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**Minutes of the
 Columbia SWCD Board of Directors
 Meeting February 19, 2025**

Directors Present:

Debra Brimacombe, Vice Chair
 Dave Freytag, Director
 Michael Calhoun, Chair
 Bill Eagle, Secretary
 Paul Gibbons, Director

Natural Resources Conservations Service (NRCS):

Hannah Isaacs, District Conservationist

Associate Directors:

David Taylor (via Zoom)
 Alison Charbonneau (via Zoom)
 Rachell Meyers, SBWC (via Zoom)

CSWCD Staff:

Malyssa Legg, District Manager (via Zoom)
 Jennifer Chavez, Operations & Outreach Coordinator
 Crystalyn Bush, Resource Conservationist
 Amber Kester, Resource Conservationist (via Zoom)

Public:

Jason Busch
 Claudia Eagle
 Margaret Magruder, Columbia County Commissioner

CALL TO ORDER OF REGULAR BOARD MEETING: 4:00 PM

Prior Month's Minutes: Bill moved, and Deb seconded a motion to approve the Minutes from the Annual and Regular Board meeting on 1-15-25 as presented. **Approved Motion passed by unanimous vote.**

Vote Record: Approve January 2025 meeting minutes as presented.

Director	Yes/Aye	No/Nay	Abstain	Motion	Seconded
Paul Gibbons	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
Dave Freytag	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
Debra Brimacombe	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Bill Eagle	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Michael Calhoun	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				

Jennifer informed the board that while attending the Special District Association of Oregon (SDAO) conference she learned that the minutes need to list out each board member by name with their vote so the format of the minutes will be slightly different moving forward. Bill exclaimed that is wrong, though Paul confirmed that he has learned this during his new director training as well.

Financial Report: Malyssa read the Treasurer's report aloud. **Deb moved, and Bill seconded a motion** to approve the Treasurer's Report from 1-31-25. **Approved Motion passed by unanimous vote.**

Vote Record: Accept the Financial Report of January.

Director	Yes/Aye	No/Nay	Abstain	Motion	Seconded
Paul Gibbons	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
Dave Freytag	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
Debra Brimacombe	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Bill Eagle	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Michael Calhoun	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				

Paul asked if the Treasurer's Report is supposed to be emailed out, and if he might have missed that email. Malysa said that she emailed it out about a half hour ago, but that it is usually sent out the same day as the meeting.

Bill added that he would also like to receive the draft minutes soon after the meeting, when it is still fresh in their minds to review.

Paul requested that the reports, and any meeting materials, be sent out at least 48 hours in advance so that everyone has time to review them ahead of the meeting.

Public Comment: Jason Busch explained that he is here and still willing to represent the patrons of Zone 2. He added that if the Board is still choosing to not have a voice for the zone, he would like to ensure they at least have an ear.

No further public comment.

REPORTS

- NRCS:** Hannah stated that she is not, and will not be, voicing her opinion on the current orders and changes occurring within NRCS but is simply providing the board with an update. She clarified that several recent executive orders are driving changes within the agency and provided a copy of Executive Order (EO) 14210, which she received last week.

Hannah noted that NRCS has terminated probationary employees as part of these changes. Rebekah's one-year probation ended just before the order was issued, allowing her to remain employed. So far, no NRCS employees have been terminated in the St. Helens office, but the agency has been advised to prepare for further layoffs.

She further explained that other executive orders are impacting funding, including a freeze on the Inflation Reduction Act (part of a redacted EO), which had been a significant source of their budget. This funding was intended to support upcoming applications and active contracts, resulting in some projects being placed on hold. Affected landowners have been notified, and Hannah is actively reaching out to other applicants and contract holders to keep them informed. She also reminded the board that NRCS will not have a summer intern this year due to the hiring freeze.

The North Coast Basin has lost six employees due to the new executive order, including Leo Preston, the Basin Team Leader (and Hannah's supervisor), who plans to retire in early March.

Paul asked whether the funding freeze would affect rental payments to the SWCD. Hannah clarified that it should not.

