



Thurston

Conservation District

Local solutions to local problems

**Board of Supervisors
Special Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, February 21, 2017
10:00am– 12:00pm**

6 **Present at the meeting:**

- | | | |
|----|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 7 | Samantha Fleischner, Board Auditor | Eric Johnson, Board Chair |
| 8 | Richard Mankamy, TCD Board | Aslan Meade, Board Member |
| 9 | Doug Rushton, Board Member | Robin Buckingham, Staff |
| 10 | Amy Franks, Staff | Joe Hanna, Public |
| 11 | Amy Hatch-Winecka, Staff | Ashley McBee, Staff |
| 12 | Kathleen Whalen, Executive Director | |

13 **Action Items:**

- 14 1. **Staff will draft a recruitment plan that includes two board members, prior to next board meeting**
- 15 2. **Staff will send full-time Resource Technician position description out to Board for review**
- 16 3. **Staff will send full-time Resource Technician posting location list out to Board for review**
- 17 4. **For February Board Meeting Agenda/Packet: Include outcome of today’s meeting/motion; Include**
- 18 **exactly what board authority is with regards to employee hiring/firing, wage increases, promotions,**
- 19 **COLA, etc., which includes Delegation of Authority to Executive authority**

21 Eric Johnson called the meeting to order at 10:00am. There was a quorum.

22

23 **1. Welcome, Introductions and Public Comment**

- 24 ▪ Welcome, Introductions, and Pledge of Allegiance were conducted
- 25 ▪ No public comment

26

27 **2. Agenda Review**

- 28 ▪ Samantha requested 15-25 minute executive session; Eric stated he wanted to postpone this until
- 29 next regular board meeting
- 30 ▪ Eric relayed that Aslan (not yet present) requested time on the agenda, but does not know the
- 31 topic; Board agreed that if the topic relates to the posted agenda items, 25 minutes would be made
- 32 for Aslan when he arrives (approximately 10:30am); Eric stated this would be conducted during
- 33 the 90 minutes allotted for Agenda Item #1

34

35 **3. Discuss & Determine Path Forward for Hiring Natural Resource Technician position, All**

- 36 ▪ Board opened floor to discuss agenda item
- 37 ▪ Richard: Reviewed provided job description and found that it did not relate to what we are looking
- 38 for in the Resource Technician position; Board and Staff realized the position description that was
- 39 provided via email was incorrectly for the Habitat Technician position, rather than Resource Tech
- 40 position description; Chair allotted five minutes for Board to review correct position description,
- 41 provided in the physical packets distributed at the meeting, and for Board questions about the
- 42 content of the Resource Technician position description; Richard expressed this was not enough
- 43 time for a proper review and was frustrated that he wasted his time reviewing the Habitat
- 44 Technician position description
- 45 ▪ Eric requested clarification on what is a ‘related field’ of study, as stated in the Minimum
- 46 Requirements section; Board and Staff explained this refers to the academic field of study and
- 47 provided examples of related fields (i.e. resource management, environmental sciences, etc.);
- 48 Clarification provided that ‘Art’ is not a related field; Later in meeting, Staff clarified the Hiring
- 49 Committee’s chosen candidate has a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) in Plant and Animal Sciences

