

Sumas Watershed Improvement District

Minutes – September 12 2023, 1 PM

Board Attending:

Terry Lenssen
 Al Sytsma

Brad Rader
 Keith Boon

Andy Enfield

Others Attending:

Gavin Willis
 Anna Beebe
 Alan Chapman
 Jay Chennault

Henry Bierlink
 Dale Buys
 Bill Clarke
 Sunny Aulakh

Fred Likkel
 Frank Corey
 David Haggith
 Katie Faber

x – present

o – absent with notice

t – teleconference

p – proxy

Terry called the meeting to order at 1:07.

1. Consent Agenda

- a. June 13 and Sep 4 minutes were reviewed.
- b. Financial report was reviewed.
- c. Andy moved to approve the consent agenda. Keith seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

2. Ag Water Board / Water Supply

- a. ECY has indicated that April 1 is their current target date for filing the adjudication. Given staffing issues and how complicated the process will be, that could be pushed back further.
- b. AWB will be co-hosting an event on Sep 13th about how to prepare for the upcoming adjudication. Will include a brief introduction from Robin McPherson from ECY, and then presentations from consultants at AESI, Aspect, and RH2.
 - i. WFF will be hosting a similar event targeting farmers the afternoon of the Farmer Rally on Nov 8
- c. A memo about the federal settlement process has been completed by Ramsey and distributed to members of the WMB Local Government Caucus. It has also been sent to tribal lawyers. We understand that the federal settlement team will be meeting with the tribes later this month.
- d. No update from the Watershed Management Board.
- e. The WMB Local Government Caucus has been meeting. County consultants have been looking at potential water supply options. One option they have done some preliminary investigations of relates to a series of out-of-stream reservoirs and pump exchange systems. These reservoirs would be filled in the winter, and would be used to distribute water for irrigation in the summer. WID board and staff note that high costs make this project unlikely to be completed, but it is a starting point for discussions.

- f. AWB staff met with tribal staff about water projects. The meeting was overall positive. The general message is that tribes want to exhaust all natural solution options before going to artificial solutions.

3. FEMA Projects

- a. EMD contracts have been sorted out, should receive funds shortly

4. Drainage / Habitat / Flood

- a. Fred provided an update on flood issues. The City of Everson is pushing for CDBG-DR funding to be used for ring dikes around the small cities
- b. Fred provided an update on issues with the CREP program.
 - i. The CREP program works with FSA and the state to fund riparian buffers, primarily on farmland. The program initially only was utilized on eligible streams that contained ESA-listed species.
 - ii. Approx. 20 years ago, FSA staff at the state level expanded the program to include all salmon-bearing streams. However, they did not approve that change through the proper channels. As a result, about 50% of CREP projects in Washington state are not eligible for federal funds.
 - iii. A waiver was issued so that landowners did not have to pay back any monies they had received through the CREP program on ineligible projects. However, the projects now are either being cancelled, reduced in size, or being re-offered through different programs at significantly reduced rental rates. Landowners have been told that they have until September 30th to sign any new contracts.
 - iv. Whatcom Family Farmers, along with a number of agricultural and environmental organizations, is planning to send a letter to the governor asking him to use state funds to maintain the contracts that will be cancelled by the FSA.
 - v. A discussion followed about whether the SWID should sign the letter. The board elected to not sign the letter.
- c. Jones Ditch has been cleaned out except for the 50 foot section above the pipeline. Gavin will follow up with the county about getting that section cleaned out

5. Water Quality

- a. Anna provided an update on water quality data from Portage Bay. The numbers have been trending in a good direction over the past couple of years. If counts continue to stay low, Portage Bay might see some conditional areas move to approved for year-round shellfish harvest.

6. Landowner Contacts

- a. Note to send letters to landowners about upcoming work in the lower Sumas River.

7. Education / Communications

- a. Website – sumaswid.com

8. Other Items from Commissioners

- a. None.

9. Next Meetings

- a. The next meeting is scheduled for October 10th at 1 PM. That meeting will need to cover expiring board member terms, 2024 budget, and the upcoming board of equalization.

Terry adjourned the meeting at 2:15 pm.

Submitted by Gavin Willis, Ag Water Board

Approved by _____