



35285 Millard Road
St. Helens, OR
97051
Ph: 503.433.3205

www.columbiaswcd.com

COLUMBIA SWCD BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING AGENDA – SEPTEMBER 16, 2026

REGULAR BOARD MEETING CALL TO ORDER

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES – From August 19, 2026

TREASURER REPORT- August 31, 2026

PUBLIC COMMENT – Topics from the Floor

AGENDA ITEMS

Reports:

- ◆ NRCS
- ◆ Watershed Councils
- ◆ Staff Updates

Old Business:

- ◆ Strategic Plan Retreat **Discuss /Approve**
- ◆ Stand-Alone Policies **Discuss**
- ◆ 2025 Audit Plan of Action – Sec State **Discuss/Approve**

New Business:

- ◆ 2026 Audit **Discuss**
- ◆ Strategic Planning Charters and Comm. Structure **Discuss**
 - Annual Budget Committee Charter
 - Finance Committee Charter
 - Personnel Committee Charter
 - Strategic Planning and Board Development Charter
- ◆ 32-hr Workweek – Michael Calhoun **Discuss**
- ◆ Communities Purchasing Watershed **Discuss**
- ◆ Building Lease USDA and CSWCD **Discuss**

Reports:

- ◆ Board

ADJOURNMENT

DATES TO NOTE

10/03 – Vernonia Salmon Festival

10/21 – Board Meeting

11/01 – Daylight Savings

11/03 – Election Day

11/03-05 – OACD Conference

11/18 – Board Meeting

12/16 – Board Meeting

12/21 – First Day of Winter

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

10/03 – Salmon Festival



35285 Millard Road
St. Helens, OR 97051
Ph: 503.433.3205

www.columbiaswcd.com

**Minutes of the
Columbia SWCD Board of Directors
Board Meeting
August 19, 2026**

Directors Present:

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

Directors Absent:

Jason Busch, Director

Associate Directors Present:

David Taylor
Alison Charbonneau
Rachell Meyers, Scappoose Bay Watershed Council
(via Zoom)

Columbia SWCD Staff:

Taylor Murray, Executive Director
Rebekah Gaxiola, Working Lands Conservationist
Jennifer Chavez, Operations & Communications
Manager (via Zoom)
Laurel Tappert, Field Technician

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS):

Hannah Isaacs, District Conservationist

**Lower Columbia River Watershed
Council (LCRWC):**

Rachael Barry, Interim Coordinator

Public:

Claudia Eagle
Julia Rutherford
Bill Etter
Michael Miller (via Zoom)

BOARD MEETING CALL TO ORDER AT 5:01 PM

Prior Month's Minutes: Paul noted that the draft listed him as a Director and Alex as Vice President. Paul also suggested noting absent Directors within the attendee list. **Paul moved, and Alex seconded a motion to approve the Minutes from the June 17 Board meeting, with the two officer-title corrections. Approved motion passed.**

Vote Record: Approve the June 17, 2026, meeting minutes with corrections.

Director	Yes/Aye	No/Nay	Abstain	Motion	Seconded
Debra Brimacombe	☒				
Bill Eagle	☒				
Michael Calhoun	☒				
Alex Devin	☒				☒
Dave Freytag	☒				
Paul Gibbons	☒			☒	

Financial Report: Bill presented the Treasurer's Reports dated June 30 and July 31, 2026. For July, the U.S. Bank account began with \$85,376.13 and had an ending balance of \$108,555.41. **Bill moved, and Alex seconded a motion to approve the Treasurer's Reports. Approved motion passed.**

Alison noted that Science in the Park took place during the first week of July, adding that she believed it was the best one so far. She recognized Amber and Jennifer for organizing the event. Taylor mentioned that Jennifer has been preparing an article and photos about the program, which may be shared with newspapers through the Oregon Association of Conservation Districts.

SBWC: Rachell reported that she had returned from maternity leave and that the Scappoose Bay Watershed Council's fall programs were largely scheduled. Upcoming activities include the landowner knotweed workshop with the District on September 12 and the October 10 native plant sale. SBWC and the District were approved for a collaborative small grant supporting outreach and native planting for the Chief Concomly Park project, which will also help continue relationships with the City of Scappoose.

Rachell reported that SBWC submitted an Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) restoration grant request for part of a large project covering approximately 1.5 miles of South Scappoose Creek near Salt Creek and Mud Creek. SBWC plans to seek the remaining funds through the Private Forest Accord grant process. She is also working with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife on approximately four miles of large wood placement in the headwaters of South Scappoose Creek across Weyerhaeuser, Rainier, and Bureau of Land Management properties.

Rachell added that SBWC recently hosted an online outdoor recreation forum with local partners. She agreed to email information about the knotweed workshop and fall plant sale to Alex as requested.

Rachell left the meeting.

LCRWC: Rachael thanked the District for the volunteer opportunity at the Columbia County Fair and thanked SBWC for partnering on the Pollinator Festival in Clatskanie, which drew approximately 800 attendees. She reported that the OWEB approved the one-year Clatskanie Engagement Grant. The project will expand community relationships and develop three projects at various stages within the basin. She thanked Taylor for helping transfer the grant as LCRWC transitions away from District fiscal sponsorship.

Rachael reported that 26 people attended LCRWC's recent celebration. A landowner attending the event discussed several possible projects, and Rachael and Laurel completed a follow-up site visit. Rachael noted that the event led directly to project development and additional community conversations.

LCRWC submitted its first grants as an independent entity. One application, in partnership with Columbia County, would support restoration near the confluence of the Clatskanie and Little Clatskanie rivers in coordination with a County Public Works crossing upgrade. LCRWC is also the applicant for a North Coast regional technical assistance grant to share grant-writing services among watershed organizations.

Rachael added that LCRWC is developing an employee handbook and preparing for its first hire. Its September 10 Board meeting will include a presentation from Columbia Land Trust, and fall and winter stewardship events are being planned with the Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership.

Staff: Taylor introduced Laurel Tappert, the District's new Field Technician, and reported that she has been a strong addition to the team. The District has also begun using a new staff-meeting format to coordinate projects and assignments. Taylor is hopeful that this will help produce project update summaries to include in future Board packets once the process is fully established.