- 50 ▪ Aslan arrived; Verified topic of discussion does relate to posted agenda; Aslan delivered summary
51 of issues for consideration, context; Richard: Unable to read Resource Tech position description,
52 while Aslan is presenting
- 53 ▪ Aslan: Natural Resource Technician position is highest priority at TCD; Key position to
54 successfully carry out TCD's technical assistance (TA) work with landowners and building trust
55 with landowners, preparing for Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP), and carrying out on-the-
56 ground implementation with landowners; Personally sees it as most important priority for CD
57 ○ Need to understand context for how we got where we are to move forward; Want to move
58 forward rather than focusing on faulting or who did what; On one hand, staff feels like they
59 have been updating board via emails and at board meetings; Also, Eric had expressed, and
60 Richard joined, to be involved in hiring; Appears there must have been lack in communication
61 on both sides; Aslan doesn't know what happened or how much effort to focus on what
62 happened, but again wants to focus on moving forward; At some point we need to get into
63 what happened and who did what in the Resource Tech hiring process
64 ○ Personally sees and agrees with Eric's point that we want to hire on experienced staff; Eric
65 related that he and Mark Clark may have found people who they feel are more qualified, with
66 more experience; Valuable not to start someone from scratch, even if historical approach at
67 TCD; To achieve this, we would need to increase the salary significantly; Frustrating to
68 everyone to consider starting over because we got this far without addressing the underlying
69 issues, but we should consider starting over
70 ○ Aslan: Underlying issues: Eric is calling for accountability on part of staff; Staff is saying
71 capacity is an issue; In this case, Staff is saying, 'we have invested this much and not good use
72 of resources to start over,' but Aslan sees this as something we need to do it if that's what is
73 best for the district
74 ○ May need to call James Weatherford back home to cover in-house technical gap; Hearing
75 WSCC saying we have more community need for TA than we have; If so, speaks to need as
76 well
77 ○ Need to discuss Roles/Responsibilities of Supervisors and relationships with Staff; Eric wants
78 to wait to address this at regular February Board meeting
- 79 ▪ Doug: Agreed with what Aslan said; Important to hire and invest time in the right person; More
80 important to have overlap with Dave
- 81 ▪ Eric: Made his own calls and came up with another qualified person; Have 3-4 candidates but the
82 salary we are offering will not work, at \$20/hr top wage; Would like to see board or sub-committee
83 review description and, once finalized, re-open position; Asked what the composite rate is for a
84 \$40k salary; Amy F: \$63k
- 85 ▪ Sam: Does board have authority to decide compensation? Eric: Yes, as a Board. Requested Amy
86 Franks discuss available budget: Approved 2017 budget allowed for \$63,000 as composite rate for
87 this position; Built the position into technical budget at that rate, and then we built our annual grant
88 budget and deliverables around that rate; If we create a \$20,000 increase in salary, the 2017 budget
89 will have a minimum of \$20,000 deficit; Eric: Has questions about how to fund Resource Tech
90 position salary; If board came to you and said, 'we want someone at \$45k-70k DOQ, how would
91 we make that work/ facilitate that? Do we fire someone on staff? Do we increase grants? Make
92 more aggressive requests from WSCC for VSP pilot project funding?; Eric shared that 1 million in
93 additional funding could come through for VSP Technical Assistance; Amy Franks, Kathy, &
94 Amy HW: Our budget and required grant deliverables are already allocated to cover the work of
95 two people, not the capacity of one highly qualified person; If we hire one person at higher rate,
96 rather than two at lower rate, we can't get allotted work done; Already have contractual obligations
97 and have to meet those; Have to meet grant deliverables or we lose the contract and damage ability

