



12/2/2024

***East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation
District FY 23-24 Annual **APPROVED** Meeting Minutes***

Monday, December 2, 2024

6:05pm- Call to Order

Zimmer-Stucky called to order the FY 23-24 Annual Meeting at 6:05pm on Monday, December 2, 2024, at the EMSWCD Office.

6:05pm- Introductions, Review/revise agenda, Review previous action items.

Zimmer-Stucky conducted introductions for the record. The following people were present:

Board of Directors: Jasmine Zimmer-Stucky (At-Large 2 Director, Chair), Mike Guebert (Zone 3 Director, Vice-Chair), Laura Masterson (Zone 2 Director, Secretary) (6:10pm), Jim Carlson (At-Large 1 Director, Treasurer), Joe Rossi (Zone 1 Director)

Staff: Kelley Beamer (Executive Director), Dan Mitten (Chief of Finance & Operations), Heather Nelson Kent (Community Outreach & Engagement Program Supervisor), Julie DiLeone (Rural Lands Program Supervisor), Kathy Shearin (Urban Lands Supervisor), Matt Shipkey (Land Legacy Program Manager), Alex Woolery (IT and Analytic Specialist), Monica McAllister (Community Connections Liaison), Katie Meckes (Senior Outreach and Engagement Coordinator), Chelsea White-Brainard (Senior Outreach and Engagement Coordinator), Jon Wagner (Senior Rural Conservationist), Sasha Schwenk (Operations Administrative Assistant), Rowan Steele (Headwaters Farm Program Manager), Asianna Fernandez (Executive Assistant)

Guests: Craig Flynn (public), Gerald Kempenich (public), Mary Colombo (public), Larry Bailey (public), Evan Gregare (public), Gabrielle Rossi (public), Genevieve Rossi (public), Tom Estes (farmer), Joseph Kunsevi (public), Al Garre (farmer), Jason Skipton (ED of Growing Gardens)

Changes to the agenda: N/A

6:06pm- Recognition Awards

Employee of the Year

Beamer announced Matt Shipkey as the Employee of the Year and presented him with a commemorative plaque and certificate of appreciation. With the award, he also received two extra days of vacation and attendance at a national conference of his choice.

DiLeone shared quotes and reasons why Shipkey was awarded Employee of the Year.

Laura Masterson arrived at 6:10pm.

Service Awards/ Milestone Anniversaries

- Monica McAllister for 5 years of service.

Shearin shared some nice words about McAllister's time, so far, at the District.

- Joe Rossi – Board Member for one four-year term of service.
- Jim Carlson – Board Member for one four-year term of service.

Zimmer-Stucky shared some nice words about Rossi and Carlson's time at the District.

6:18pm – FY 23-24 Annual Report Presentation and Approval

Fernandez presented the FY 2023-2024 Annual Report via Prezi.



Motion: Carlson moved to approve the FY 2023-2024 Annual Report, Masterson 2nd. Motion passes unanimously (5-0).

6:32pm- FY 23-24 Audit Presentation and Approval

Mitten presented the FY23-24 Audit to the Board for review and approval. The full audit report was included in the Annual Meeting packet and Mitten provided a summary of the report highlights. These included:

- EMSWCD is in complete compliance with all aspects and provisions of the laws and regulations, with no material issues or problems, and EMSWCD has demonstrated good fiscal controls and processes within the organization.
- Funds held in contingency were not utilized in FY 23-24.
- All programs' expenditures are within appropriations for the fiscal year.
- Mitten described the underspent amounts in FY23-24:
 - The USDA Grant that was applied and budgeted for did not get awarded to EMSWCD, so we were unable to expend any of the money appropriated for that grant. That amounted to about \$137,000 of unspent expenditures associated with that grant.
 - Otherwise, the underspend was mostly reflected in contracted services, payroll, contracted attorneys, for a total of \$938,000 unspent in those categories.
 - Rural Lands: \$171,000 underspent, mostly related to the USDA Grant, contracted services, and payroll
 - Urban Lands: \$179,000 underspent, mostly related to contracted services.
 - Contingency: \$359,000 not spent as no unforeseen circumstances arose during the FY.
 - As noted previously, the "where" underspent has been identified. In FY24-25, staff will be focusing on determining the "why" programs went underspent and report back to the Board.
- Revenue totals: \$6.9million for FY 23-24, an increase of just over \$1million from FY 22-23. This is mostly related to property tax revenue exceeding our budgetary expectation and interest income.
- Total Expenditures were \$5.9million, a decrease of about \$261,000 from FY 22-23. An overall decrease in spending of the General Fund.
- Due to increased revenue and decreased expenditure, our net position increased by over \$1million from FY 22-23.
 - We have very little liabilities and are debt free.
- Our total net position is \$19.2million.
- Capital assets fluctuate by year, and during FY 23-24, it was mostly due to office building improvements, Headwaters Farm capital improvements, and the disposition of the Gordon Creek property.
- All of the interest in our accounts get split up into the General fund, Grants fund, and Land Conservation fund.
 - The Grants Fund received \$112,000.
 - The Land Conservation Fund is allocated about 65% of all interest received and 25% goes towards the General Fund. This totaled about \$550,000 overall.

