



**Columbia
Soil & Water
Conservation District**

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**Minutes of the
Columbia SWCD Board of Directors
Meeting May 21, 2025**

Directors Present:

Debra Brimacombe, Vice Chair
Michael Calhoun, Chair
Bill Eagle, Treasurer
Paul Gibbons, Secretary
Dave Freytag, Director
Jason Busch, Director * (via Zoom)

CSWCD Staff:

Amber Kester, Interim District Manager
Jennifer Chavez, Operations & Outreach
Coordinator
Crystalyn Bush, Resource Conservationist *
Rebekah Gaxiola, Resource Conservationist
Malysa Legg, Financial Manager (via Zoom)

**Natural Resources Conservation Service
(NRCS):**

Hannah Isaacs, District Conservationist *

Associate Directors:

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

Public:

Claudia Eagle
Rachael Barry

**Attended regular board meeting only*

CALL TO ORDER OF BUDGET HEARING: 4:31 PM

The purpose of the budget hearing is to discuss any questions or concerns regarding the approved budget. There was no public comment. A copy of the Budget will be made available on the CSWCD website at columbiaswcd.com.

CALL TO ORDER OF REGULAR BOARD MEETING: 5:01 PM

Prior Month's Minutes: Deb moved, and Paul seconded a motion to approve the Minutes from the Board meeting on 4-16-25 as presented. **Approved Motion passed.**

Vote Record: Approve April 16, 2025, meeting minutes as presented.

Director	Yes/Aye	No/Nay	Abstain	Motion	Seconded
Paul Gibbons	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				<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"/>				
Jason Busch	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				

- **SBWC (Scappoose Bay Watershed Council)**: Rachell Meyers reported that the council has been busy wrapping up the project season and focusing on weed management. Since her last report, one staff member has left, but a new hire will begin on June 2nd. The council plans to continue collaborating with CSWCD on garlic mustard and spurge laurel treatment and removal efforts. Meyers also noted that the council will host a volunteer appreciation event tomorrow. Additionally, the council has been working to make significant improvements to their nursery and will partner with Scappoose High School and Habitat for Humanity to continue these efforts over the summer. A brief discussion followed.
- **LCRWC (Lower Columbia River Watershed Council)**: Rachael Barry explained that the LCRWC has been actively working on the nuts and bolts of reorganizing and organizational development, noting that there has been a lot of positive energy and engagement from the council's board. She shared that they are in the process of securing CPA services, have adopted a work plan through the end of the calendar year, and have established committees focused on engagement and project evaluation. Barry also mentioned that Amber connected her with a new landowner, and a site visit is scheduled for this Friday. Rachael asked whether OWEB (Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board) had approved the council's funding extension. Barry confirmed that the extension has been approved and noted that she is currently working to submit the necessary materials to finalize it.
- **Staff Reports**: Amber reported that she plans to sign two contracts in her role as Interim District Manager. Crystalyn provided details, explaining that one contract is for wetland delineation services and the other is for videography services, both related to the Conyers Creek project. She noted that the total combined cost for both contracts is under \$20,000.

OLD BUSINESS

- **District Manager Job**: Michael noted that this will be discussed during the Executive Session.
- **Salary Chart**: Amber explained that during last month's board meeting, there was discussion about forming a committee to update the District's salary chart. She noted that she has been attending trainings and learned that Oregon's pay equity law is legally required and that the District is overdue. Amber has collected salary chart examples from other local districts and believes the committee now has a solid starting point. Although the salary chart has not yet been updated, the topic of Malysa's salary remains active, as she continues to receive District Manager wages. Amber shared that she and Malysa have been in discussions today but have not yet agreed on a salary Range/Step. Amber reiterated her previous recommendation for the board to consider Malysa's former placement as Financial Manager and apply the appropriate step increases. Malysa stated that her salary before becoming District Manager was \$63,668. She explained her calculations, which included step and COLA increases, as well as a 5% time-of-service increase, leading to a proposed salary of \$83,630.77 for the remainder of the fiscal year, until COLAs increase July 1st. Amber explained that the proposed salary did not match what the current salary chart shows. Discussion was held. She added that she would like to move forward with a decision tonight, pending future adjustments once internal processes and pay equity assessments are completed. She noted that this topic may be revisited as the salary chart is updated. Malysa added that she thinks that the District has four hours of support available through HR Answers, which could assist with the pay equity assessment. She will send the contact information to Amber. Deb asked when a new salary chart could be expected. Amber acknowledged that the process is extensive but stated that a new chart could be in place by the end of the year if the District remains proactive. She also mentioned that she has built strong connections with various agencies that can help. Brief discussion followed. **Bill moved, and Paul seconded a motion to approve Malysa's Financial and HR Manager salary at \$83,630.77. Approved Motion passed.**

