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**Regular Monthly Meeting  
October 23, 2025  
90 W Washington, Burns, OR 97720**

Present: Board Chair (BC) Jeff Hussey, Vice Chair (VC) Susan Doverspike, Secretary/Treasurer (S/T) Scott Franklin, Board Director (BD) Ken Bentz; District Manager (DM) Jason Kesling, County Weed Management Agency (CWMA) Tyler Goss, SONEC Braden Morris, Sage Grouse Coordinator (SGC) Sarah Mundy, LIT Priscilla Doan, Admin Assist (AA) Barbara Pearson

Present, Remote: BD Sue Ramsay

Absent: BD Carol Dunten, Stacy Davies

BC Hussey called the meeting to order at 3:30 pm.

**Item #1 October Meeting Agenda (action item)**

There were no additions or corrections. BD Bentz moved and S/T Franklin seconded approving the meeting agenda as presented. All who were present at the time and eligible to vote were in favor and the motion passed.

**Item #2 September Financial Report (action item)**

BD Ramsay said in the previous meeting minutes there was a question if all projects were on the financial report, and the answer was all projects that had financial activity during the month. She thought it would be a good idea for all projects to be listed on the spreadsheet to give the board an idea of how many projects the District actually has. DM Kesling said instead he would create a page with all lists separate; if he listed them on the spreadsheet it would be

cumbersome. In the past he has provided a list of all District projects semi-annually.

3:33 pm VC Doverspike arrived.

Following brief additional discussion, S/T Franklin moved and BD Bentz seconded approving the financial report as presented. All eligible to vote were in favor and the motion passed.

**Item #3 September Regular Meeting Minutes (action item)**

BD Ramsay directed the discussion to the last page, the paragraph that mentions “short term” employment (note: this was about the possibility of hiring on a short term basis an employee who would work directly on grant funding and financial opportunities). She asked for clarification about “short term.” DM Kesling clarified that “short term” meant under six months, but explained the hiring would not go through. The reasoning would be due to agenda item #6.

There were no other concerns. BD Ramsay moved to approve the September Meeting Minutes as presented. S/T Franklin seconded. All eligible to vote were in favor and the motion passed.

**Item #4 Scheduled November/December Meetings (action item)**

An explanation regarding this issue was included in the director notebooks. DM Kesling also explained that District monthly meetings are regularly held on the fourth Thursday of every month. In November, that meeting date would fall on Thanksgiving and the December meeting would fall on Christmas this year.

After discussion about dates that would work for board members, S/T Franklin moved and BD Bentz seconded:

- a) Canceling the regularly scheduled November and December meetings
- b) Schedule a special board meeting on Thursday, December 11, 2025, beginning at 4 pm
- c) Have a dinner following (location to be determined), to include HSWCD board, staff, and family.

All eligible to vote were in favor. The motion passed. AA Pearson to locate a venue for the meal.

**Item #5: Ditch Cleaning Bids (action item)**

There were two ditch cleaning projects for the board to decide, with funds provided by the High Desert Partnership (HDP). One project is named Clemens as that was the previous landowner. Locally the land is known by that, but is now owned by Peasley (both names were listed on project material). DM Kesling discussed the properties and what led them to be priorities. The board is to

choose contractors (three submitted; all under). SONEC Morris explained the spreadsheet that was included in the board notebooks.

BD Ramsay asked if all individuals have previously participated on District projects. DM Kesling said that this is the first bid from ACW the District has received since he came on district. He said all contractors are well versed; he is confident they can get the work done. Previous work for the District and other entities was mentioned.

BD Ramsay asked how the District advertised and DM Kesling said listed contractors are contacted by phone and projects are also posted on the District's website and Facebook (AA Pearson said she posted the project on at least three Facebook pages), and if a project total exceeds \$100K it is also advertised in the paper.

