



**Columbia
Soil & Water
Conservation District**

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**Minutes of the
Columbia SWCD Board of Directors
Meeting May 20, 2026**

Directors Present:

Bill Eagle, Treasurer
Dave Freytag, Director
Debra Brimacombe, Director
Michael Calhoun, Chair

Associate Directors Present:

David Taylor
Alison Charbonneau

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

Rachael Barry, Interim Coordinator

Columbia SWCD Staff:

Taylor Murray, Executive Director
Rebekah Gaxiola, Working Lands Conservationist
Jennifer Chavez, Operations & Communications
Manager

Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA):

Eric Nusbaum, SWCD Operations Specialist

Public:

Claudia Eagle
Bill Etter
Michael (last name unknown), via Zoom

CALL TO ORDER OF THE ANNUAL BOARD MEETING OF LANDOWNERS AT 5:04 PM

Annual Report:

Taylor presented the annual report, adding that copies are still available if anyone would like any.

Audit:

Taylor provided an overview of the District's experience with Pauly Rogers & Co. during the audit process and explained the reasons the audit was presented five months late. Taylor reviewed the Significant Deficiencies section of the audit and the District's response letter submitted to the Secretary of State. Etter commented that the identified deficiencies may have been avoided with more timely communication and performance by the auditing firm. Discussion followed. Taylor noted that the District intends to engage a different auditing firm for the next audit cycle.

The Annual Meeting adjourned at 5:20 PM

REGULAR BOARD MEETING TO ORDER AT 5:20 PM

Michael explained that he would like to move Eric Nusbaum's Conflict of Interest training up the agenda.

Conflict of Interest Training: Eric introduced himself to the Board and invited Board members to introduce themselves. He then presented the Ethics for Public Officials training and noted that a copy of the presentation slides would be made available. During the presentation, Eric reviewed conflict-of-interest requirements for public officials, explaining the distinction between potential and actual conflicts of interest. He noted that officials with a potential conflict may participate in discussion and vote on the matter, while those with an actual conflict may not participate in discussion or vote.

Prior Month's Minutes: Deb asked whether the 4/15/26 draft minutes accurately reflected Bill Etter's intention to send a letter to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers regarding Port Westward. Etter explained that he

Bills to Pay: Bill moved, and Deb seconded a motion to approve paying the bills. Approved Motion passed.

Vote Record: Approve to pay the bills as presented

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

REPORTS

- LCRWC:** Rachael reported that the LCRWC has been focused on administrative activities, including adopting its first financial resolution and completing bank authorization paperwork. She noted that the Council's next board meeting, scheduled for June 13, will focus primarily on business matters.

Rachael shared that the Council is looking forward to its August 13 celebration and invited attendees to participate, noting that flyers will be distributed soon. She also reported that the Council's application for an Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) Engagement Grant ranked first in the region and is looking for folks to participate.

Rachael stated that she is working with Columbia County on a potential application to the Oregon Water Resources Department for place-based water planning. She explained that the program is structured in multiple phases, with the initial phase focused on community engagement and convening stakeholders. She also noted that the Council has several projects in development. Finally, Rachael reminded the Board that Rachell's leave would begin later that week.
- Staff:** At Taylor's request, Alison provided an overview of the upcoming Science in the Park program. She explained that she previously coordinated the week-long program and, now that she is retired, hopes to help reestablish it. Alison noted that the District is partnering with the St. Helens Parks Department to offer the program at McCormick Park during the first full week of July.

She explained that each day of the program will focus on a different theme, including water, soil, plants, insects, and wildlife, and provided a brief overview of the planned activities. Alison reported that the program has been well-received and has attracted enthusiastic volunteer participation. She expressed hope that the District will be able to continue offering the program annually.

Taylor reported that he and Amber attended a Fair Board work session and meeting to discuss the hours of operation for the District's vendor booth at the upcoming county fair. He explained that the request was made due to limited visitor traffic at the booth after 7:00 p.m. The Fair Board denied the request; however, Taylor stated that he intends to revisit the issue and highlight the District's contributions to the Ag Building. Discussion followed. Taylor noted that, regardless of the outcome, the District plans to host a booth at this year's fair. He invited Directors and partners to participate and share space at the booth.