98 to get same or any funding from granting agency in future; Need two people to fulfill the current
99 contracted grants; What about current staff (Robin and James); They are already maxed out
100 ■ Discussion about the .6 FTE position: Amy HW: Three weeks ago, partners provided funding for a
101 .6FTE employee to be hired by March 1st; Wanted to replace Dave and grow project employee
102 with no long-term commitment; If we don't have a person to start that work by March 1st, will not
103 be able to meet deliverables and will have to turn back that money; Aslan: Can we request they
104 extend that money by two weeks? Discussion moved on, questions not specifically answered;
105 Aslan: Can we potentially still hire by March 1st for the .6FTE; Eric: Asked what deadline was on
106 deliverables; Amy HW: They have already given us two weeks; Start date is March 1st or turn back
107 money; Eric: Asked Amy to go back to partner and request two more weeks; Why not plug new
108 person into Dave's salary?; Budget does not have funding for that
109 ■ Aslan: Can we hire someone to fill .6FTE Resource Tech position, from the pool of interviewed
110 candidates
111 ■ Staff didn't build 2017 budget to replace Dave; Budgeted 400 hours for Dave, then lower pay for
112 remaining hours at entry level;
113 ■ Amy HW: If we hired someone at Dave's salary, we would end the 2017 fiscal year at a \$20,000
114 deficit, as noted by the Fact Sheet provided by Amy HW and Amy Franks; This deficit will grow
115 progressively in the future; Eric: Taking a budget hit is where we are at; Wanted someone to
116 replace Dave; Board gave direction for a Resource Specialist, not an entry level Resource Tech
117 ■ Richard: The budget already planned for a downgraded position (from Dave's level)?; Yes. Board
118 approved that budget; But, we did not know what we are approving; ; Doug, Aslan, and Samantha
119 all communicated that Board Supervisors should understand what they are doing or, 'why are you
120 on the Board?'; Discussion moved to blame and Eric wanted to hold blame until next meeting.
121 ■ Eric: Not okay with hiring a person at start up level; Need someone to fill Dave's position
122 ■ Aslan: We had the chance and never stopped this process three months ago; Eric: We didn't know;
123 Aslan: Yes. We did know. Eric: Disagrees and no mention in emails of interviewing candidates
124 and ignored sub-committee request to be involved
125 ■ Aslan requested input from Technical Team: How they see this process? Are they worried about
126 new person?
127 ○ James: Starting by stating personal qualifications for context; He is the Senior Planner in state
128 of WA; His job is to train and mentor technical staff in our state; Does the technical
129 qualifications and Quality Assurance for the state: The Board cannot replace Dave; Not b/c of
130 his experience with conservation planning, longevity, institutional knowledge, ag experience,
131 but because of this experience as a cattleman and relationships with farmers; Can we handle
132 work load? New person vs. more experience? Has personally talked to people that have more
133 experience, but they are not fully trained; Can't make judgment call on if the leads you have
134 are appropriate for the job; Getting someone with ag experience will still require taking the
135 time for them to successfully complete required trainings/certifications; Provided example of
136 person he spoke with personally who has basic conservation planning training, would start at
137 \$70k, and stated themselves they are often in over their head
138 ○ Kathleen: That would be above what Dave or James is already paid; Dave is capped out with
139 the current salary schedule and has not been able to receive a raise for three years; The salary
140 schedule will need to be reworked entirely.
141 ○ Dave: Knows folks who have worked at CDs and/or NRCS for 15 years; Would hire this new
142 person selected by the Hiring Committee, before someone with the work experience; Having
143 experience does not mean you are the best individual for job; Would say this candidate is the
144 most qualified person starting out, that he has seen walk through the TCD door in his
145 employment at TCD

146 ○ Robin: Echo what Dave and James said; Personally feels weight of too heavy work load; Feels
147 hiring process is robust enough to ensure candidate will hit the ground running; Candidate is a
148 good candidate; Robin's preference is to hire now/yesterday; Need to get someone in the door
149 to start taking on part of the work load; This would allow us to be able to have more people to
150 do more work in the long-term, vs. a candidate starting out at higher rate
151 ○ Doug: Is this person going to be able to the VSP work?: Dave: Yes, Dave as much as anyone
152 can because it's a new program. Robin: Yes.

- 153 ▪ Eric: Be clear wants to open position back up; If go through process again, and this candidate is
154 chosen, then meant to be; Need to examine budget and pay structure and see if we can potentially
155 pay more money
- 156 ▪ Samantha: If we reopen hiring process and budget for 2017, will have to completely re-do 2017
157 budget; Doug agreed would require re-opening 2017 budget
- 158 ▪ Richard: What is going to happen when we need more than two resource specialists/technicians;
159 Preparing for this in staffing plan, and will progressively budget for future funding to support; Can
160 we wait? How many do we need? James: Would like to see at least two more people; With regards
161 to VSP, even experienced technicians will still have learning curve b/c this is a new deal, never
162 been done before in practice; Will require ability to work with county; Eventually, will be more
163 than one person's job; Robin is already doing the work of two people; There will be training
164 requirements even for people who come in with training
- 165 ▪ Eric: Wants to see a farmer background in person hire;; Spoke with Fred Colvin who said he felt
166 good about TA team at TCD when he was on the Board b/c strong farming background
- 167 ▪ Samantha: It is hard to find someone with working ag experience, a college education, *and* tech
168 experience; Not impossible but skill set is not as common as it was; Eric: Big nation of people,
169 more than just Olympia to draw from; Personally found someone who has cow/calf operation and
170 familiar with districts
- 171 ▪ Amy: Noted that we received applications from across the country; Noted all 14 applicants that
172 were pulled for interviews have experience working on farms/ag operations; Number #1 candidate
173 has 5-10 years' experience on various types of farms; Staff Hiring Committee was careful to
174 maintain ability to bring someone in that is able to communicate and work with farmers and have
175 ag experience; Staff felt comfortable with this candidate's ag experience
- 176 ▪ Eric: Board requested a hiring sub-committee so that's what I want done because that's what was
177 requested of Staff from Board
- 178 ▪ Doug: Two Issues: 1) The Board requested a sub-committee, and 2) Why didn't it happen?; Eric:
179 This will be addressed in the next meeting
- 180 ▪ Samantha: If re-opening hiring process, Board needs to be specific about process and involvement
181 in hiring process; Need a plan of actions; Need to lay out in black and white how to fill position;
182 Need more than a general motion to reopen; Can't be more than two board members participating
183 in interviews b/c that makes the interview a public meeting, and need to give directions that if
184 Board Supervisors can't make the interview, Staff can still do the interview; Also the role of the
185 Executive Director to hire and fire Staff.
- 186 ▪ Aslan: Still hard decisions/path forward; Everything is hitched to everything; To re-open the hiring
187 requires to re-open budget; Daunting and effects Staff capacity; We need to develop a system
188 where the Board understands the flow of work at the district; Board needs to understand and not
189 add work at inappropriate times; Board has been given opportunity to weigh in/address concerns
190 over last three months; Resource Team are in agreement with this hire; Amy's description of
191 candidate/process does not align with information Eric shared with him; If we re-open hiring,
192 suddenly we are going to open ourselves to public eye on the process, stress to the district, and/or
193 (according to Amy HW) we may have to give back money