Motion: Guebert moved to approve the FY 2023-2024 Audit Report, Carlson 2nd. Motion passes unanimously (5-0).

Announcements and Action Items: N/A

Zimmer-Stucky adjourned the Annual meeting at 6:39pm.



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**East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District
Board of Directors *DRAFT* Meeting Minutes**

Monday, December 2, 2024

7:00pm- Call to Order

Zimmer-Stucky called to order the regular meeting of the EMSWCD Board of Directors at 7:00pm on Monday, December 2, 2024, at the EMSWCD Office.

7:00pm- Introductions, Review/revise agenda, Review previous action items.

Zimmer-Stucky conducted introductions for the record. The following people were present:

Board of Directors: Jasmine Zimmer-Stucky (At-Large 2 Director, Chair), Mike Guebert (Zone 3 Director, Vice-Chair), Laura Masterson (Zone 2 Director, Secretary), Jim Carlson (At-Large 1 Director, Treasurer), Joe Rossi (Zone 1 Director)

Staff: Kelley Beamer (Executive Director), Dan Mitten (Chief of Finance & Operations), Heather Nelson Kent (Community Outreach & Engagement Program Supervisor), Julie DiLeone (Rural Lands Program Supervisor), Kathy Shearin (Urban Lands Supervisor), Chelsea White-Brainard (Senior Outreach and Engagement Coordinator), Monica McAllister (Community Connections Liaison), Asianna Fernandez (Executive Assistant)

Guests: Ramona DeNies (virtual), Jason Skipton (ED of Growing Gardens), Madison Tucker (Headwaters Farm Business Incubator farmer), Aron Kerr (Headwaters Farm Business Incubator farmer), Craig Flynn (public), Gerald Kempenich (public), Mary Colombo (public), Larry Bailey (public), Evan Gregare (public), Gabrielle Rossi (public), Genevieve Rossi (public), Tom Estes (farmer), Joseph Kunsevi (public), Al Garre (farmer)

Changes to the agenda:

- Addition of Policy Proposal
- Addition of Response to Rossi's questions from the December 4th Board meeting.
- Switch Item 6 and 7.

Previous action items: N/A

7:05pm- Approval of minutes

MOTION: Guebert moved to approve the November 4th Board Meeting Minutes, Carlson 2nd. Motion passed unanimously (4-0, Rossi abstained).

7:06 pm - Time reserved for public comment: N/A

Skipton, Growing Gardens Executive Director – The organization has spent 30 years looking at conservation, land stewardship, and community building through agriculture. As a PIC Grants recipient, he wanted to share his appreciation for the District's partnership and to share about Growing Garden's year in review. Growing Gardens has three main programs. One is their Youth Grow program, where they work with 11 elementary schools and one high school in getting kids outside in a tactile learning environment, and embedding math and science into agriculture. The students participate in tasting, growing, and learning about food grown in their schools in East Portland. Last year, they helped grow 35 pounds of food that went back into school kitchens for the students to enjoy. Another program is their home gardens program. This is education about home gardening, as well as connection to conservation and growing their own food. They also help invest about \$100,000 of USDA funding to local farms to buy CSA boxes that get delivered every week. About 300 a week. They also helped grow and distribute 15,000 plant starts to home garden families. Lastly, Growing Gardens works in 14 correctional facilities across Oregon doing 12 months of horticulture education and hands-on production, getting people outside and providing job training and skill development while incarcerated. On average, they grow about 300,000



pounds of produce in Oregon Correctional facilities, that then go back into those facilities' kitchens. Through Temecula Community College, they started a Greenhouse Management course, since most facilities have greenhouses, and they're doing a decentralized community greenhouse project, building five smaller greenhouses throughout East Portland, and connecting those to the community for people to grow food as the climate is changing around us.

