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**Harney Soil & Water Conservation District Regular Monthly Meeting
January 26, 2023, 3:30 pm
Harney County Courthouse Basement Conference Room**

Present: Board Chair (BC) Jeff Hussey, Vice Chair (VC) Scott Franklin, Secretary/Treasurer (S/T) Ryan Peila, Board Directors (BD) Susan Doverspike and Ken Bentz; District Manager (DM) Jason Kesling, Pheasants Forever (PF) Danielle Reynolds, Sage grouse/Ag Water (SG/AW) Breanna O'Connor, Admin Assist (AA) Barbara Pearson

Participating Remote: BD Carol Dunten, Sage grouse Coordinator (SGC) Sarah Mundy

Guest: Deborah Arntz, FSA

Agenda Issue #2 was moved to the front of the meeting. Elected HSWCD directors Jeff Hussey, Ryan Peila, Susan Doverspike, and Carol Dunten were all sworn in. AA Pearson read the oath of office for the directors.

BC Hussey called the meeting to order at 3:38 pm

Agenda Issue #1: Approval of meeting agenda

BD Doverspike moved and VC Franklin seconded approval of agenda. Everyone present who was eligible to vote were in favor and the motion passed.

Agenda Issue #3: November and December Financial Reports

DM Kesling said the district finances look good; funds are flush. There were no questions. BD Bentz moved and VC Franklin seconded approval of the November and December Financial Reports. Everyone present who was eligible to vote were in favor and the motion passed.

Agenda Issue #4: December 2022 Meeting Minutes

BD Dunten requested a correction, with page 4, with the paragraph that had the last sentence ("This has been an issue that BD Dunten has worked on fervently"). She requested the paragraph be less "colorful," and asked the sentence to be removed. This will be done. BD Doverspike moved the minutes be approved as corrected; S/T Peila seconded. Everyone present who was eligible to vote were in favor and the motion passed.

Issue #5 Review SOWR Spring Juniper Cut Bid(s) and Select Contractor(s)

DM Kesling led discussion on SOWR. He explained the project and the necessity to act quickly. Funds of \$420K are available for treatment, to be split between 3 agencies. The BLM will address juniper and spray for broadleaf weeds. The ODFW spray herbicide on private land. The HSWCD agreed to administer contract and select the contractor(s). There was a virtual bid tour conducted at the district office on Monday, January 23, 2023 (travel was not an option to the area). Seven bidders participated in the tour and five bids were submitted. Copies of the submitted bid packets were in the board directors' notebooks. There was no landowner preference. The board was decided to go with a contractor who could do the entire project vs. some who had bid for less acres. DM requested board directors to review score bids on the remaining two bids.

All contracts submitted were reviewed, but two contracts were considered and scored based on their ability to cut the entire acres, and Scott Franklin moved to award the contract based on scores received to O-O. BD Bentz abstained; BC Hussey, VC Franklin, S/T Peila, BD Doverspike and Dunten were in favor and the motion passed

#6 BLM Sage Grouse Amendments Process Update

The BLM held two meetings with cooperating agencies were held and DM Kesling discussed the notes from the meeting made available to the board. The BLM plans to have a record of decision presented in June 2024. DM Kesling has requested publications on avian research and horse research. This new science includes information on Corvids and Wild Horses. DM Kesling will include this information in the District's response. He requested the board read the meeting notes and advise him of any questions.

BC Hussey asked, "What are we trying to do?" DM Kesling said the district has been asked to influence nationwide process in EIS, review the public document before published. The District has a theoretical opportunity to influence the document. DM Kesling provided a timeline presented to him. In June or July 2023, a draft will be presented. District staff will review the document to see issues pertinent to the board are included and how reflected they are presented in the draft. BC Hussey noted this was a listed in the agenda as a

potential action item. DM Kesling said BD Dunten suggested a subcommittee to assist DM, and BD Dunten affirmed this, "I would like to see another board member participate." BD Bentz volunteered. DM Kesling will coordinate with BD Bentz and Dunten prior to bringing up the District's presentation to the board. At presented he has seen a draft only of alternatives presented by the BLM. He has not submitted a response and he has not received the documents of new science. Once written it will be presented to ODFW for that agency's viewpoint. DM Kesling asked for a vote to form a committee. BD Doverspike moved and VC Franklin seconded that BD Bentz and Dunten join DM Kesling to form a subcommittee to address a response to the BLM draft.

Issue #7: FSA Update

The meeting guest, FSA Director Deborah Arntz has returned to the local FSA office. She has been back for 4 months. She has participated in the Grant County Soil and Water Conservation meetings. She reported on a deadline next week, to apply for the livestock forage program. She requested if board directors knew anyone interested in assistance to please advise of deadline. This would be for water hauling, livestock and feed transportation. She discussed other programs through FSA, their timeframes and deadlines. Notice of loss needs to be filed within 30 days.

A new program was ramped up on January 23, 2023. The state office will provide training to the local office in two weeks. This is a loss program (Deborah thought it would be based on income loss. This and other programs were established to assist those who didn't receive prior disaster relief.

