



**Columbia  
Soil & Water  
Conservation District**

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

**Directors Present:**

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

**CSWCD Staff:**

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

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

Hannah Isaacs, District Conservationist  
Rebekah Gaxiola, Natural Resource Specialist

**Associate Directors:**

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

**Public:**

Jason Busch (via Zoom)  
Claudia Eagle

**CALL TO ORDER OF REGULAR BOARD MEETING: 6:00 PM**

**Prior Month's Minutes:** Bill moved, and Deb seconded a motion to approve the Minutes from the Regular Board meeting on 2-19-25 as presented. **Approved Motion passed by unanimous vote.**

Vote Record: Approve February 19, 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"/>				

A brief discussion was held regarding the amount of detail included in the minutes. Bill thinks they are too detailed; Paul likes the details to refresh his memory. Bill added that he would like to note that he would like to receive a copy of the draft minutes within a week after the board meeting.

**Special Meeting Minutes:** Deb moved, and Paul seconded a motion to approve the Minutes from the Special Board meeting on 2-26-25 as presented. **Approved Motion passed by unanimous vote.**

Vote Record: Approve February 26, 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"/>				



## Vote Record: Approve appointing Jason Busch as Zone 2 Director

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"/>				

No further public comment.

### **REPORTS**

- NRCS:** Hannah explained that their travel cards are unavailable due to frozen funds, so they will no longer be attending the Oregon Conservation Education and Assistance Network (OCEAN) Connect Conference in April. She also noted preparations for another Reduction in Force (RIF) and expressed hope that lower federal staffing levels in Oregon would reduce layoffs.

Bill asked about payments for standing contracts with landowners. Hannah confirmed that contract funds have been released, allowing prior contracts to proceed.

Paul mentioned that he has seen reports of numerous NRCS leases across the country going unpaid. Paul mentioned reports of unpaid NRCS leases across the country. Hannah clarified that their office is not affected, and she is not currently concerned, though she and Michael are preparing for potential issues.
- SBWC (Scappoose Bay Watershed Council):** Rachell informed the board that SBWC is in the middle of the planting season and remains busy preparing for their native plant sale, managing active small grants while planning for the next grant cycle, and launching an extensive weed collaboration with the SWCD. A brief discussion was held.
- LCRWC (Lower Columbia River Watershed Council):** Paul shared that he attended a September meeting where the council discussed becoming a 501(c)(3). Initially thinking he was appointed to the board, he later learned he was elected Chairperson. Rachel Barry is working with Malysa to help get the council back on track. While it may take a year or two for full activation, Paul is encouraged by the group's energy and commitment.

Paul inquired about the council's operating funds and whether an extension would be granted. Malysa explained that the funding is set to expire at the end of July and that this will be the council's second extension. She mentioned they are checking if they can use the remaining \$80,000, and she will continue supporting Rachel with financials and documentation as they move toward 501(c)(3) status. Paul stressed the importance of these funds for the council's progress.
- UNWC (Upper Nehalem Watershed Council):** Michael mentioned that the council had a tree planting at Vernonia Lake over the weekend.
- Staff:** Crystalyn informed the board that the Conyer's Creek project in Clatskanie is likely to receive funding and that several grants have been submitted, with responses pending. She provided a brief update on current projects, including working with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) to secure funding for a fish passage project on Apiary Road in the next year or two. Crystalyn also highlighted the growing partnership with SBWC, focusing on weed control efforts targeting Hawthorne and Garlic Mustard.

-Amber shared that she is finalizing the capacity grant report with the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA), noting that the CSWCD is one of the few selected to test ODA's new electronic submission system. The district will submit applications for two small grant projects in the final quarter of this biennium and is evaluating new issues and programs to prioritize for the upcoming biennium. A discussion followed, with Allison suggesting the baseline data from the late 1990s SBWC work might be useful in setting new priorities.

-Malysa mentioned that the Columbia PUD bill might look slightly higher moving forward due to the rates slightly increasing. A brief discussion was held.

*-Jason dropped off Zoom call*

**OLD BUSINESS**

- **District Manager Job Description:** Bill believes the description has been thoroughly reviewed and looks good. Jennifer recommended running both the District Manager and Financial Manager job descriptions through a spell/grammar check, noting minor errors. She also pointed out that the two motions made in December for edits were not included in the packet. A discussion followed. Amber questioned the job qualifications, pointing out that it was previously discussed that candidates would need either a degree or relevant experience, but the current wording suggests both are required. A discussion followed. Paul supported requiring a degree, while Crystalyn suggested it be preferred. Allison emphasized the need for candidates to be comfortable with complex language and reports, given the listed duties.