Fernandez to send the Board a copy of the Growing Gardens impact report.

Tucker, co-owner of Walking Whale Flower Farm, finishing their first season at Headwaters Farm. Speaking in direct response to what she saw unfold at the December Board meeting around the soil health initiative at HIP. She knows the Board and staff care about setting new farmers up for success, so she wanted to share her experience with Jen Aron over the past year. In college, she studied agroecology and soil science under remarkable academics and recalled her professors talking about how this science was new and dynamic. A lot of what was being studied could not be replicated accurately in a laboratory setting, and because soil environments are so variable, results could differ greatly depending on the local microbiome. Practical applications of these theories could be risky, as results weren't guaranteed, but every application would be informative, and in the face of rapidly declining soil fertility, change would be necessary. When they started Walking Whale Flower Farm, they were excited to meet with Aron because they knew the soil reputation at Headwaters, and knew they were facing an uphill battle. She was thrilled to hear Aron reflecting back some of the things she had learned in school, including nerding out about aggregation, and to see that she had practical recommendations for how to apply those ideas to their farm. She felt excited to have the space and support to experiment with new ideas and try things that were untraditional. Nothing about how they're approaching farming is traditional. Farming in the face of climate change without generational wealth or inherited land is all but impossible, and it will take an entirely new paradigm of understanding what it means to be a farmer to stay afloat. She did not take everything Aron told them as gospel truth, and there were things she recommended that they decided against, but overall, she found her advice to be pragmatic, scientifically grounded, and aligned with their core principles. This season, they found great success at Headwaters in terms of soil health. Their weed pressure stayed down, they had excellent yields with very little fertilizer application, and aside from Sluggo, they did not have to use a single pesticide. She attributes that largely to luck and to the fact that they were on such a small plot and could dedicate a ludicrous amount of time to tending to the soil. She also attributed that to Aron, who was there every single week with them to touch the soil, take samples, examine plants, answer questions, and offer advice. There were times in the season Aron was just there to offer her a hug, or to hear her complain. She interacted with Aron more than any other person involved with HIP. Her enthusiasm is palpable, and her care for the farmers is undeniable. Outside of running a farm, Tucker also works for a local farming nonprofit, and their programming touches many of the small-scale farmers in the area at some point in their career. She was recently attending a work event and Aron's name was brought up. Faces lit up, and it felt like half the people in the room had a positive story to share about a way in which she helped them at some point in their farming journey. She has done more in her capacity as a farmer, a mentor, an educator, a friend, and an advocate to help new and beginning farmers than almost any other farmer she knows in the area. Tucker hopes that the District continues to contract Aron to help future farmers at HIP. The program, from a farmer's perspective, has only seen benefits from her inclusion.

Kerr, co-owner of Walking Whale Flower Farm. He is giving a statement of support for Jen Aron and her incredible work at Headwaters. Aron has been an invaluable asset and support to their farm this year. They had weekly check-ins with Aron all season, where they would work through problems they were facing and get reassurance when they were second-guessing themselves. In terms of direct support and contact, she's been the most valuable resource to them in the Headwaters program, and she was always incredibly knowledgeable about any subject they brought up with her, related to soil health or not. On the topic of Aron's work rehabilitating the soil at Headwaters, the opportunity to work closely with her in the Soil Ambassadors Program was one of the reasons they applied to Headwaters. Their interest in soil science and its importance in creating a sustainable food system is part of the reason that they're farmers. He's connected with many young farmers in the area and Aron is a farmer in this community with a great