BD Bentz asked if the landowners have a contractor preference. SONEC Morris said no, they are just excited for the opportunity to get the work done. S/T Franklin asked why there was so much financial disparity with the bids submitted. SONEC Morris explained the landowners want the dirt moved to another area of the property. DM Kesling said it has been his experience that if contractors don't need the work they tend to bid higher. BD Bentz asked if all contractors received the same information. They did.

Further discussion: BC Hussey asked if there was a criterion for ditch cleaning. The ditch is to be leveled at the high point and remove impeding vegetation. Ditch depth can affect neighboring ranches. Where does the vegetation that is removed go? Many landowners will burn it. The projects need to be completed October 2026. This could prove difficult for the Peasley/Clemens property which is still very wet and winter is coming.

BD Bentz said he believes all three contractors have done the work and are qualified.

SONEC Morris said based on what is decided at this meeting there may be three additional projects up for bid.

Following discussion, BD Bentz moved and S/T Franklin seconded awarding the Clemens/Peasley ditch cleaning bid to Wild Honey Excavation in the amount of \$19,952. All present who were eligible to vote were in favor and the motion passed.

Additionally, BD Bentz moved and S/T Franklin seconded awarding the Forman ditch cleaning bid to Wild Honey Excavation in the amount of \$11,092.16.

Notification of both awards to be published on the website and District Facebook page.

**Item #6: Government shut down (discussion)**

Noted for minutes and historical purposes: The United States Congress at the time of the meeting could not agree on a budget and at the beginning of October 2025 there has been a federal government shutdown. Many District projects involve federal funding or are on federal projects. The building where the District normally works (530 Highway 20 South) is privately owned, but rented by the federal government. Currently the District does not pay rent, so if federal government agencies are not in the building, the District is not to occupy it.

Based on this, the DM Kesling advised he would not hire the short term employee proposed during the September meeting. He wants to keep the existing staff on board. Based on billing patterns, the District has not received federal reimbursement since July. He has pulled funds from LGIP to meet salary, but if the shutdown continues it may require employee(s) furlough. Currently the District receives federal funding for four to five employees.

DM Kesling recently attended an OACD meeting in Pendleton and was told by leaders of other districts that there is a trend to remove conservation district offices from federal properties. The HSWCD does have a 10 year agreement with the local Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), but it may not make a difference if the federal government wants the District to leave the Hines office. CWMA Goss pointed out this is a good reason for the District to attempt to secure its own building.

LIT Doan asked if an employee could receive unemployment, and was told yes. Other questions followed—how does this impact District projects? Projects that involve the federal government are not funded (contractors are not funded during the shutdown). Essential and nonessential employees were discussed. BD Ramsay asked if the District has a state income stream. The DM explained that state projects are funded but the District is half reliant on federal funds for projects. Currently the state is being asked to cover all short falls.

BD Ramsay asked if the DM has spoken to employees. DM Kesling said furlough would be the best way to go; he will also contact an attorney in order to follow HR laws. He is confident the District can go at least to the November 15<sup>th</sup> pay period. BD Bentz said the most important thing is to retain staff. There was additional discussion, knowing that the issue may be revisited in 30 days. BC Hussey thanked DM Kesling for bringing this to the board's attention.

**Item #7: OACD Board Vote (action item)**

A copy of the ballot was included in the director notebooks. DM Kesling said he was nominated by BD Dunten. If he is elected, he would serve. The group meets quarterly. The staff size does make a difference in the way the District would have on this board. One ballot will be turned in.

VC Doverspike moved and BD Bentz seconded the board cast its vote in favor of Cassi Newton, Jason Kesling, and Dean Moberg. All present who were eligible to vote were in favor and the motion passed.

**Item #8: Public Comments**

There were no comments.

**Item #9: Adjournment**

VC Doverspike moved and S/T Franklin seconded adjourning the meeting. The motion passed. The meeting ended at 4:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Pearson, Admin Assist

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District Representative

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Date