**Deb moved, and Paul seconded** a motion to approve the District Manager job description with corrections, including adding 'preferred' to the higher education qualification, incorporating agriculture into the list of relevant degrees, running the document through spell-check, and updating 'climate change' to 'climate resiliency.' **Approved Motion passed by unanimous vote.**

Vote Record: Approve the District Manager job description with discussed corrections.

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"/>				

- **Financial Manager Job Description:** Before disconnecting from Zoom, Jason left comments regarding the Financial Manager (FM) job description, which Jennifer read. He questioned the justification for changing the position from hourly to salaried, noting the significant pay increase. He also raised concerns about the accuracy and approval status of the salary chart provided in the meeting packet, noting that previous versions placed the FM position in a lower range or did not include it at all. He also asked why the FM description doesn't mention the telework policy, as the District Manager's does, suggesting consistency between the descriptions. Paul asked whether the FM duties could be performed effectively from home. Malysa explained that for the most part, she can do most of her work from home, such as working on the budget and emails. She noted that it is nice to have a quieter environment when working with numbers, but that she does need to come into the office for filing, meetings, and to do payroll. She added that it could depend on where an individual feels comfortable working. **Bill moved, and Paul seconded a motion** to approve the Financial/HR Manager job description. **Approved Motion passed by unanimous vote.**

Vote Record: To approve the Financial/HR Manager job description.

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"/>				
Bill Eagle	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Michael Calhoun	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				

A discussion followed. Hannah, based on her experience with NRCS, believes managers should be in the office. Given the SWCD's field-based work, staff are often out, and a manager should be available to engage with the public. Telework should be used primarily when beneficial to the District. Allison emphasized that remote workers, especially in financial roles, should have clear working hours so others know when to expect a response. Amber asked if the FM would continue coordinating with the District Manager (DM) on the budget, noting it's mentioned in the DM description but not the FM description. Bill agreed it should be

included. A brief discussion followed.

*-Jason returned via Zoom*

- Review Current Salary Chart:** Jason reiterated his concerns about the salary chart, noting it differs from the approved chart last year. He added that his main concern was regarding the Financial Manager's salary moving forward. A discussion was held. Malysa explained that the SWCD did not have a Financial Manager at the time, which is why the position was not included on the chart. Jennifer added that several changes have been made since the chart was approved in March 2024, including the addition of a job description that was not approved until July 2024. Jennifer asked whether changes to job titles on the chart require reapproval. Malysa confirmed that the chart would need to be reapproved. Jennifer also referenced the salary chart for 2022-2023, which showed the Financial Manager in Range 4/5. Paul expressed concern about approving the salary chart without more background information, requesting justification for the changes. Michael expressed frustration, stating that he had hoped that more information would be provided so that this discussion would be resolved tonight. Jason suggested spelling out position titles and indicating current staff placements on the chart. Further discussion followed. Paul expressed a preference for merit-based increases over step increases and requested to review at least the previous two salary charts, along with the current budget, with relevant information clearly presented for the board.
- Board Meeting Time Change:** Michael expressed that the 6:00 pm meeting time isn't working for him and prefers a 4:00 pm start. Rachell pointed out that a 4:00 pm start might be challenging for potential board members with full-time jobs. A discussion followed about purchasing an Owl Meeting Camera to improve virtual meetings. Paul stated he'd be open to an earlier meeting time if the virtual option improves. Michael questioned why Paul hadn't considered the meeting time before running for the board. Further discussion was held. Malysa suggested the possibility of an early morning meeting. **Bill moved, and Deb seconded a motion to move the April Board meeting to 5:00 pm. Approved Motion passed.**

Vote Record: To move the April meeting to 5:00 pm.

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"/>				

- Candid Certification for Website:** Michael asked Jenn for an update. Jenn apologized, stating that she was unaware she was responsible for leading this effort and would provide an update next month.