The deadline to apply for noninsured crop disaster is March 15, 2023. Brenda Schwartzlender in the local office is working on this. There is also automatic funding for noninsured crop disaster for socially disadvantaged ranchers and farmers, and those eligible should have received postcards from the agency. Those who fall into that category are ranches and farms owned by women, 50% of entity owned by a female, beginning farmer (less than 10 years' experience), Native American, Hispanic, or limited resource option (adjusted gross income). Socially disadvantage receives more for some funding with no admin fees. She urged the board if they had any questions about qualifying for these programs to contact the FSA office.

The FSA has an oversight county board, and Tom Davis was recently elected. Other members are Katie Baltzor, Pat Holliday, Dennis Abraham, and John Corrigan. The county board is fully staffed; members hold 3-year terms. Corrigan's term will end soon, but he has the option for re-election.

In the local office Markie Sykes has been employed since July. Loan Officer Patty Modey has left, and no one has applied for her position. Tammy Chamberlain works in the Ontario office and came to Harney County to fill in. She currently oversees Deschutes, Crook, and Malheur Counties.

The Board thanked Deborah for her information and support.

Issue #8: NRCS Local Work Group, Appoint a Board Rep

The Local Work Group is a meeting held by NRCS. In the past the District Conservationist Zola Ryan has asked for representative from the board to participate. The purpose of the meeting (to be held February 21, 2023, 1 to 4 pm at the Community Center) is to set NRCS priorities for the next year. This includes input on programs and how they are to be implemented).

SONEC Reynolds discussed some projects and funding. She noted the Local Work Group meeting will be held the same week as the District's annual meeting.

BC Hussey said February and March were not good months for him to have outside activities. He said he would appreciate if someone else volunteered. The DM said there has not been a representative of the district participating since 2020. The Board consensus was to ask BD Stacy Davies to participate. No other member would be available at that time.

Issue #9: SWCD Staff Update

DM Kesling said he had discussed with board directors previously on a new District job position and he thought it should be recorded. Beginning in January, Danielle Reynolds assumed the role of Partner Biologists NRCS/Pheasants Forever, though she will still be listed as a District employee. The contract for her position is funded \$45K now through August and then for the next six years. Her previous position with the District is potentially open. DM Kesling noted that Crook and Malheur Counties are hiring and he hopes to reach out to the pool of their applicants. He will need a board director to serve on the hiring board, and perhaps vote the position at annual meeting held next month. PF Reynolds' position fully funded.

Issue #10: SWCD Credit Card Limit Increase

DM Kesling said the current credit card limit is \$2500 and the District oversees a \$1.6M budget. The HCWMA has approved CWMA Goss to purchase a drone but this has been difficult since the drone is more than the credit limit and the vendor does not accept checks. He is concerned about other times when there may not be enough credit for purchases, such as when more than one employee travels. He gave an example of having to use his personal card to

complete paying for the office safe because there was not enough available credit. Some monthly administration charges are automatically billed to the card, such as the Google account (roughly \$200). He asked the board to increase the credit card limit to \$10K, which will be sufficient with month-to-month operations.

Included in the directors' notebooks was a copy of the credit card policy which had been written by previous DM Shannon Brubaker and was approved by the board. The district has one credit card in the name of Harney SWCD name. DM Kesling said there is nothing in policy he would like to see changed. The policy indicates that if employee misuses card he/she is responsible for reimbursement and can be penalized with legal action or being terminated. There has been no misuse. The card is used about 4-5 times per month, and is locked up when not in use. DM Kesling and AA Pearson oversee signing out of the card and AA Pearson reviews transactions.

DM Kesling also requested an addition to the resolution: Funding agencies will begin direct deposit of checks. Currently the DM has no way of knowing when funds deposited until the office receives the monthly banking statement. He would like to be able to view banking transactions online. VC Franklin could administer the online account, but he (DM Kesling) would be able to view transactions to ensure the District receives deposits. As it is currently the DM needs to call the bank for information, the bank is required to contact VC Franklin to approve. VC Franklin can also assign viewing only permission (not transfer funds) to the DM.

BD Bentz moved and BD Peila seconded approving the credit line increase of \$10K and allowing the DM the ability to monitor account activity through online banking. Everyone present who was eligible to vote were in favor and the motion passed.

Issue #11: Public comment

DM Kesling advised OWEB will hold Soil and Water Conservation District director training at the Community Center on March 1, 2023, from 10 am to 2 pm. He asked how many directors would attend. The training focuses on roles and responsibilities and liability. New directors are urged to attend but it is also a good refresher. BC Hussey, VC Franklin, BD Susan and Stacy plan to attend.

PF Reynolds hopes to have a new SSP to present for approval in March. AA Pearson reminded the board of the annual meeting Thursday, February 23rd and urged any board director who planned to attend and bring a guest to let her know. BD Bentz and his spouse BC Hussey and his spouse will attend.

VC Franklin moved and BD Bentz seconded adjourning the meeting. Everyone present who was eligible to vote were in favor and the motion passed. The meeting ended at approximately 5:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Pearson, Admin Assist

District Representative

Date