reputation. Those who know of her work or have visited her farm are excited about what she's doing, and those who don't know about her work probably would be. He doesn't claim to represent or know what the exact type of farming that the District wants to see at Headwaters is, but he does know that young farmers are passionate and serious about fixing our food system, mitigating and reversing the effects of climate change and topsoil depletion, and finding ways to farm that are less extractive. He believes that Headwaters is exactly the type of place where we should be trying to address these issues. In the farming industry as it exists today, it is too much of a burden for many farmers to incorporate new ideas and practices while staying afloat. So as long as we have a public program here that is government funded, he believes our community is done a service by creating a space to try new things that are backed up by science. All of this has to be balanced with the fact that this is a business incubator, and creating a successful business comes first. That's a balancing act they've run into plenty of times already and again, he doesn't see it as a reason why they shouldn't be trying to rehabilitate the soil at Headwaters. Finally, as Aron has pointed out, this is a complex system that is actually objectively more complex than they are currently capable of fully understanding—and it is a system that has been thrown out of balance over decades. If you believe in what we're trying to do you're just going to have patience and a scientific approach, which is that things don't always go as you plan and you have to recalibrate sometimes. They strongly believe in it and Aron is the best.

Joe Rossi (Aron is very knowledgeable on soil science issues, but he thinks we're missing the ball at Headwaters in this way. He doesn't judge how people farm, he judges by performance, and when he sees farms performing, he wants to learn how they're doing so at a high standard, and when they're not performing, he wants to learn why too. He's spent a significant amount of time at Headwaters. To summarize our efficiency at Headwaters, we're seeing a slow increase in performance, but we've had a steady decline for seven years. This is based on our own soil practices and that's evidenced by our neighboring farm, Mainstem, an amazing vibrant ball and burlap farm, with more recent history than our acquisition of our asset. Then with Scot Ekstrom's nursery farm, it has great soil with a lot of biomass. Quoting Professor AM Techley, in their highly read publication from 1909, "we're missing the ball on deep plowing and turning the soil." Rossi's issue now is that he suggested a trial earlier in the season, but for some reason, that didn't happen. Continuing the quote, "deep plowing brings up stores of inert plant food, enlarges the moisture reservoir, deepens seed bed, gives more root room and more internal for the soil." You create a moisture bank, and you turn the bad stuff, from the top, down, and the stuff from the bottom comes up. Plowing looks like you're flipping it upside down, but you're actually flipping it sideways. So, you're taking two sections, flipping them sideways, and turning all the biomass, bad insects, etc. under and turning the biomass to create natural compost into the soil. "Deep plowing for subsoil users to break up impervious hard band and favors the absorption of moisture." It allows moisture to go deeper into the roots and allows for deeper root growth. We're not doing that at Headwaters and Aron is not proposing that, which is discouraging to hear. "Proper and timely plowing is most effective in practical means of preparing a suitable seed bed for nearly all farm crops." We're not doing this step. "The best way to build up our native exhaustive soils is to plow well, add hummus, work up physical conditions suitable for best growth of plants. So dead plants, insects, animals, leaves and other organic matters decompose, they break down into the chemical elements that leave behind rich brown dark substances. Substances, hummus and its full nutrients are necessary for plants." The analogy of stirring paint that he used in the last meeting, where you can't leave a paint can in the garage for five years, not stir it, and then expect it to paint well in your house, is like what we're doing right now. We're not mixing the paint can and he wishes there was a little bit more science involved in Headwaters, or at least a trial like the one that he proposed.

7:21 pm- Monthly Financial Reports:

Mitten Both September and October financial reports look great and in-line with budget and expectations.

September: Total Assets and Liabilities, the Balance Sheet has increased by 3.91% since last year at this time, meaning it's a healthy Balance Sheet. Overall, Assets were at \$18.1 million, a 3.91% increase from the year before. Profit and Loss budget performance is on track. Interest accrued through September was \$163,000, reflecting the increased interest rates, that are now decreasing. The Local Government



Investment Pool and Treasury interest rate is beginning to decrease. This was predicted for the FY 24-25 budget. Line 9040, Purchase of Real Property, shows the Hawk Haven transaction for \$453,000. P&L by class shows that none are close to 25% spend rate for the same percentage of fiscal year past.

October: Some of the Balance Sheet lines have changed; Property Tax Receivables, some of the Fixed Assets, Building accumulated, and Depreciations were changed. These changes are made as part of adjusting journal entries and part of the audit process. Overall, the Balance Sheet is 3.3% higher than the prior October, which is still in line. Profit and Loss Budget Performance shows typical ebbs and flows of expenses. We received \$212,000 in Interest, which is 125% of our appropriations, but as interest rates go down, this number will decrease over months. In line 9030, Improvements on Property, \$22,000 was for painting and carpet for the office building. The Profit and Loss by Class shows that all programs are within spend velocities.