**NEW BUSINESS**

- Ethics Training by Our Lawyer:** Michael shared that the District's lawyer offered to provide an Ethics Training. A discussion was held. Deb noted it would be a valuable refresher, especially with the Oregon Government Ethics Coalition now overseeing the Public Meetings Law. Michael added that, while the board is scheduled for a Public Meetings Law training in September, both trainings would be beneficial. Amber will coordinate with the lawyer and send a doodle poll to the board.
- COLA (Cost of Living Adjustment):** Malysa recommended a 3% COLA increase, noting that this aligns with local SWCDs. A brief discussion was held. Paul asked if this was based on the Department of Labor Statistics. Malysa confirmed, adding that it also aligns with SDAO's (Special Districts Association of Oregon) recommendation. She noted that last year, the Board approved a 4% increase. **Paul moved, and Bill seconded a motion to approve a 3% COLA adjustment. Approved Motion passed by unanimous vote.**

Vote Record: To approve a 3% COLA increase

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"/>				

- **Budget Calendar:** Malysa proposed that the committee have their first meeting on May 1<sup>st</sup>. A brief discussion was held.

**Bill moved, and Deb seconded a motion to approve the Budget Calendar as presented. Approved Motion passed by unanimous vote.**

Vote Record: To approve the Budget Calendar

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"/>				

- **Budget Committee:** Bill asked if all committee members had agreed to participate. Malysa confirmed that they had.

**Bill moved, and Deb seconded a motion to accept the Budget Committee. Approved Motion passed by unanimous vote.**

Vote Record: To accept the Budget Committee.

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"/>				

- **Budget Officer: Bill moved, and Deb seconded a motion to approve that the Financial Manager serve as the Budget Officer. Approved Motion passed by unanimous vote.**

Vote Record: To approve the Financial Manager serves as the Budget Officer.

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"/>				

- **Outside Light Bulbs:** Michael proposed changing the District's outside light bulbs to an amber color, explaining that it is healthier for wildlife. A discussion was held. Amber will contact the contractor for a

quote on fixing the lights to turn off during the day. Michael also requested information on the specifications of the current light bulbs. Deb noted that this could be a great educational opportunity.

- **Appoint Associate Directors:** The current Associate Directors are Allison Charbonneau, Barbara Travis, David Taylor, and Rachell Meyers.

**Bill moved, and Deb seconded a motion** to re-appoint the existing Associate Directors. **Approved Motion passed by unanimous vote.**

Vote Record: To re-appoint the existing Associate Directors.

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"/>				

- **Policy Update:** Michael asked Malysa to provide an update on the policies recently discussed with the Policy Committee so the board would have a heads-up before they are presented for approval. Malysa stated that the updated Personnel Policy will hopefully be ready for approval at April's board meeting. Michael added that upcoming policies will include a Leaf Blower Policy, permitting use for sidewalk safety while minimizing impact on pollinators, and a Cell Phone Policy requiring phones to be silenced before meetings. A discussion was held regarding bathroom products, but it was ultimately decided that no policy was necessary.

- **Interim District Manager: Bill made a motion** to appoint Amber as the Interim District Manager. **A discussion was held.**

*Malysa left at 8:19 pm.*

Paul explained the Interim position would have modified duties. Amber asked about the timeline, and Michael confirmed she would begin Monday, with the District Manager position posted tomorrow. The discussion shifted to the Resource Conservationist interviews. Amber requested applicant resumes in advance. Deb confirmed Amber should have received a folder with the documents. Michael assured Amber she'd receive the resumes and interview questions soon. Hannah asked if Amber and she would take an advisory role due to Amber's lack of hiring/firing authority. A Brief discussion was held. Amber asked about the District Manager hiring timeline, with Michael estimating about a month. She also expressed interest in sharing her workload with the new Resource Conservationist, but didn't want to fully transition tasks. Deb suggested a meeting with the Personnel Committee after the position is filled. Jenn inquired about the Personnel Policy, and Deb explained it's still in review due to technical issues. Deb also clarified that the telework policy is separate from the Personnel Policy. Amber requested to meet with the Personnel Committee. Paul suggested the hiring process may take two to three months, and asked Amber to be flexible. Amber agreed, adding that she wants to help the District be successful.

Michael revisited Bill's motion to request a second. **Deb seconded the motion** to appoint Amber as the Interim District Manager. **Approved Motion passed by unanimous vote.**

Vote Record: To appoint Amber as the Interim District Manager.

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"/>				

**BOARD REPORTS**

- Paul shared that he had been invited to speak at the Clatskanie Chamber of Commerce meeting on June 5th but wondered if someone from the District should speak instead. A brief discussion followed. Paul also provided an update on the Strategic Planning Meeting. He is in contact with facilitators and has heard back from a venue, which has availability starting in November. A discussion was held about other venue options in the county and potential invites for the meeting.

***MEETING ADJOURNED AT 8:37 PM***

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