Additionally, Hannah was asked this morning to provide information regarding the office space NRCS leases within the SWCD building, including the number of occupied and intended-to-be-occupied spaces. She does not anticipate any impact on the office, as there are currently no vacancies.

Lastly, NRCS held its Local Work Group Meeting last week. A key issue discussed, both at this meeting and in the past, was erosion concerns. The group also explored the idea of forming a task force in collaboration with other local agencies to address these challenges.
- UNWC (Upper Nehalem Watershed Council):** Michael attended the Nehalem Basin Partnership quarterly meeting earlier today with a presentation from Dr. Leslie King on vulnerability and injustice. He thought that it was really interesting.
- LCRWC (Lower Columbia River Watershed Council):** Paul has been in communication with Margaret Magruder to stay informed about the council's activities. This morning, he noticed that the council has a proposal for grant writing assistance and asked Malysa for more details. Malysa spoke with Rachael Barry last Friday, who will assist the council in applying for their

capacity grant. Malysa mentioned that she read over some of the proposal, adding that this would help the council move forward.

Rachell asked if the council plans to submit the capacity grant this cycle, adding that the deadline is only two weeks away. Malysa stated that Rachael is aware.

Paul thanked Rachell for the deadline reminder, adding that he will look over the proposal tonight so that Rachael can begin working on it if she is expected to meet the deadline.

- **SBWC (Scappoose Bay Watershed Council):** Rachell informed the board that the SBWC is working on getting over 10,000 plants into the ground at two of their project sites. She added that they plan to hire a contractor to assist in the planting. The council is also preparing for summer planning and the next round of grant cycle planning.
- **Staff:** Crystalyn mentioned that she does not have any updates at this time but would be very interested in a local erosion task force and looks forward to speaking with Hannah on this further.

OLD BUSINESS

- **Elect Board Officers:** Michael explained that the Treasurer position is still open. Paul expressed uncertainty about whether he felt ready to take on the role. Bill joked that the staff would do all the work for him.

Paul acknowledged the importance of the position and emphasized that it should be filled. He noted that as a new director, his training covers board liability, and he is not yet confident in acting on behalf of the board. Additionally, he stressed that he does not take this role lightly and believes the Treasurer position requires long-term stability. He is unsure if he can commit to it at this time in a way that would be meaningful.

Margaret Magruder arrived 4:28 pm.

Paul asked David if he would be interested in serving as Treasurer, but Michael mentioned that David did not meet the qualifications to serve as the Zone 3 director.

While Paul prefers not to leave the position vacant, he decided to decline the Treasurer role for now.

Bill stated that he would be willing to take on the position. Malysa then suggested that Paul could assume Bill's current role as Secretary, noting that he wouldn't have to do much since someone else takes the minutes. Brief discussion was held.

Deb moved, and Dave seconded a motion for Bill to become the Treasurer and Paul to become the Secretary of the Columbia SWCD Board of Directors. **Approved Motion passed by unanimous vote.**

Vote Record: Bill Eagle to become Treasurer and Paul Gibbons become Secretary.

Director	Yes/Aye	No/Nay	Abstain	Motion	Seconded
Paul Gibbons	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
Dave Freytag	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Debra Brimacombe	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Bill Eagle	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
Michael Calhoun	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				

- **Annual Meeting Review:** Michael requested feedback from the Board and Staff on last month's Annual Meeting. Malysa mentioned that the food was good, and Paul added that he appreciated the story behind the food. Bill added that he didn't like the venue, it was very hard to hear. Dave would like to see local guest speakers, though Michael mentioned that he appreciates presentations on relevant topics. Paul added that the projector screen was difficult to see. Discussion was held.
Michael added that cell phones were pretty distracting at the annual meeting and that the Policy Committee will be meeting tomorrow where this will be discussed.
Rachell added that the Board should consider having their annual meeting separate from their regular board meeting.

Jason asked if it has ever been considered to host the Annual Meeting in other areas of the county. Brief discussion was held.