Taylor reported that the Field Technician position has received approximately 35 applications to date, with slightly more than half of the applicants appearing to meet the eligibility requirements. The application period closes on Friday. Interviews are expected to begin during the first week of June, with field interviews to follow. The District anticipates hiring a candidate by July 1.

Taylor also reported that the Budget Committee met on May 7 to review the proposed budget. The committee approved the budget, and the public budget hearing is scheduled for the District's June 17 meeting.

Taylor also noted that the District recently purchased a new truck.

Bekah displayed insect traps used for monitoring invasive species and explained that one trap targets the Mediterranean Oak Borer (MOB) and the other targets the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB). She reported that MOB traps have already been deployed throughout the county and that EAB traps would be placed later that week.

OLD BUSINESS

- **Strategic Plan Board Development:** Deb reported that she and Paul met with Amy Stork to discuss organizational needs, the scope of Amy's assistance, and the anticipated timeline for completing the work. They agreed to update job descriptions in July and review committee structures in August, with both processes to be revisited annually. Taylor noted that he had been asked to participate in some of the meetings. The next meeting is scheduled for June 8.

NEW BUSINESS

Strategic Planning Work Group: Taylor explained that Alex would like to be added to the Strategic Planning work group. **Bill moved, and Deb seconded a motion** to approve adding Alex Devin to the Strategic Planning work group. **Approved Motion passed.**

Vote Record: Approve adding Alex Devin to the Strategic Planning Work Group

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

- **Strategic Plan Retreat:** Deb reported that Amy Stork recommended holding an in-person, one-day retreat for the full Board to review and discuss the recommendations developed by the Work Group. Potential dates discussed included September 16, which would replace the regular Board meeting, September 11, or September 12. The possibility of scheduling the retreat in October was also discussed if necessary. Taylor noted that the retreat would result in an additional cost of approximately \$2,300 to the District. Discussion followed. Taylor stated that he would provide the Board with a breakdown of the anticipated costs and circulate the potential dates by email to determine a preferred date for the retreat.
- **Change Committee Name – Budget to Finance:** Taylor reported that Malysa requested renaming the committee that meets more frequently to review and discuss the District's finances as the Finance Committee. He explained that the Budget Committee is the committee that meets annually to review and approve the proposed District budget, and that the name change would help distinguish the two groups and reduce confusion. **Bill moved, and Deb seconded a motion** to approve renaming the internal budget committee to the Finance Committee. **Approved Motion passed.**

Vote Record: Approve renaming to Finance Committee

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

Taylor also reported that Malysa requested an increase in the District's credit card limit from \$20,000 to \$30,000. He explained that recent purchases, including accessories for the District's new truck, have resulted

in higher credit card expenditures. Increasing the credit limit would help the District avoid incurring interest charges due to the bank's payment processing schedule. **Deb moved, and Dave seconded a motion to approve increasing the District's credit card limit from \$20,000 to \$30,000. Approved Motion passed.**

Vote Record: Approve increasing credit card limit from \$20k to \$30k

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

BOARD REPORTS

- Bill reported that he had received a call from Nancy Ward regarding whether the District Board had discussed reopening the meeting room for community use. He explained that, during the Budget Committee meeting, he noted that one of the primary reasons for constructing the kitchen was to provide a community resource and that the meeting room was intended to be available for public, or at least nonprofit, use. He added that providing access to the facility was a way of giving back to the community that supports the District through its tax base. Discussion followed regarding potential parameters for reopening the meeting room. Jennifer asked whether allowing partner organizations to use the facility, but not the general public, would create an ethics concern. Eric explained that such an arrangement would be permissible provided there is a clearly written policy that is applied consistently. Jennifer noted that the kitchen is not a licensed commercial kitchen and therefore cannot be used or advertised as one. Taylor expressed support for allowing partner organizations to use the meeting room, while noting concerns about use during regular business hours. Alison suggested requiring users of the kitchen to possess a valid food handler's permit. The discussion was tabled until the next Board meeting.

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 6:39 PM

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