Taylor reported that Science in the Park was successful and that the fair booth generated meaningful educational conversations about emerald ash borer and soil testing. Staff tracked visitor activity to document the limited public engagement after approximately 7:00 p.m. Taylor said the District will continue discussing an educational-vendor designation and earlier closing time with the Fair Board. He also reported that recent transitions involving the District's auditor and IT provider had been resolved and that he was returning more of his attention to strategic planning.

OLD BUSINESS

Strategic Plan Board Development: Taylor reported that Directors, Associate Directors, and staff have continued working with Amy Stork on Board roles, responsibilities, and supporting documents. The next phase will include individual sessions between Taylor and Amy, followed by another staff session to align roles and responsibilities now that Laurel has joined the team.

Strategic Plan Retreat: Taylor encouraged all Directors and Associate Directors to attend the Board retreat scheduled for Friday, September 25, from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Columbia SWCD office. Rachell noted that the date conflicts with a SBWC advisory board luncheon. She and Taylor agreed to discuss the scheduling conflict separately.

NEW BUSINESS

Associate, Board Director, and Officer Position Descriptions: Paul explained that the Strategic Planning Work Group, including Deb, Alison, Alex, Taylor, and Paul, had worked with Amy Stork to review and revise the documents. The drafts were distributed to the Board five days before the meeting. Paul said approval would allow the documents to help guide discussion at the September retreat.

The Board first reviewed the roles, responsibilities, and expectations for the Board and individual Directors. Discussion focused on active participation, reviewing meeting materials in advance, staying informed about conservation issues, communicating with landowners and constituents, and using the District's mission and vision to guide decisions. **Alex moved, and Bill seconded a motion to approve the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of the Board and individual Directors. Approved motion passed.**

Vote Record: Approve the Board and individual Director roles, responsibilities, and expectations.

Director	Yes/Aye	No/Nay	Abstain	Motion	Seconded
Debra Brimacombe	☒				
Bill Eagle	☒				☒
Michael Calhoun	☒				
Alex Devin	☒			☒	
Dave Freytag	☒				
Paul Gibbons	☒				

The Board next reviewed the Associate Director document, which clarifies the purpose of the position, expected participation, and the value Associate Directors provide to the District. Members identified minor title and formatting changes. **Alex moved, and Paul seconded a motion to approve the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of Associate Directors with the identified formatting changes. Approved motion passed.**

Vote Record: Approve the Associate Director roles, responsibilities, and expectations with formatting changes.

Director	Yes/Aye	No/Nay	Abstain	Motion	Seconded
Debra Brimacombe	☒				
Bill Eagle	☒				
Michael Calhoun	☒				
Alex Devin	☒			☒	
Dave Freytag	☒				
Paul Gibbons	☒				☒

The Board reviewed the duties and expectations for its officers. Discussion addressed the Chair's working relationship with the Executive Director and responsibility for committee assignments, the Vice Chair's role when the Chair is unavailable, and the Treasurer's and Secretary's oversight of duties commonly delegated to staff. It was noted that the Chair serves on the Personnel Committee.

Members discussed whether officer terms should be longer than one year or staggered to maintain continuity. They agreed that the topic would be appropriate for the September retreat. Members also noted that the position descriptions may be reviewed after the Board has used them and must be reviewed at least every three years or as needed. **Alex moved, and Paul seconded a motion to approve the officers of the Board of Directors' roles, responsibilities, and expectations. Approved motion passed.**

Vote Record: Approve the officer roles, responsibilities, and expectations.

Director	Yes/Aye	No/Nay	Abstain	Motion	Seconded
Debra Brimacombe	☒				
Bill Eagle	☒				
Michael Calhoun	☒				
Alex Devin	☒			☒	
Dave Freytag	☒				
Paul Gibbons	☒				☒

The Board also reviewed the Staff Support for the Board of Directors document. Paul explained that it largely reflects the Executive Director's job description and presents staff support responsibilities alongside the Board's governance duties. No action was taken.

Meeting Room Policy: Taylor reported that the District has encountered legal and compliance questions related to community use of the meeting room because the office is shared with NRCS. He has paused approval of new room-use requests while he develops a revised policy identifying prohibited political activities and other requirements. The draft will be reviewed by legal counsel before being presented to the Board.

Discussion addressed the distinction between political campaigning, advocacy organizations, and nonpolitical educational uses. Members also discussed the kitchen's lack of commercial certification and the need for users to leave the room in good condition. Taylor said he intends to prepare a policy for Board review at the next meeting.

The Board meeting was adjourned at 5:56 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by: *Jennifer Chavez*, Operations & Communications Manager

Columbia Soil and Water Conservation District Board Development Retreat

September 25, 2026 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM Columbia SWCD Office, St Helens OR

Preparation

- Please complete the attached survey to help us have great discussions!
- There's also a packet of background materials.

Agenda

9:00	WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION TO THE DAY ■ Reconnect and review the agenda
9:20 <i>THERE WILL BE A BREAK AROUND 10:30</i>	STRATEGIC ISSUES AND BOARD FUNCTION ■ What issues do we want to tackle as a board in the next few years? ■ Which board functions are most important to strengthen? ■ How can we make sure our meetings and committees advance the issues we want to tackle? <i>Background materials:</i> ◆ Board job description approved in August ◆ Committee structure ◆ Best Practices for Governance Groups ◆ Sample board meeting agenda
11:15	OUR BOARD AND THE COMMUNITY ■ How can Directors and Associate Directors be effective ambassadors? ■ What are our priorities for building interest in running for the Board or becoming Associate Directors?
12:15	CLOSING and WORKING LUNCH ■ How will we hold ourselves accountable to our commitments, today and into the future?
1:00	ADJOURN

Columbia Soil and Water Conservation District Board Development Survey

Why this survey?

Please take a few minutes to answer these questions to help us have a great conversation...