Vote Record: To approve Malyssa's approved salary

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

- **Jason Oath of Office:** Michael administered Jason's oath of office, to which he agreed. Malyssa will email him a copy to sign.
- **Strategic Planning:** Paul reported that he and several committee members toured two venues in Vernonia and noted that both could be suitable, though he would like to evaluate a third option. He is currently waiting to hear back from a venue in Goble. He shared that it has been unexpectedly challenging to identify potential facilitators. Amy Stork remains available and interested in the project, and a copy of her proposal was once again provided to the board. Alison suggested reaching out to others who have previously worked with Stork. Paul added that he reviewed several websites of her past clients and found them compelling. He concluded that it will be helpful to coordinate this work with the incoming District Manager, ideally with that person taking the lead on the project.
- **Policies:** Amber asked Malyssa if the Personnel Policy was ready, as previously discussed. Malyssa responded that it is not yet complete and will need to be reviewed before it can be brought to the board for approval. She added that the Paid Leave Oregon policy has been drafted. Discussion was tabled to allow the policy committee time to review both policies.
- **OGEC Ethics and Public Meetings Law Training:** Amber reminded the board of the upcoming Oregon Government Ethics Commission (OGEC) Ethics and Public Meetings Law trainings scheduled for September 17th at 9:30 a.m. She noted that she will attempt to record the session again for future reference. Michael added that he attended the same OGEC training in Clatskanie a few weeks ago and does not plan to attend this upcoming session.

NEW BUSINESS

Adopt the Budget for 2025/2026 Fiscal Year: Malyssa read resolution 24/25-02 aloud to the Board with the Annual Budget totaling \$2,768,023.29.

Bill moved, and Dave seconded a motion to adopt Resolution 24/25-02 and approve the budget of \$2,768,023.29, and the tax levy of \$0.10 per \$1,000. **Approved Motion passed.**

Vote Record: To approve the budget of \$2,768,023.29, and tax levy of \$0.10 per \$1,000.

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

- **July Board Meeting:** Michael noted that, as in previous years, the county fair coincides with the July board meeting. He proposed canceling the meeting for that month. A brief discussion followed. **Bill moved, and Deb seconded a motion to cancel the July 16th Board Meeting. Approved Motion passed.**

Vote Record: To cancel the July Board Meeting

Director	Yes/Aye	No/Nay	Abstain	Motion	Seconded
Paul Gibbons	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
Jason Busch	<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"/>				
Jason Busch	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				

- **OACD Dues:** Malysa informed the board that the Oregon Association of Conservation Districts (OACD) dues are payable starting July 1st. Paul asked what benefits the District receives from OACD. Malysa explained that OACD provides lobbying support and guidance on potential grant opportunities. She added that their conferences are highly beneficial. A brief discussion followed. **Bill moved, and Jason seconded a motion to pay the OACD Dues for \$2,000.00. Approved Motion passed.**

Vote Record: To pay the OACD Dues

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

BOARD REPORTS

Deb reported that she represented the District at this year's Scappoose Earth Day Festival and felt it was a worthwhile event, noting that attendees tended to stay for several hours. She expressed interest in seeing the District commit to participating in future years and encouraged finding more creative ways to engage the public. This year, she hosted a worm bin activity that was well-received and ultimately given away to a high school student.

Rachell added that the Council was asked by the City of Scappoose to lead the planting efforts along the CZ Trail for the event. She also shared that the Council would participate in the upcoming Scappoose Outdoor Festival on May 31st and plans to bring the popular culvert/salmon toss game. A brief discussion followed.

Bill reported that he attended the South County Chamber meeting. Amber expressed interest in the District rejoining the Chamber as a member. A brief discussion followed.

REGULAR MEETING ADJOURNED AT 5:57 PM for EXECUTIVE SESSION:

"to consider the employment of a public officer, employee, staff member, or individual agent," Under ORS 192.660(2)(a).

REGULAR MEETING was called back to order at 7:19 PM

Jason dropped from Zoom

Michael explained that though it was a difficult decision, the board has a motion to approve Taylor Murray as the district manager.

Paul moved, and Bill seconded a motion to approve hiring Taylor Murray as District Manager.
Approved Motion passed.

Vote Record: To hire Taylor Murray as District Manager

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

Paul expressed appreciation to Amber for her work as Interim District Manager on behalf of the Board. Deb added that she believes staff will enjoy working with Taylor, noting his background in outreach, connections with OWEB, and seven years of management experience. Bill reiterated that the decision was not an easy one and emphasized that Amber has done an outstanding job, stating that the District is better because of her leadership.

REGULAR MEETING ADJOURNED AT 7:20 PM

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