7:12pm- Leadership Team Updates

Beamer shared her Executive Director Updates:

- Attended a two-day conference, Our Willamette Waters, convening all the watershed groups from the headwaters of the Willamette to the Columbia River in our district, for the first time again in a while. It was great to get a refresher on high level science about the Willamette river, and see the steps different agencies, nonprofits, and tribes are taking to support the watershed. The takeaway is that the River is getting warmer, especially lower our region, the number of invasive fish species is increasing, and the number of natives fish species is decreasing. The groups plan to convene again and think about collective action, with a new structure.
- Delivered testimony to Portland City Council, responding to the city's tree code amendment for sunseting the higher fee for removing urban trees in the urban area. The council unanimously voted to remove the sunset.
 - **Zimmer-Stucky** heard great things about Beamer's testimony from members of the public. It was a new space to see the District represented in, and they thanked her for her testimony. Thanked her and staff for this engagement.
- The Leadership Team is working with 3C's Strategies to operationalize and prioritize the programmatic goals from the District FY 24-25 Workplan.
- With DiLeone moving on after over 20 years at the District, we're sad to see someone with such long tenure leave and we're now thinking about planning for the position and how to support the Rural Lands team in the meantime.
- Developing onboarding modules for new Board Members, so they're prepared to make decisions and hit the ground running.

Mitten shared his Finance & Operations Team Updates:

- FY 23-24 Audit Report finished.
- Paint and Carpet at the office – thanked the F&O staff for orchestrating that with zero pain points. This is the end of the renovation project. There will be an arts project to decorate the office, but that's a separate effort.

Shearin shared her Urban Lands Team Updates:

- Mount Hood Community College dam removal: we've received funding from the Resources Legacy Fund (\$47,000 for project manager) and requested another \$200,000 for phase 2. The project manager is also working on getting funding for the design phase. We also applied for the Private Forest Accord grant for \$200,000 to plan for final design and construction should begin in September.
- Participated in the NAYA Kenema campus uplift project, and now that they have a new executive director, the project is kickstarting again to create more of a culturally responsive outdoor space and uplift the ecosystem services of that location (near the Columbia Slough Watershed Council's office and the Slough.)



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- Kickstarting the District's Spring workshops, and thinking about doing other kinds of workshops, workshops in different languages, and more hands-on workshops.

DiLeone shared her Rural Lands Team Updates:

- They received seven applications for the Headwaters Farm Business Incubator, which are being reviewed this week.
- All recently mentioned cost share projects (CLIP) have been completed: two drip irrigation projects at nurseries, and two rainwater harvesting tank and drip installations at vegetable farms that irrigate from municipal water.
- Completed the sale of the Division Ave. farm to a Headwaters graduate.

Guebert gave his sincere appreciation for DiLeone's years of service to the District and all the work she's done. Her legacy will be felt here for many years to come.

Masterson gave her appreciation for DiLeone, and her work. She's touched the whole district, beyond just the Rural Lands. Thank you for everything you've done for so long. There are big shoes to fill.

Kent shared her Communications, Outreach, & Education Team and Grants Updates:

- The website redesign is moving along, we got great feedback from our designers, and now we're diving into content development.

Grants

- Held an online info session for the Partners In Conservation (PIC) Grants process. All 2024 PIC Grant agreements are signed and in process.
- Awarded one Special Projects and Community Events (SPACE) grant to the Portland Harbor Community Coalition.

7:45pm- Board of Directors Discussion

Zimmer-Stucky attended a memorial service for Bob Sallinger. Hearing people talk about his work, his legacy, and all of his connections to so many communities was very powerful. Thanked staff for the social media and website post.