Key issues

- 1. What big strategic questions do we want to tackle as a board in the next few years?**

The Board we want to be

- 2. Of the following, which are the top three board functions do you think are most important for us to get better at, so we can be the best Board possible? (More detail in the Board job description)**

- ☐ Keep the district's vision and mission in focus in all decisions.
- ☐ Develop, review, and update policies
- ☐ Approve the annual budget
- ☐ Provide fiduciary oversight
- ☐ Supervise the Executive Director
- ☐ Develop and approve a long-range strategic plan
- ☐ Approve and oversee District programs and annual workplan
- ☐ Report to the public on conservation district programs and accomplishments, for example through an annual report and annual meeting.
- ☐ Recruit new directors and associate directors

- 3. Is there anything you would personally like to work on to help you be the best board member you can?**

- ☐ Attend and actively participate in all board meetings
- ☐ Serve on committees as assigned
- ☐ Come to meetings prepared
- ☐ Understand and follow all applicable laws.
- ☐ Work cooperatively with each other, staff, partners, etc.
- ☐ Represent the District in the community
- ☐ Take steps to stay abreast of local conservation issues.

4. How can we make sure our regular meetings and committees are effective?

5. What would help me be a community ambassador for the SWCD?

Recruitment priorities

6. What are our priorities for building interest in running for the Board or becoming Associate Directors? What do we have now, and what do we need?

	We have this now (make an X)	We need more of this (Make an X)
Topical expertise		
Agriculture		
Forestry		
Community outreach		
Education		
Relevant sciences		
Other		
Other		
Management skills/expertise		
Financial management		
Public affairs/advocacy		
Org. management		
Legal		
Grants and other funding		
Public agency		
Marketing / Communications		
Human resources		
Other		
Other		
Connections		
Geographic diversity		
Age diversity		
Racial/ethnic diversity		
Connection to public officials/agencies		
Connection to funding sources		
Connection to key partners		
Other		
Other		

Columbia Soil and Water Conservation District

Roles, Responsibilities, and Expectations of the Board and Individual Directors

MISSION and VISION OF THE SWCD

- **Mission:** To support and guide the people of Columbia County in voluntarily stewarding our soil, water, habitat, and other natural resources.
- **Vision:** We envision a Columbia County where people have the knowledge and tools to care for our shared natural resources; a Columbia County where water is clean and abundant, soils are healthy and productive, locally-grown food is abundant, and ecosystems thrive; and where we all recognize the interconnection of people and our natural world.

PURPOSE OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

To govern, oversee policy and direction, advise, and assist with the leadership and general promotion of the Columbia SWCD.

MAJOR RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

ORS 568.550 outlines the statutory powers and authorities granted to conservation district boards in the State of Oregon. The Board of the Columbia Soil and Water Conservation District governs through policy and oversight. Individual directors shall not direct staff, supervise employees other than the Executive Director, or become involved in day-to-day operations unless specifically authorized by board action. As a body, the Board of Directors is responsible to:

- **Keep the district's vision and mission in focus in all decisions.**
- **Develop, review, and update policies:** Supported by the Executive Director and committees, the Board develops and approves policies that govern the District's actions.
- **Approve the annual budget:** The Board of Directors works with the Budget Committee to develop the annual budget and approves the annual budget.
- **Provide fiduciary oversight:** The Board of Directors provides oversight, stewardship, and accountability of the District's financial activities in accordance with law and District policies and procedures. See Treasurer Job Description and Finance Committee Charter for more information.
- **Supervise the Executive Director:** The Board of Directors recruits, hires, supervises, and evaluates the District's Executive Director. See the Personnel Committee Charter for more information.
- **Develop and approve a long-range strategic plan:** With the staff, the Board should identify local conservation needs and take a strategic leadership role in developing the District's ODA-required long-range or strategic plan for addressing those needs through programs and strategies. The Board approves the long-range strategic plan. See the Strategic Planning Committee Charter for more information.
- **Approve and oversee District programs and annual workplan:** The staff, led by the Executive Director, creates an annual workplan that reflects anticipated progress on the goals, strategies, and programs outlined in the long-range plan. The Board approves the workplan and provides oversight of workplan and program progress through regular review of staff and programmatic reports and other progress evaluation tools as needed.

- **Report to the public** on conservation district programs and accomplishments, for example through an annual report and annual meeting.
- **Recruit new directors and associate directors:** The board should conduct outreach to ensure ongoing governance of the District. See the *(List the appropriate Committee)* Charter for more information.

EXPECTATIONS OF INDIVIDUAL DIRECTORS

Individual directors do not have individual powers and authorities under statute, unless granted by the Board. Individual directors may be given authority or power to act on behalf of the Board for specific limited tasks, as granted through board action (resolution, motion, policy) and must be recorded in the Board's meeting minutes. As individuals, directors should at a minimum:

- **Attend and actively participate in all board meetings:** Per ORS 568.560(7), if a conservation district director has missed at least three consecutive publicly advertised meetings of the conservation district board, the Board may request the position be declared vacant by the Oregon Department of Agriculture.
- **Serve on committees as assigned:** Committees are where detailed policy development occurs. Directors are expected to serve on and actively participate in at least one standing committee of the Board, and ad-hoc committees as needed.
- **Come to meetings prepared:** Directors are expected to review Board and Committee meeting materials in advance.
- **Understand and follow all applicable laws.** Director training is required on topics such as Oregon's Public Meeting, Public Records, and Ethics laws. Directors must disclose any conflicts of interest in compliance with Oregon law. Directors should also be knowledgeable about laws that govern board operations such as budget, audit, and contracting.
- **Work cooperatively to plan and oversee the implementation of their conservation district's programs.** Directors should strive to work effectively with each other as well as District staff, cooperating agencies, and partners.

Directors can best serve the District if they also:

- **Represent the District in the community:** Directors should promote the Columbia SWCD in the community and gather feedback to inform their decision-making and the District's long-range plan and programs. Directors have a particular focus on communicating with and responding to constituents from the geographic zones they represent, as well as those from all zones who represent key stakeholder interests. As a representative of the conservation district board, opinions expressed publicly by individual directors should be consistent with established board policy, regardless of the individual's personal agenda or opinions. Individual directors do not speak on behalf of the Board unless authorized by the Board to do so.
- **Take steps to stay abreast of local conservation issues.** Directors should attend area and state meetings of various state associations and other local, state, and regional conservation partners, and otherwise participate in the community.

