributes and perspectives that are lacking and needed. The Board has tried to make sure that there is geographical diversity among members, but there may be additional characteristics and talent that would be helpful in making sure the Board has wide representation. The Board suggested that increasing the name recognition of the RCD is helpful in attracting new members and that we might also look to our partners for suggestions. The Board member recruitment process typically involves initial discussions between the Executive Director and potential recruits, and where there is interest and alignment follow up discussions with the Board.

8.2. Ad hoc Policy Committee Report

Lisa shared that the Employee Handbook has been sent out for legal review to BBK. Most of the updates are straight forward and she hopes to get it back to the Board in April or May for approval. She said that BBK sent over a template for the Workplace Violence Prevention Plan which is like the Injury and Illness Loss Prevention Program that the Board previously adopted. Additionally, Lisa told the Board that a Request for Proposals have been sent out to four consultancies to complete a compensation and benefit study. The bids are due back June 20th and the committee will then meet to review the proposals and decide on a consultant.

8.3. Ad hoc Youth Engagement Committee Report

Lisa, Robert Ketley and Kelley Bell participated in the first ad hoc Youth Engagement Committee meeting last month, together with Vasiliki Vasil, Kelli Camara, and numerous staff members. The meeting was mostly brainstorming how we can improve youth engagement to advance our mission and also mentor the next generation. The group worked to answer the question how to define youth engagement. They suggested that there are different categories of youth including K-8, High School, College, recent Graduate and early Workforce Development. The group is working to define different goals within each category and to also assess if there are partners that are currently serving these needs. The group felt strongly about utilizing paid internships either through partnerships or grant opportunities. Robert Ketley shared that he was in agreement with trying to find ways to get internships that would give participants the “Wow” factor. Drew also shared that NRCS has the Earth Team Volunteer program and that there is a quick application process. While the program is volunteer, sometimes there are paid internships through colleges to pay for these types of experiences.

8.4. Executive Director’s Report

Lisa shared that the fiscal year 2024-2025 Budget process is under way and staff are currently working on estimating their needs for the next year. Lisa highlighted that the Pajaro Valley Water

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Management Agency agreement is up for renewal; staff will be giving a presentation at their March 20th Board meeting at the Watsonville City Council Chambers. The PV Water Board will be considering the next agreement at that meeting as well. Lisa gave an update to the RCD's staffing needs. She shared that staff have been working on finalizing a full time Operations Manager position and a part-time Administrative Assistant position. Lisa shared that the state's budgeting shortfall is affecting the District with several state agency funders putting some grant programs on hold (typically those programs funded out of the State's General Fund). She anticipates a shift towards more reliance on federal funding in the near term.

8.5. Director/Associate Director Reports

Jim McKenna attended the online CARCD business meeting. However, the meeting ended without a vote due to difficulties in establishing a clear way of voting online. It was pointed out that the bylaws state that it must be a paper ballot. He said that the vote will be postponed until the ballots are mailed, these ballots will include statements from each of the candidates.

9. CALENDAR DATES

March 15, 2024 Frank Perry Geology of Santa Cruz Book Event
March 20, 2024 PV Water Board Meeting
April 13, 2024 State of the San Lorenzo River Symposium at the Felton Community Hall
June 25, 2024 The Cultivar Symposium at the Seymour Center in Santa Cruz

10. CLOSED SESSION

10.1. Personnel Matters per Government Code Section 54957

11. OPEN SESSION

11.1. Report Out Closed Session Motion

No motion was taken. A meeting was schedule for March 25, 2024, at 9AM to continue the matter.

12. ADJOURN

The next regular meeting of the RCD Board will be held at the at the City of Capitola Community Room and via Zoom on April 10, 2024, at 6:30PM. Robert Ketley moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:06PM. John seconded the motion. All were in favor of the motion. The meeting was adjourned.

(TC:JM)

James J. McKenna

AGENDA

Final Audit Report 2024-05-03

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