Rossi proposed a policy, endorsed by Multnomah County Farm Bureau. It shifts the District's focus from being competitors, to our land purchasers for ag land, to facilitators. It would add capacity to the group and execute more farmland saving in our district. He would rather have discussed this during the November LLC meeting, and apologizes for pushing this on the Board now, but he's been asking for this debate, and the Board did not approve engaging Farm Bureau, Oregon Association of Nurseries (OAN), and anyone else in this conversation, so he's introducing the topic now. As farmland declines due to housing and economic forces, our historic farmers are squeezed for ag land just like our aspiring farmers need ag land. What we don't have in our District is any focus on that element. The exciting part about DiLeone leaving is that we could probably actually have somebody that connects all of the ag community, adding a viewpoint to the group that we don't have now. The District thinks it does, but it really doesn't. The ag community complains about that to him. We now have the chance to invite our farmers' input into who is hired. He would have asked for a vote for this. His sole intention is to execute more soil and water health and acquire land for agriculture.

Rossi The second topic is based on the list of 20 questions that was a result of Jen Aron's soil health presentation. Some of his questions are directed at Aron, some are general questions for the Board Members to reflect on, and one question is for Mitten regarding numbers. There are some numbers quoted that he's not sure are accurate. Some are questions are to Beamer, about her thoughts as the Executive Director. To be an effective manager and director of the organization, he likes to dig into what we're doing and asking questions allows him to come to meetings informed, to make decisions and include his fellow directors in the debate. He feels like he has less of a voice than he would as a member of the public. He's really excited about Mary Colombo serving in his new position, she comes with a viewpoint. He wants his questions to be part of the record and doesn't understand why it took so long to answer them. Other directors can ask questions and get answers or trials, but when he asks Beamer a



question, it becomes a big debate. He feels like he's being treated differently, and he comes with an alternate, minority, viewpoint that the Board should consider.

Rossi passed out 4 documents.

Masterson None of us direct Beamer, the Board as a whole has to agree to direct Beamer, who will then direct staff. She feels like the Board has talked a lot about some of the issues he's bringing up. If the group can't come to consensus, or votes in a specific way, then it's her understanding that we then move on from the topic, but it feels like he keeps raising the same issues. She thinks this Board has a lot of agreement about ways to move forward, and a lot of great programs for farmers. We're never going to agree on everything.

Rossi stated he is not asking to be agreed with, and he's not directing Beamer. He's asking questions to be an informed director, which are not directing. Beamer can then direct the questions to staff who raised the issue. Zimmer-Stucky seems to think he has to have a debate with the other directors to get his questions answered. These questions shouldn't have to be raised to the Board level. As a Board member, he should have access to basic information. He feels that he's had four years of patience, but it's been a waste of his time. Asked for the Board to get back to the questions by the next meeting.

Masterson stated she doesn't have 20 questions for Beamer. I'm sorry you feel frustrated. She'd like to have a continued conversation with the Farm Bureau, OAN, and our East County farmers. Rossi didn't get a yes to most of his questions, which she feels is part of the challenge here. She's happy to look at these questions today, but she's not going to respond to them all right now. We are a governmental organization, and some things take time.

Carlson has similar concerns to Rossi. When he toured HWF for the first time, he saw a lot more productivity than what he's seen in the last couple of years. For the money we're spending out there, this should be a showcase. If he had the same budget to run his farm, it would be so clean, you could eat out of the dirt. We need to take a hard look at these questions. In one of the previous meetings, there were fingers being pointed at the previous ball and burlap (b&b) farmers, who he's known and been friends with for 40 years, and he knows how they farmed the land. Whatever happened in the past is in the past, we need to figure out how we're going to move forward, to improve it. His mother's gardening club toured the farm with Steele, and they were appalled at what they saw.

Rossi It is the worst farm operation he's ever seen. We have no business teaching anybody how to farm if we can't for \$800,000. There's a lack of economic product out there this year. Last year, weeds were up to his waist and all the plots were abandoned by mid-September. There's no activity out there. One farmer was harvesting potatoes, which weren't marketable, but it was salvage harvesting. It's three times the cost of an OSU education.

Masterson We agreed to a plan as a Board, and we're on a new trajectory out there.

Rossi No you're not, you're not on the right trajectory. They could very easily do a trial plot to prove they're on the right trajectory, but they're not doing that. He proposed to have a trial plot based on historic industry. We have an amazing opportunity there, with historical knowledge of farming that we can apply to new science. It's an amazing opportunity to bring all of our ag community together, but you're farming like a person in Lake Oswego would think of farming, farming out of the book. It's not fair, it doesn't give trust to our farm community. There's a lot of farmers who tour the operation and they're here, he was surprised to have so many people attend this meeting because it's a difficult meeting to come to. Thanked the public attendees.