- **Promote the conservation district's work to legislators and other decision makers** to help secure the District's funding and program priorities.

EXPECTED TIME COMMITMENTS

LENGTH OF TERM

- Directors are elected to four-year terms. There are seven board positions. The terms are staggered to expire at specific intervals by position, not by election of the specific individual; Directors elected or appointed to a position mid-way through a term will need to be re-elected to their position at the expiration of the position's term.

MEETING ATTENDANCE AND EXPECTED TIME COMMITMENT

- **Monthly meeting:** The Board of Directors meets monthly at a regular time determined by the Directors. Meetings typically last 90-120 minutes. Directors are expected to review Board meeting materials in advance, which may take from 30 minutes to several hours a month. Directors will notify the Board Chair or Executive Director in advance when unable to attend meetings.
- **Orientation and initial training:** New directors will complete the Board Orientation Process and all required governance trainings within 30 days of beginning board service.
- **Committee service:** Standing committees meet an average of four times per year for 90-120 minutes each meeting, pending their respective work agendas. Ad-hoc meeting times and frequency are determined as needed with the committee is formed. Directors are expected to review committee meeting materials in advance, which may take 30-120 minutes.
- **Work sessions and retreats:** The Board may decide to hold work sessions and retreats (longer meetings) throughout the year or annually at key times. Directors are expected to attend these meetings. Directors are expected to prepare for these meetings as requested, which may take from 30 minutes to several hours per meeting.
- **Special events:** Directors are asked to attend at least one special event or meeting per year, as they are determined to be of value by the board (i.e. Annual Meetings, County Fair, etc.).

REVIEW AND RENEWAL OF COMMITMENT

- Directors will review this document annually at the January board meeting and update as needed
- Individual directors will sign a copy of this document annually

Commitment of the Director:

I have read, understand, and agree to the job description and expectations outlined here.

Signature

Name

Columbia Soil and Water Conservation District

Roles, Responsibilities, and Expectations of Associate Directors

MISSION and VISION OF THE SWCD

- **Mission:** To support and guide the people of Columbia County in voluntarily stewarding our soil, water, habitat, and other natural resources.
- **Vision:** We envision a Columbia County where people have the knowledge and tools to care for our shared natural resources; a Columbia County where water is clean and abundant, soils are healthy and productive, locally-grown food is abundant, and ecosystems thrive; and where we all recognize the interconnection of people and our natural world.

PURPOSE OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND OF ASSOCIATE DIRECTORS

The purpose of the Board of Directors is to govern, oversee policy and direction, advise, and assist with the leadership and general promotion of the Columbia SWCD.

The position of Associate Director exists to help the Board of Directors:

- Prepare interested individuals for the role of Director, giving them a chance to understand the work of the District and the role of Director before deciding whether to run for a Director position
- Engage expertise or representation from people who are not eligible or are otherwise unable to run for a Director position, but whose wise counsel is of benefit to Directors in their governance role

QUALIFICATIONS OF ASSOCIATE DIRECTORS

To be appointed as an Associate Director, an individual must be a local stakeholder in the work of the District, for example:

- A resident of the District
- A landowner within the District even if not a resident
- An employee or board member of a landowner in the county
- An employee or board member of a key business or organization connected to the work of the District

RESPONSIBILITIES OF ASSOCIATE DIRECTORS

Minimum participation:

- Attend all or most District board meetings
- Actively participate in discussions at board meetings

Encouraged participation:

Associate Directors are encouraged to also participate in learning about and contributing to the District in at least one of the following ways:

- Serve on committee(s) / participate in helping the District be more effective
- Provide expertise in areas that are helpful to the District, for example:
 - Serve as a liaison from key interest areas such as advisory groups, community organizations within the county

- Provide technical expertise or advice to the Board and/or executive director
- Participate in District outreach opportunities such as attending/tabling at events, etc.

APPOINTMENT AND TERMS

- Appointed by the Board of Directors at the first board meeting in January or as needed throughout the year
- Serve for a one year term renewing at the first board meeting in January
- Associate Directors appointed other than at the first board meeting in January shall serve a partial term with renewal proposed at the first board meeting in January of the following year.

COMMITMENT OF THE ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR UPON APPOINTMENT BY THE BOARD

I have read, understand, and agree to the responsibilities and expectations outlined here.

Signature

Name

Date

Best Practices for Governance Groups

The following best practices are based on our collective years of experience with Boards of Directors, city councils, county commissions, and other governing bodies. Of course, every board is unique, and each should discuss and adopt its own guidelines. Other than legal matters, most questions have no “right” or “wrong” answers, but it is important that directors have the same expectations. It is helpful to review and revise guidelines at least annually.

Expectations and Courtesies

- Make every effort to attend every meeting, to arrive on time, and to be prepared.
- Do not criticize any director, staff member, or citizen in public.
- No surprises: Whenever possible, inform others before they learn important news.
- Speak only when recognized by the chair, unless as a group you have decided that meetings should be run in another manner.
- Don't interrupt or engage in side conversations when another director is speaking.
- Be brief and to the point. Limit speeches; don't posture or grandstand.
- Clearly explain how you got to your position and how it serves the public or organizational interest. This is especially important when you disagree with a staff recommendation or with another director.
- Share credit generously. Spread opportunities to get positive recognition.
- Support the legitimacy of board decisions, even those you didn't vote for. Once a decision is made, move on.

Tips for Effective Directors

- Respect the different styles of fellow directors.
- Be open to changing your mind based on new information.
- Maintain your independence. Do not allow yourself to be seen as a member of a bloc.
- Take personal responsibility for encouraging respectful behavior among your fellow directors.
- Strive for consensus, but don't settle for the lowest common denominator. When you have exhausted all avenues of agreement, accept that divided votes are simply part of the process.
- If you have a concern with another member, speak directly to that person.
- Be open with sharing information. Give others information you would want them to give you.
- Spend some casual time together. Invite fellow directors to get together informally, particularly those who sometimes or often hold opposing views.
- Pick your battles. Let others win on matters important to them and less important to you.
- Learn the various businesses of the organization. Schedule visits, tours, walk-throughs, and ridealongs to better understand the day-to-day picture as a basis for making policy decisions.

