

Skagit Watershed Council - Final Notes

Meeting of the Board of Directors – December 6, 2018

(Underline indicates decision point; parentheses indicate attachment #; ***bold indicates action item**)

Attendance: Bill Blake, Richard Brocksmit, Brendan Brokes, Steve Hinton, Michael Kirshenbaum, Colleen McShane, John Stein, and Jon Vanderheyden.

Not in attendance: Chair Ken Dahlstedt and Jon-Paul Shannahan

Call to Order – 9:00 am

Michael moved and Steve seconded approval of the agenda. Motion carried.

Bill moved and John seconded approval of the October 2018 Board notes. Motion carried.

Executive Directors Report

The new bookkeeper, Renee Relin, and Kulshan Services are the only subcontracts at this time. The last two month's profit/loss were in the red due to lack of ability to seek reimbursement for closing out our past employee. Advertising the new position did go over the allocated budget in print/advertising; however, Richard noted less was spent (~\$1300) on recruitment than in previous efforts. Steve moved and Jon seconded approval of the September and October 2018 Financial Reports. Motion carried unanimously.

- Staff Update – Richard noted that our past employee appealed a state ruling denying unemployment benefits and won the appeal. SWC will not appeal given the terms of the separation agreement. ***The Board advised Richard to document recent developments and place in the record.** Aundrea McBride started full-time remotely on December 3 and will be in the office full-time on January 7, 2019. Richard noted that SWC like other WA corporations will begin on 1/1/2019 covering 100% of premiums for all employees for WA Paid Family and Medical Leave Act.
- Performance Evaluations – ***Richard will be conducting performance evaluations in the next month or two with Andrea and Scottie. Brendan noted that he and Jon-Paul and Commissioner Dahlstedt will be doing an Executive Director evaluation.**

Cost of Living – Richard recommended a 25% cost of living adjustment for Scottie to provide internal pay equity. There are adequate funds in the budget to do so. The Board unanimously supported this decision given her importance and long tenure. Jon moved and Steve seconded approval of salary increase for Scottie and payment in full of the monthly cost for family leave benefits for all. Motion carried unanimously.

- Coordinator Position – Richard sent out Aundrea's resume and she was at the Council of Members meeting as a soft-announcement of her hiring. Richard noted that he will keep the Lead Entity Coordinator title for the time being. She will be responsible for implementing the lead entity program, supporting M&AM program, supporting project sponsors in project development, GIS mapping, and Protection Strategy. Everyone

hopes that she'll be able to take new energy to the M&AM subcommittee. Additionally, new projects are evolving.

- New bookkeeper – Barbara, SWC's long-standing bookkeeper, is reducing her workload. Renee Relin has been hired on contract and trained as the new bookkeeper, with appropriate background checks, references, and bonding in place.
- 2017 Form 990 Tax Filing Review – Richard noted the recent transition from the previous accountant to Siobhan Murphy (Thrive Accounting) in Bellingham. They have completed the 990 and it has been shared with the Board for review.
- Committee Reports
 - The Protection Subcommittee met November 13. They reviewed and greenlighted some new acquisitions. These were briefed to the TWG.
 - Richard and Aundrea met with the County regarding county-owned lands in the floodplain. The County is interested in updating their management plans and open to the idea of better conservation of these parcels. Dan briefed County Commissioners regarding permanent protection and stewardship of this land. ***The conversation continues.**
 - TWG met in November and will be meeting next week. They reviewed the Carey's Slough scope change amendment. They have been reviewing progress of past habitat projects and at their upcoming meeting will address any edits or additions to the 4-year Work Plan. The Protection Subcommittee and TWG have agreed upon the details included on a form to track acquisitions and improve documentation kept on each parcel. It describes the parcel, the score for connectivity and habitat quality, level of degradation, and the committees it needs to go to and their decisions. ***The Board suggested that the form could be linkable to the parcel in the electronic database.**
 - The Community Engagement Committee met November 14. They are doing great projects, reaching out extensively to school districts across targeted grade levels, and are looking at ways to better engage adults. ***Gaps to look at moving forward include targeted outreach for project development.**

Old Business

- PSAR Returned Funds – First Review of 3 Proposals (#4a, b, c)

The Illabot Alluvial Fan project was completed this year under budget. It's not yet known the full amount of funds to be returned, but it's estimated between \$500,000 to \$1,000,000 will come back to SWC's control. Construction costs came in lower than anticipated and scope changes were avoided.