Masterson thinks we're hearing some different perspectives here.

Rossi proposed that the District hire an independent evaluator from Headwaters Farm, because Jen Aron comes from our program, which he didn't know. She's teaching pseudoscience farming, and the District could hire somebody to prove she's right. He knows some of the things she does are right, but we don't know. He sees a lack of performance at the farm. The slide she showed regarding Nitrogen deficiency and some of the things she's saying is great, but you have to get the root zone down deep because the water has to go deep, and when you don't break it up and the roots are shallow, you don't have success, which is what he's seeing at HWF. The plants' inability to bring in Nitrogen is because of the micronutrients and



mismanagement of the soil. Having an independent evaluator would help to commend the good job you're doing or improve it. He feels for these farmers because they spend a lot of time out there.

Masterson corrected that Jen Aron worked at OSU, and worked for OSU Extension, she did not have anything to do with the Headwaters Farm. Some of the Headwaters Farm Business Incubator farmers have been very successful. She believes Rossi is painting a picture here and there is a different perspective. Thanked Rossi for bringing a different perspective to the table. She has also farmed for almost 30 years and has a different perspective. We have some challenges at Headwaters Farm that the Board is committed to improving.

Beamer mentioned the story from the Annual Report that showed all of the 24 successful farms who have graduated out of the program and are now feeding our local community, are successful, and are still operating all around the district.

Rossi replied that they're conflating farmers in our programs who are successful on other plots, but not ours. It's a distorted way to look at it.

Motion: Rossi moved to have the District hire an independent evaluator. Carlson 2nd. Motion amended after discussion.

Discussion:

Carlson Like Rossi said, Aron brought some things to the table and if we do this, it shows that what we're doing is the right way, then we just have a second opinion that proves it's the right way. If we get another opinion that shows we need to divert and do something different to make this better, then why wouldn't we want that opinion?

Masterson is not opposed to this idea, but she feels it deserves further discussion before being voted on tonight. She needs more information about who to hire and the criteria we're evaluating on, before voting on it.

Rossi didn't ask for specifics, just for an agreement to do it and the next Board can decide how it's executed.

Zimmer-Stucky This Board has been very clear that the weed pressure at the HWF is unacceptable. The changes we've made to the recently adopted Strategic Plan helped us turn the page. The changes that the Board approved in the November 2023 Board meeting, in regard to the Headwaters Weed Management Plan, helped us change direction. But change happens one farming season at a time. We are two years into executing the Strategic Plan, and only one year into the HWF Weed Management Plan. It's too early to say that these plans are not working, or that we need to go a different direction. These plans need a few growing seasons to take effect. We have debated this as a Board substantially and we are all in agreement that we want to see HWF as a beacon of what a business incubator looks like. As a business incubator program, some farms will fail and not everyone is going to cut it, like any other business incubator program would have. The reality is that any fails are not going to simply live in someone's business folder on someone's laptop like a regular tech business, it's going to exist in weeds and failed crops. It's going to be very visible. That's what a business incubator program is. We've made specific steps in our Strategic Plan and Weed Management Plan to achieve a higher standard, and it just requires a few years to put those plans in motion.

Carlson From his own experience, he had issues with certain plots of lands too, and needed to remediate that, and it didn't take him two to three years to fix. They did it in one season and were back to farming that piece of land the next year.

Rossi It does not take two or three years.

Zimmer-Stucky Both Rossi and Carlson were on this Board when those two strategic plans were approved.

Rossi That was last year, he's asking for something this year. It's the perfect time to do it since we're not farming yet. We can have an interview with Aron's ideas, what we're doing, take a look at the soil, and have a recommendation before the growing season starts in March. Yes, he approved it, he was patient, assessed it, allowed the Board to do what they wanted, and he knew it was going to fail, but he let the work be done. However, what he saw this year was managed weeds, but productive plots to be economically viable for someone to go and replicate elsewhere. He's not judging farmers who do not like it or dropping out, he's proposing to look at how we manage the soil for our farmers. It's a judgment of us. He'll fund it if that's what it takes, as long as it's an independent person.



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Rossi rescinded his motion and reintroduced it.