- Everyone does not have to weigh in on every question. Sometimes it's OK to just vote.
- When a discussion grinds, you might suggest taking a break.
- In general, praise people in public and criticize in private.
- Avoid using written communications to express anger, serious disagreement, or other difficult emotions. Whenever you put anything in writing, keep in mind that someone other than your intended recipient may someday read the communication; choose your words accordingly.

Working Relationship between Board and Staff

Board and staff are partners in serving the organization and ultimately the public. As members of the team, they play different roles, but they should be working toward the same goals. Mutual trust, confidence, and respect are the keys to effective working relationships.

Communication between Directors, Executive Staff, and Other Staff Members

- In general, directors should communicate only with the executive, or in larger organizations, department heads. Department heads should inform the executive when they have significant conversations with directors. There are several exceptions:
 - ◆ Communicating directly with staff members working with you on a particular project.
 - ◆ Communicating directly with seasoned staff members with whom you have a long-term working relationship.
 - ◆ Directors are encouraged to attend staff occasions, celebrations, and recognition events.
- Discuss personnel issues only with the executive.
- Directors should be careful not to criticize the staff as a whole, or any individual member, in public.
- Only the full Board may give direction to employees, and only through the executive. As a rule of thumb, this applies to any activity that takes more than one hour of staff time.
- Directors are encouraged to take issues to the executive first, giving as much information as possible to ensure a thorough response. It is especially important not to surprise staff in public.
- The executive shares information equally with all directors.
- Staff should understand that different Board members prefer to communicate in different modes – telephone, email, in person.
- Written reports should be succinct and prepared in a style agreed to by the board.
- Staff's role is to gather facts, present objective analysis, and make recommendations based on their best professional judgment. Board decisions may take into consideration many other factors in addition to the staff recommendation.
- Regular and honest feedback helps everyone to work together more effectively.



(SAMPLE) AGENDA
Meeting of the Board of Directors - Organization XYZ
Tuesday, December 6, 2026 2:00 PM – 4:00 PM

2:00 Call to Order

- Approval of the Agenda
- Public Comment
- Approval of the Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Commented [AS1]: Having times helps people know what to expect and helps the Chair keep meetings moving.

2:05 Reports

- 2:05 Treasurer/Finance committee report and disbursements
- 2:25 Personnel Committee Report
- 2:35 Strategic Planning and Board Development committee report
- 2:45 Questions about the Executive Director report

Commented [2]: The executive director report can mirror the strategic plan goals if not too cumbersome. Helps to track progress on goals and strategies.

2:50 Old Business

- E.g. Contract with XYZ partner (Vote on contract previously discussed) **DECISION**
- E.g. Application for funds (Vote on application previously discussed) **DECISION**

Commented [AS2R2]: The E.D. Should not go through the whole report. People can ask questions for the allotted time, then follow up if needed.

3:00 New Business / Discussion

- 3:00 Application for funds (Discuss concept) **DISCUSSION**
- 3:15 Strategic initiative (Education effort), Led by Board Member #1 or Committee #1 **DISCUSSION**

Commented [3]: A good target is for every piece of business to be discussed at one meeting before voting on it at the next, to the extent possible. So if there is a grant application, for example, the overview has been covered at a previous meeting and the Board's questions answered. The vote does not depend on a dissection of the action; it's a thumbs up or down on the thing you'd already talked about. This isn't always possible, but it's a good thing to shoot for.