Michael also asked if the Board would like to change the time of the annual meeting. Paul inquired about the time of previous meetings. Malysa explained that in the past, the meetings were held later in the evening, as the Board meetings were scheduled for 7 p.m. However, this year, the Annual Meeting was scheduled earlier to see if it would impact attendance. Malysa noted that attendance appeared to be about the same as in previous years.

Paul proposed a carpooling signup or a shuttle for the Annual Meeting. Brief discussion was held.

NEW BUSINESS

Meeting Time Change: Paul explained that he runs a small business and manages two employees. Having a meeting in the middle of the week in the afternoon can be a challenge, so he would like to propose the idea of the board meetings being held later. Discussion was held.

Jason explained that the meeting times were primarily adjusted to encourage more staff participation, but he feels it hasn't had much impact. Crystalyn agreed, adding that while staff have expressed willingness to attend, there hasn't been a regular rotational schedule or a formal request for staff to attend or present at the meetings. Further discussion was had.

Deb moved, and Paul seconded a motion to change the Board Meeting time to 6:00 p.m.

Approved Motion passed.

Vote Record: To change the regular Board Meeting time from 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm

Director	Yes/Aye	No/Nay	Abstain	Motion	Seconded
Paul Gibbons	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
David Taylor	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
Dave Freytag		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
Debra Brimacombe	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Bill Eagle	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
Michael Calhoun	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				

- **Website Credentials:** Michael explained that he has come across a few different nonprofits in Oregon with a credential from "Candid," adding that it is a way to put information out. He mentioned that obtaining the credential could potentially provide greater access to grants and did not see any associated cost.

Paul asked what type of tax form the District files, Bill replied it is a 990, to which Paul explained that is usually what the organizations on Candid file. Michael would like to see the District apply for the Platinum level. Paul added that this level would require more staff time to fill out the application.

Deb moved, and Bill seconded a motion to apply for the Candid Platinum credential for the website. **Approved Motion passed.**

Vote Record: To apply for the Platinum-level credential with Candid

Director	Yes/Aye	No/Nay	Abstain	Motion	Seconded
Paul Gibbons	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
David Taylor	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
Dave Freytag	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
Debra Brimacombe	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Bill Eagle	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Michael Calhoun	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				

- **Budget Committee:** Malysa asked if anyone has anyone in mind to be on the budget committee to let her know.

BOARD REPORTS

- Deb explained that she has spoken with Duane Meisner regarding erosion on South Scappoose Creek near Dutch Canyon, adding that it could be a great site for the task force.
- Paul shared that over the past month, he has been familiarizing himself with the District by reviewing past minutes and gaining a better understanding of its work. He noted that he has attended LCRWC meetings intermittently over the years and, since becoming a director and engaging with citizens, has identified several areas worth discussing.

He began on a positive note, expressing admiration for the District's accomplishments despite having a small staff. However, he voiced concerns about the District's reputation, particularly in North County. He highlighted frequent staff and Board turnover in recent years, often ending on bad terms, citing the dismissal of Selene as an example. He emphasized that these patterns indicate areas needing improvement and suggested utilizing guidance from the Soil and Water Conservation Commission.

Paul also pointed out that the District's mission and vision are difficult to find. He advocated for aligning the District's values and plans in a way that excites both the board/staff and the community. To support this, he recommended revising the District's Long Range Plan and suggested a Board retreat that includes input from partners. He believes these steps would help foster a healthier organizational culture, noting his concerns that the current environment may be toxic.

Jason expressed concern that the Board lacks representation from farm/ag producers or timber industry representatives, noting that the SWCD was originally established to support agriculture. Paul added that over the past month, he has learned that the SWCD was created by landowners who petitioned the state and that 75% of the land in the area is forestry. He emphasized the importance of involving these stakeholders in a strategic planning meeting and suggested inviting someone who was part of the original petitioning process. Brief discussion was held regarding the details of hosting a board retreat.

Allison added that it is good to know where your funding is coming from and the focus of the grantors. Additionally, she recommended obtaining baseline data for the county to help determine priority areas and issues.

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 5:13 PM

Respectfully Submitted by: *Jennifer Chavez*
Jennifer Chavez, Operations & Outreach Coordinator