Motion: Rossi moved to have an independent evaluation based on our soil health and methods to increase our soil health for the benefit of our farmers that we're serving. Carlson 2nd. There was additional discussion before the vote.

Discussion:

Masterson is happy to agree to this in concept, but she's voting no because it deserves more remorse.

Guebert Rossi's characterization of this as pseudoscience is pretty insulting to those of us who actually pay attention to modern science. There's been a revolution in soil health science in the last two decades and he's quoting some researcher from 1909. It's insulting to those of us who are practicing biological principles of soil health, and this is not pseudoscience.

Rossi Have an independent evaluator judge it that way. Merging established farming, good practices, and successful people with new science is what we should be doing. We shouldn't be closed-minded.

Motion voted and failed (2 in favor: Rossi and Carlson; 3 opposed: Guebert, Masterson, Zimmer-Stucky)

Carlson left at 8:12pm.

8:12 pm- 2025 PIC Grants Review Committee

Kent The Partners In Conservation (PIC) Grants review committee is a committee of the Board, they're working on the Board's behalf, and it's made up of outside participants. They make recommendations for Board approval. There are six new committee members, and the remaining eight have been on the committee before. Ramona Denice, the District's new Board member, has agreed to join the Board as well.

Zimmer-Stucky Do you feel that this group of participants represents the spectrum of the program's different goals? How did you find the new members?

Kent There is a lot of expertise in a few key areas and a range of expertise in the sustainable agriculture and natural resources backgrounds, including grant makers from other SWCDs and similar funding spaces this year. To find the new members, she asked people through networking. Last year one of the scientists from METRO's science and nature team that was part of the cohort asked one of her colleagues to participate this year. Kent also put out a call for volunteers on the Oregon Food Systems Network, got 15 applicants just from that, and three of the committee members are from that network. Gathering 14 members was the goal. Last year, she needed three groups of at least four people to ensure we were able to keep our time commitment reasonable and decided to continue that again this year.

Beamer and Kent reviewed the recommended committee and it's amazing how wide the experience of the members is, ranging from the philanthropy/grantor world to soil and water technicians.

MOTION: Guebert moved to approve the PIC Review Committee as presented, Masterson 2nd. Motion passed unanimously (4-0, Carlson absent).

-- pm- Equity-Focused Strategic Opportunity Grant Pilot Program Review – postponed to January Board meeting.

8:17pm- Announcements, Action Items, and Adjournment

Guebert is giving a talk at Portland State University on Thursday at 4pm about the power of regenerative agriculture as it sequesters carbon in the soil.

Rossi shared his appreciation for his time on the Board and wishes it could've been more effective. The agricultural community would like to continue to engage with Beamer on the topic of the Land Legacy program. He's excited about the new Rural Lands Supervisor role and would like to be a part of the process as a citizen, so he hopes the Board considers an open process to include an actual rural lands



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viewpoint and farmer viewpoint. They've been insulated from that in his tenure, and he believes the farm community feels that way too.

Beamer thanked Larry Bailey and Denise Tucker for their time speaking to her on behalf of the Farm Bureau. The voices of our East County grower community if one of the District's pillars. They are the stewards of the resource that we all care about, putting their blood, sweat, and tears into that work, into the soil, and into the waters that our mission directs us to steward. We can't do our work unless we are showing up, building trust, and hearing each other out. We're not always going to agree, but maintaining and building trust, showing up, and hearing each other is how we move forward with stewarding those resources. Diversity in viewpoints is how we grow. Our district map shows the most culturally diverse part of Oregon. A lot of the passion in this room comes from a shared interest and care for protecting our agricultural land and creating forever farms. As a non-farmer, she knows that once you start talking about farming, there's not likely going to be two of the same viewpoints in the room. There's a lot of diversity and we are trying to find that area where we agree to uphold our mission is important.

Rossi complimented Beamer on her ability to facilitate conversations.

Masterson is serving on the Oregon Ag Heritage Program (OAHP) committee, and they approved a forever farms easement program for farms all over the state, with a \$4 million grant. It will have a big impact across the state, and they're hoping it gets approved by OWEB.

Rossi appreciates the work Masterson does and her passion for this.

Masterson thanked Rossi for his service on the Board.

Action Items:

- **Fernandez** to send the Board a copy of the Growing Gardens impact report.

Zimmer-Stucky adjourned the meeting at 8:23pm.