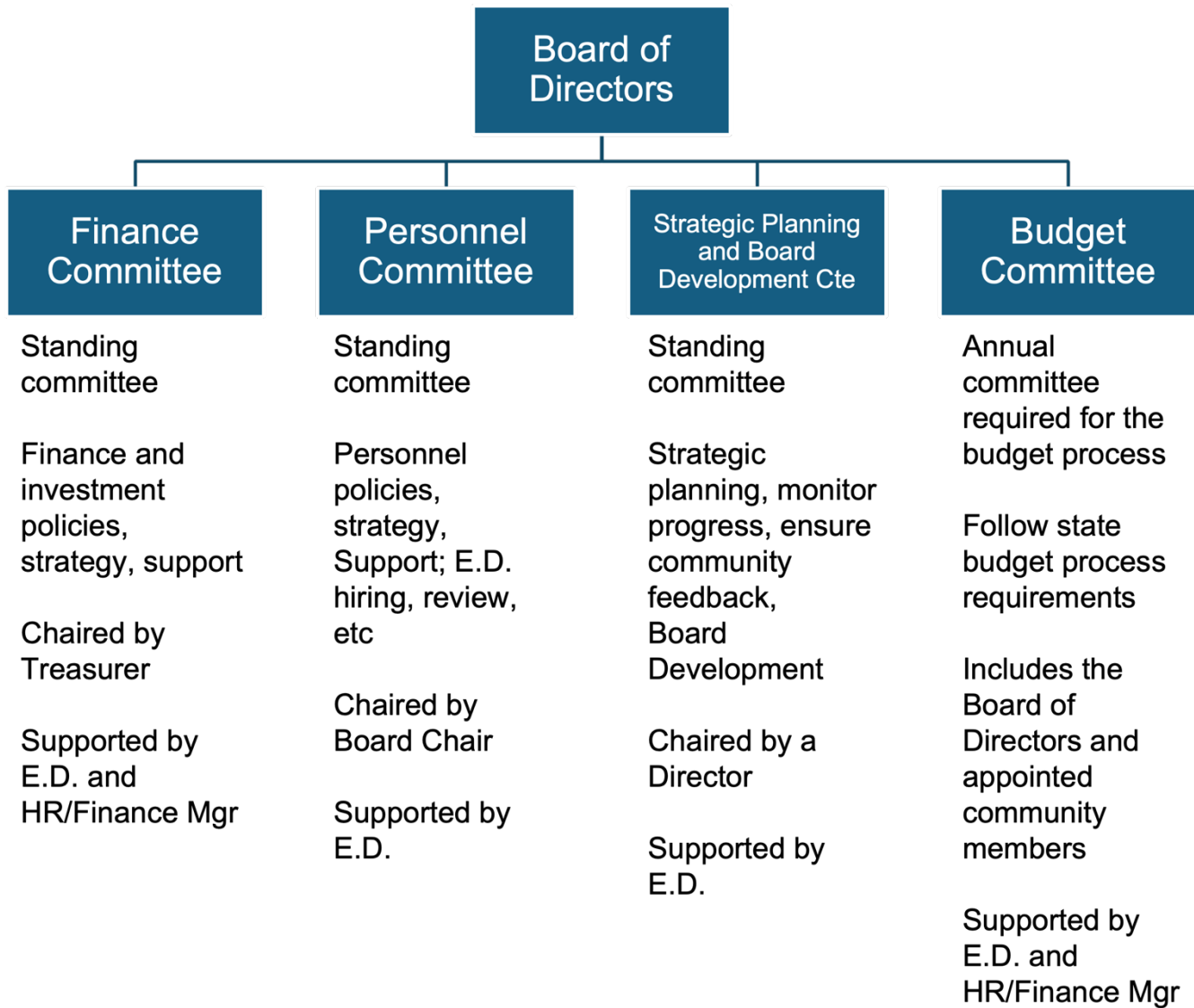
3:45 Closing

- 3:45 Recap action items
- 3:50 Next month's major agenda items
- 3:55. Announcements

4:00 Adjourn

Columbia Soil and Water Conservation District

Committee Structure 2026





35285 Millard Road
St. Helens, OR
97051
Ph: 503.433.3205

www.columbiaswcd.com

9/14/2026

Oregon Secretary of State
Audits Division
c/o Amy John, CPA
255 Capitol Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97310

RE: 2025 Columbia Soil and Water Conservation District – 2025 Audit Deficiencies Plan of Action

Dear Amy John,

I am writing this regarding the deficiencies found for The Columbia Soil & Water Conservation District, 001265MUNI submitted by our auditor.

- 1) We found that the District does not calculate depreciation expense or maintain a capital asset register for its fixed assets. The absence of these records limits the District's ability to accurately report capital asset activity and comply with financial reporting requirements. We recommend the District implement procedures to track capital assets and calculate depreciation on an annual basis to ensure complete and reliable financial information.**

Depreciation Policy, Internal Controls, and Corrective Actions

Columbia SWCD maintains an established Depreciation Policy. This policy was reviewed and approved by the Board of Directors at the May 20, 2026, meeting to ensure our depreciation policy remains accurate, compliant, and aligned with current operational practices.

Historically, depreciation has been calculated by our external auditors. As part of strengthening internal controls, the District is implementing an internal depreciation-tracking system beginning with the current fiscal year. This enhancement is intended to ensure:

- Timely and accurate monitoring of capital assets
- Greater internal ownership of depreciation records
- Improved year-end readiness for audit review

The corrective actions implemented include developing a formal tracking mechanism, assigning responsibility to staff for ongoing updates, and incorporating depreciation review into the District's annual financial procedures.

- 2) During our testing of journal entries, we noted that insufficient backup is not kept for each journal entry made and there currently is no evidence of approved journal entries. We recommend that all supporting backup be kept and that someone other than the person who makes the entries review them for reasonableness and accuracy to enhance internal controls.**

Journal Entry Preparation, Review Controls, and Documentation

All journal entries are prepared by our contracted CPA during the annual financial review. These entries are based on information provided by the auditor from the prior fiscal year. The CPA supplies complete documentation and work papers to the current auditor as part of the audit package.

The District's internal control structure includes a review and approval process in which the Financial Manager works closely with the CPA to verify the accuracy, completeness, and reasonableness of all journal entries before they are finalized. This process ensures segregation of duties between preparation, oversight, and approval functions.

As a corrective enhancement, the District is reinforcing its documentation standards by maintaining centralized records of all reviewed and approved journal entries, including supporting schedules and explanations. This added step strengthens transparency and facilitates smoother audit procedures.

To ensure ongoing compliance, management will implement the following monitoring steps:

- Conduct quarterly spot-checks of a sample of journal entries to confirm documentation completeness and evidence of independent review.
- Review exceptions or documentation issues identified during spot-checks and follow up with staff to ensure corrective actions are taken.
- Provide refresher training annually to all staff involved in journal entry preparation and review to reinforce requirements and expectations.
- Report monitoring results to leadership semi-annually to ensure continued oversight and accountability. Management anticipates completing implementation of these procedures by the end of the next fiscal quarter.

The board of directors reaffirms their approval from May 20, 2026, of the Districts plan of action to address the deficiencies related to the 2025 financial statement audits.

The Columbia Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Directors Resolves as of 9/16/2026, that the District will implement this plan of action effective immediately.

Sincerely,

Taylor Murray
Executive Director
Columbia Soil and Water Conservation District

Malyssa Legg
HR and Finance Manager
Columbia Soil and Water Conservation District

Michael Calhoun
Board Chair
Columbia Soil and Water Conservation District

Bill Eagle
Board Treasurer
Columbia Soil and Water Conservation District

Columbia Soil and Water Conservation District

Annual Budget Committee Charter

BUDGET COMMITTEE OVERVIEW

Oregon Revised Statute chapter 294 requires public taxing entities to prepare a budget consistent with Oregon Local Budget Law. The Columbia Soil and Water Conservation District is a Special District of the State of Oregon and a local unit of government, formed under the authority of Oregon Revised Statute chapter 568, and with the powers and duties described in that law. Columbia County voters approved a permanent tax rate for the District, making the District a public taxing entity that must comply with Oregon Local Budget Law.

The District must establish a Budget Committee and must hold at least one public meeting to review and approve the upcoming year's budget.

BUDGET OFFICER

As a taxing entity subject to Oregon Local Budget Law, the District must appoint a Budget Officer to prepare or supervise the preparation of the budget document, as described in Oregon Revised Statute ("ORS") chapter 294.33. On an annual basis the Board of Directors authorizes the District's Executive Director to serve as the Budget Officer, in accordance with the statute. The Budget Officer ensures that the budget process is followed, including citizen member recruitment and appointment.

COMPOSITION

The Budget Committee consists of the District's governing body (the CSWCD Board of Directors) and an equal number of local registered voters appointed by the governing body.