- 194 ▪ Sam: Can we hire the current candidate choice for the part time position and then look for more
- 195 qualified person for full-time?; This person appears qualified, has ag background, has endorsement
- 196 of tech team, relevant academic degree, is (was) willing to take position, so can hire them now for
- 197 .6FTE position and seek funding to fill full-time Resource Technician later?
- 198 ▪ Eric: Putting all VSP work on James; Robin has technical training but does not have on the ground
- 199 training or ag background; Experience with ag has been on some dairies
- 200 ▪ Joe Hanna: 1) Want to clarify that James stated 4 additional staff are needed in his comments to
- 201 consider for future; 2) Tech, if not fully qualified, do they meet requirements of the grant, a less
- 202 than entry level person? Amy HW: This is not an entry-level position nor is the candidate entry-
- 203 level; The grant deliverables are perfect for a person starting at the district; James: The candidate
- 204 we are proposing is a qualified person
- 205 ▪ Aslan: Would motion to support Sam's suggestion for hiring this candidate for .6FTE; Then, we
- 206 have a trial/vetting period; Would still have to re-open budget
- 207 ▪ VSP: We do not have VSP funds in the current budget b/c we don't have those monies in hand yet
- 208

209 **Aslan moved to hire candidate already identified for .6FTE Resource Technician position, and to**
 210 **re-open the budget, and to re-open hiring for a full-time Resource Technician, and that Board be**
 211 **involved in that process. Doug seconded. Discussion: Richard: Need qualified person and going to**
 212 **take what money we do have allocated and apply it elsewhere; Aslan: Haven't vetted candidate**
 213 **but trust Staff and Tech team; Sam: Address Richard's question: There is currently money**
 214 **available for a part time position, so taking vetted candidate and offering them the part-time**
 215 **position; Re-opening full-time Resource Technician so the Board can be involved; Taking monies**
 216 **that are available right now and putting someone in that position; If person is an asset to TCD, we**
 217 **will work to ensure funding to extend their position; But, now/immediately, taking money**
 218 **available (because if we don't use it, we will lose the money available) and filling .6FTE position;**
 219 **Eric: What are the weekly hours allotted for this position? 24 hrs/wk; Want to add to motion that**
 220 **person is not to work more than 24 hrs/wk; Intention is not to permanently cap their hours; Does**
 221 **sub-committee have opportunity to weigh in on this candidate before hiring? No. Vote: Sam,**
 222 **Doug, & Aslan in favor. Richard opposed. Eric abstained.**

223
 224 **Aslan left the Special Meeting at 11:23am.**

225
 226 Further discussion before moving on:

- 227 ▪ Aslan: If we have more money it should go to more qualified person/position
- 228 ▪ Amy HW: Robin has the training and experience the Board is looking for in a candidate. His
- 229 training qualifies him as top technician in state; Has taken all trainings and has all credentials to
- 230 implement the Natural Resource Specialist position and VSP; Currently doing job of two people;
- 231 Thank you to Robin for his dedication and willingness to take on additional training and respond to
- 232 the needs of the District
- 233 ▪ Eric: Has heard outside the district that Robin is a rockstar!!
- 234 ▪ James: What will Robin do if you hire someone less qualified for more money? Board needs to
- 235 consider outcomes of hiring new Staff and paying more money than current staff
- 236 ▪ Clarification request from Kathy: What are next steps?; Before next board meeting, staff draft
- 237 recruitment plan and ensure two board members will be involved; Richard wanted input on
- 238 description; Share where it is posted again
- 239 ▪ Kathy: I want to apologize; I've been busy with VSP; Not having enough time to be fully involved
- 240 with hiring and left in Staff hands in large part to handle some of the pieces of the hiring; Expressed
- 241 frustration and requested board pass along the candidates they communicate with; If Board had done

242 this when Staff sent job announcement to them, we would not be in this position; Takes
243 responsibility for role in communication and follow through issues
244

245 **AI – Staff will draft a recruitment plan that includes two board members, prior to next board**
246 **meeting**

247 **AI – Staff will send full-time Resource Technician position description out to Board for review**

248 **AI – Staff will send full-time Resource Technician posting location list out to Board for review**
249


250 **4. Skookumchuck Easement Proposal Update, Amy HW**

- 251 ▪ Amy Update: Have scheduled meeting this week with Skookumchuck landowner; Will talk
252 through what he wants for his property and the timeline that works for them; Will continue to
253 move forward with Conservation Futures (CF) proposal if it fits their timeline/needs
- 254 ▪ Eric: Wants Staff to contact other landowner referenced by Jeff Swotek; If Skookumchuck
255 property does not work for CF, this one might; Wants to get applications in for both of these
256 properties and fill in details later; Also wants to move forward with developing criteria for
257 potential easements
- 258 ▪ CF application due one week from today; Amy working to ensure that if it is a donated easement,
259 funding source will allow for stewardship funds, attorney fees, closing costs, etc.; Have a question
260 in to County to see if long-term stewardship costs are eligible; Eric shared example/understanding
261 that past CF funding was awarded for easement and they requested enough for easement to cover
262 stewardship fees
- 263 ▪ Amy also clarifying with County if we are actually allowed to apply for CF; Their criteria
264 specifically calls out that eligible orgs must be 501(c)3; Does not state special purpose districts;
265 WA Conservation Society could potentially serve as a fiscal umbrella
- 266 ▪ Eric: Let's be proactive; If any speed bumps, notify board or Chair so they can help navigate
- 267 ▪ Staff are devoting overtime to meet concurrent priorities/board directives; Acknowledged working
268 on weekends and pushing capacity to carry out board directives
- 269 ▪ Board consensus to contact second landowner but ensure CF application priority for
270 Skookumchuck property; Eric will ensure Staff receives contact info for landowner
- 271 ▪ Need to ensure we can hold the easement, and make sure landowner is comfortable with that
- 272 ▪ Consider approaching a land trust and see if they are interested in partnering and holding easement
- 273 ▪ Eric called for any last questions from anyone on the topics of today's meeting:
 - 274 ○ Richard: Asked for gross figure/total cost to district if Resource Technician hired at \$20/hr;
275 Composite rate: \$33.15/hr
 - 276 ○ Doug: If we are going to have to do a budget adjustment, already be thinking about that; Amy
277 Franks: Already thinking about it
 - 278 ○ Eric: Can we talk with WSCC about earlier money for VSP? Kathy: No, we have to wait until
279 legislature approves a biennial budget; If legislature approves budget on time *and* if it is in fact
280 included in the budget, money will not be released until after July 1st; Eric: Can we position
281 ourselves for first ask at WSCC level? Already are b/c we are one of two pilot counties that will
282 be at the implementation stage
 - 283 ○ Still no assurance of how much money TCD will receive; VSP funding will go from WSCC to
284 County (not TCD)

285
286 **AI - Sam requested: February Board Meeting Agenda/Package: Include outcome of today's**
287 **meeting/motion; Include exactly what board authority is with regards to employee hiring/firing,**
288 **wage increases, promotions, COLA, etc., which includes Delegation of Authority to Executive**
289 **Director policy**
290

- 291 5. Adjourn
292 ▪ Eric Johnson adjourned the meeting at 11:54am.

293
294 Respectfully Submitted,

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296 _____
297 Eric Johnson, Board Chair
298