BUDGET PROCESS OVERVIEW

- ✓ Budget Officer appointed
- ✓ Budget Committee established
- ✓ Budget Message communicates the proposed budget
- ✓ Budget Committee approves (or modifies and approves) proposed budget
- ✓ Board of Directors adopts (or modifies and adopts) approved budget

TERM OF SERVICE

Citizen members are appointed by the CSWCD Board of Directors to serve **three-year terms**. Terms of citizen members are staggered to help provide continuity from year to year, and to allow new members to bring their ideas and perspectives to the Budget Committee.

DUTIES

The role of the Budget Committee is to review the proposed budget submitted by the Budget Officer, and either approve it as proposed, or modify it. The Budget Committee elects a presiding officer (Chair) to help the Committee reach an affirmative vote in approving the Budget.

Specifically, the Budget Committee:

1. Receives the budget document from the Budget Officer;
2. Hears the budget message from the Budget Officer;
3. Considers public comment;
4. Discusses and revises the budget as needed;
5. Approves the budget; and
6. Approves the property taxes to be levied.

Generally, the Budget Committee's role is not to directly establish or eliminate specific programs or services. Budget Committee influence is most often exerted at a higher level when it approves the overall budget and establishes the tax levy. The Budget Committee does not approve new personnel, employee salaries, or negotiate contracts. However, where there is a fiscal impact and the majority of the Budget Committee agrees, it may direct the Budget Officer to adjust (make increases or decreases) in the proposed budget. The CSWCD Board of Directors can make changes after the Budget Committee has approved the budget, although they may have to re-publish the budget and hold another public hearing.

MEETINGS OF THE BUDGET COMMITTEE

All meetings of the Budget Committee are subject to Oregon's Public Meetings Law (ORS 192.610 through ORS 192.690). A quorum of the Committee is required to conduct business and a majority of the Budget Committee members is required to take action. The Committee may request additional information from District Directors, the Budget Officer, or other staff.

DUTIES OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Following approval of the budget by the Budget Committee, the District's Board of Directors holds a budget hearing on the budget as approved by the Budget Committee. Any person may comment on the approved budget at the hearing. After the hearing, the Board of Directors may increase the budget approved by the Budget Committee for specific-purpose grants and gifts through resolution. However, a supplemental budget may be needed for expenditure of undesignated general-purpose grants and gifts that exceed budgeted appropriations.

DEFINITIONS

Budget: Oregon Revised Statute chapter 294 requires public taxing entities to prepare a budget consistent with Oregon Local Budget Law. The budget is a one-year financial plan that balances needs and resources to help accomplish the District's mission and goals.

Budget message: A cornerstone of the public budgeting process is communicating the annual budget to the Budget Committee and the public. The budget message provides an analysis of significant changes from the previous year's budget and identifies significant new initiatives and changes in District programs and operations.

Budget detail sheets: Budget documents are provided to the Budget Committee and public for their review. The District is required to submit the final budget on standardized local budget (LB) forms prescribed by the Oregon Department of Revenue. All funds have a budget that

includes a Resources (revenue) section and a Requirements (expenditures) section. Totals for both sections must balance for each fund. Budgets include categories and line items specific to the needs of each fund.

Board of Directors

```
graph TD;
    A[Board of Directors] --> B[Finance Committee];
    A --> C[Personnel Committee];
    A --> D[Strategic Planning and Board Development Cte];
    A --> E[Budget Committee];
```

Finance Committee

Standing committee

Finance and investment policies, strategy, support

Chaired by Treasurer

Supported by E.D. and HR/Finance Mgr

Personnel Committee

Standing committee

Personnel policies, strategy, Support; E.D. hiring, review, etc

Chaired by Board Chair

Supported by E.D.

Strategic Planning and Board Development Cte

Standing committee

Strategic planning, monitor progress, ensure community feedback, Board Development

Chaired by a Director

Supported by E.D.

Budget Committee

Annual committee required for the budget process

Follow state budget process requirements

Includes the Board of Directors and appointed community members

Supported by E.D. and HR/Finance Mgr

Columbia Soil and Water Conservation District

Finance Committee Charter

AUTHORITY

Unless otherwise authorized by the Board, the Finance Committee shall have no power to act on behalf of the Board but shall present recommendations, proposals, and options to the Board for action as well as recommendations and support to the Executive Director.

Columbia SWCD is a special district of the State of Oregon and a local unit of government. The District is both a governing body and a public body according to ORS 192.610 and is therefore subject to Oregon's public meetings law per ORS 192.620-192.710. Public meeting law requires that meetings be open to the public, have advance notice given, have minutes taken, and that votes be made publicly and recorded.

DURATION

- Standing committee, expected to continue until further notice

PURPOSE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Finance Committee is chartered to work with and support the Treasurer to:

- Monitor and provide guidance to the Executive Director on the **development of the budget**;
- Ensure **accurate tracking/monitoring/accountability** for funds;
- Ensure **adequate financial controls** through following the financial controls policy approved by the Board;
- **Support the Executive Director in developing short-and long-term financial strategy** including revenue and expense strategies;
- Ensure that **financial reports are developed to effectively convey financial information** to the Board of Directors and support sound financial decision-making by the Board;
- **Oversee the audit process**; and
- Provide **oversight for all investments**.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP AND TERMS

COMPOSITION: The Finance Committee will include, at minimum, the Treasurer and one or two additional directors. Up to two associate directors may also serve on the committee. The committee chairperson will be the Treasurer. The committee will be supported by the Executive Director and the HR/Finance Manager.

TERMS: Appointments will be made by the Chair. Committee members will remain until they resign from the Committee or the Board, or until the Chair makes new appointments.

QUALIFICATIONS

- Ability and commitment to attend and participate in Finance Committee meetings
- Commitment to understanding the District's finance policies.
- Interest in contributing to the District's long-term financial strategy, including revenue and expense strategies

OPERATIONS

- The Finance Committee will meet at least quarterly. The committee may meet more frequently when needed to advance important initiatives or respond to emerging needs and opportunities.
- The Committee Chair and Executive Director shall work together to set meeting times and agendas.
- Oregon Revised Statute 192.610 to 192.690 lays out the requirements of public meeting laws. The Personnel Committee will abide by these regulations to ensure that meetings of public bodies are open to the public, so the public will know of the activities and actions of its public officials.
- The Committee may hold executive sessions in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.

WORKPLAN AND DELIVERABLES FOR [YEAR]

Activity	Who	When	Deliverable

Columbia Soil and Water Conservation District

Personnel Committee Charter

AUTHORITY

Unless otherwise authorized by the Board, the Personnel Committee shall have no power to act on behalf of the Board but shall present recommendations, proposals, and options to the Board for action as well as recommendations and support to the Executive Director.

Columbia SWCD is a special district of the State of Oregon and a local unit of government. The District is both a governing body and a public body according to ORS 192.610 and is therefore subject to Oregon's public meetings law per ORS 192.620-192.710. Public meeting law requires that meetings be open to the public, have advance notice given, have minutes taken, and that votes be made publicly and recorded.

DURATION

- Standing committee, expected to continue until further notice

PURPOSE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- **Provide oversight, guidance, and support to management regarding human resources matters.**
- **Ensure that the District has and follows a comprehensive and up-to-date set of personnel policies** that comply with applicable laws and regulations and minimize organizational risk and exposure. See Personnel Policy Manual for details.
 - Maintain a schedule of policy updates and ensure the schedule is followed
- **Supervise and support the Executive Director and facilitate a healthy partnership between the Board and the Executive Director**
 - Serve as a sounding board and resource for the Executive Director on personnel matters, including but not restricted to training, staff retention or termination, and future staffing needs.
 - Ensure there is an accurate and fair evaluation of the Executive Director's work performance.
 - Ensure continued operations in the absence of an Executive Director (e.g. appoint an interim E.D.)
 - Coordinate Executive Director position recruitment when vacant, and support and onboard the new Executive Director

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP AND TERMS

COMPOSITION: The Personnel Committee will include at minimum the Board Chair and one or two additional directors. Up to two associate directors may also serve on the committee. The committee chairperson will be the Board Chair. The committee will be supported by The Executive Director.

TERMS: Appointments will be made by the Chair. Committee members will remain until they resign from the Committee or the Board, or until the Chair makes new appointments.

QUALIFICATIONS

- Ability and commitment to attend and participate in Personnel Committee meetings
- Commitment to understanding the District's personnel policies and to develop a working familiarity with Oregon employment law and other relevant laws
- Interest in contributing to high-functioning human resources to fulfill the District's mission.
- Interest in supporting the Executive Director
- Interest or experience in staff management, facilitation and/or mediation.

OPERATIONS

- The Personnel Committee will meet at least quarterly. The committee may meet more frequently when needed to advance important initiatives or respond to emerging needs and opportunities.
- The Committee Chair and Executive Director shall work together to set meeting times and agendas.
- Oregon Revised Statute 192.610 to 192.690 lays out the requirements of public meeting laws. The Personnel Committee will abide by these regulations to ensure that meetings of public bodies are open to the public, so the public will know of the activities and actions of its public officials.
- The Committee may hold executive sessions in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.

WORKPLAN AND DELIVERABLES FOR [YEAR]

Activity	Who	When	Deliverable

Columbia Soil and Water Conservation District

Strategic Planning and Board Development Committee Charter

AUTHORITY

Unless otherwise authorized by the Board, the Strategic Planning and Board Development Committee shall have no power to act on behalf of the Board but shall present recommendations, proposals, and options to the Board for action as well as recommendations and support to the Executive Director.

Columbia SWCD is a special district of the State of Oregon and a local unit of government. The District is both a governing body and a public body according to ORS 192.610 and is therefore subject to Oregon's public meetings law per ORS 192.620-192.710. Public meeting law requires that meetings be open to the public, have advance notice given, have minutes taken, and that votes be made publicly and recorded.

DURATION

- Standing committee, expected to continue until further notice

PURPOSE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- **Manage the development of the Long Range Business Plan/Strategic Plan, and monitor the District's progress on the Plan**
 - Seek community input into the strategic direction of the District
 - Create a scorecard/dashboard to show staff and board progress
 - Highlight areas where more attention or direction is needed
 - Review and comment on the annual workplan before presentation to the full Board of Directors
- **Ensure there are regular mechanisms for the Board of Directors to hear from the staff, community and partners on strategic needs and concerns, and communicate with the community about the District's work**
- **Support the health and functioning of the Board of Directors**
 - Annually review board and committee job descriptions, structure, and workplans and suggest changes as necessary
 - Manage efforts to recruit Associate Directors and potential candidates for Board election
- **Plan an annual Board of Directors retreat to discuss key issues of strategic direction and board functioning**

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP AND TERMS

COMPOSITION: The Committee will include at minimum two and up to three Directors. Up to two associate directors may also serve on the committee. The committee chairperson will be a Director. The committee will be supported by The Executive Director. Additional staff members will be invited to join the committee for strategic and annual planning efforts.

TERMS: Appointments will be made by the Chair. Committee members will remain until they resign from the Committee or the Board, or until the Chair makes new appointments.

QUALIFICATIONS

- Ability and commitment to attend and participate in Strategic Planning Committee meetings
- Commitment to understanding the mission and vision of the District
- Interest in ensuring that the District's strategic direction is clear and the District's impact is measured
- Interest in ensuring clarity, efficiency, and continuity of District function and leadership
- Experience in and understanding of organizational leadership and/or implementation of conservation or natural resource work
- Commitment to listening to District stakeholders including Directors, staff, partners, and community members

OPERATIONS

- The Strategic Planning and Board Development Committee will meet at least quarterly. The committee may meet more frequently when needed to advance important initiatives or respond to emerging needs and opportunities, for example when creating the Long Range Business Plan/Strategic Plan.
- The Committee Chair and Executive Director shall work together to set meeting times and agendas.
- Oregon Revised Statute 192.610 to 192.690 lays out the requirements of public meeting laws. The Personnel Committee will abide by these regulations to ensure that meetings of public bodies are open to the public, so the public will know of the activities and actions of its public officials.
- The Committee may hold executive sessions in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.

WORKPLAN AND DELIVERABLES FOR [YEAR]

Activity	Who	When	Deliverable