The TWG has not made a recommendation yet but has looked at each of three proposals: Hansen Creek restoration, Pressentin Park restoration, and Watershed Habitat Acquisition. Funds must be spent by July 2019. If enough money is returned, the TWG supported approving all 3 project requests.

The challenge: We don't yet know the final amount of returned funds and there are still some moving parts that provide some uncertainty for final costs of the 3 proposed projects. If we wait too long we will make it harder for any project awarded the money to spend it by the end of the biennium.

Richard pointed out that this isn't much different than the process SWC does every year for grant rounds. This sense of urgency and the advanced state of project development however make this different than the normal process and highlight the need for extra care in the decision process.

***TWG's role is to rigorously examine the technical qualities, challenges, and possible risks of each project. The Board asked that TWG work to obtain clarity on any technical or risk issues for each project at their next meeting so that the Board can make a policy decision in January if possible. They requested the 3 project sponsors be asked to prepare ahead of next week's TWG meeting what the risk is if they don't receive funding.**

***Board members noted the importance of being very clear about the decision process. Board members felt that determining the highest-priority project should be a policy decision by the Board. Recommendations on which project(s) receives the returned funds will be based not only on the technical merits, but on SWC policies and priorities as determined by the Board.**

***The Board suggested Richard look into ways that the money could be moved around to avoid losing money in June.**

New Business

- Approval of Carey's Slough Scope Change (#5)

SFEG is considering a design change to a much smaller culvert of 12 to 20-feet rather than a 50-foot bridge span. This downsize will still meet fish passage criteria, but there are broader questions. It's encouraging that Hamilton is continuing to discuss, and indeed acting on, moving the town out of the floodplain. Passing today's motion doesn't imply support for immediately building the culvert replacement. Steve moved to approve the scope change as drafted and Colleen seconded. Motion approved unanimously. Jon Vanderheyden abstained.

- Community Engagement Program

Staff provided a written update in the meeting. Engagement is increasing numbers of new partners and constituents and has raised awareness and some money. Areas that are working:

- Social media engagement through Facebook and Instagram is growing.
- Illuminight – set for January 25 – is generating a lot of interest especially with the increased school outreach and increased numbers of people making luminaries at events. Art is an amazing tool for talking about fish and habitat. To that end, Andrea is making presentations and getting out to a lot of elementary schools.
- STEAM Train is and will be doing great work in stormwater education.

- Andrea maintains a public calendar on the SWC webpage (<https://www.skagitwatershed.org/resources/calendar/>) of all environmental events. This is reaching a larger and wider audience.

Andrea noted that the most meaningful and largest impact of the engagement has been quality time spent in the classrooms. The CEC is looking at increasing education opportunities at existing volunteer events, more directed outreach, and adult education outreach, with staff hoping to turn to story maps.

Points of discussion:

- The Board asked about connecting with diking and drainage districts and providing engagement with an estuary focus. It's another constituency to include.
- The Board wondered if the summer festivals are worth the bang for the buck as compared to other outreach methods. ***They asked about gaps at the Salmon Festival and how to make sure there is an awareness footprint there.** Richard noted that the question of where to focus in 2019 will be addressed in spring.
- ***Members asked about tying into science camps at Shannon Point, Padilla Bay, Camp Kirby, Camp Orkila, or NCI for example, with more time to engage with kids and plug into existing programs.**
- ***The Board wants engagement, plugging in pieces, spanning a variety of ages, demographics, and methods. Think collectively about how to address each area of the watershed. It's about building awareness, not converting.**
- ***They asked about whether a dashboard is needed to show progress?**
- The U.S. Postal Service announced that the Skagit River will be one of a dozen rivers featured on a panel of Forever Stamps in the 2019 collection commemorating the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System across the country. (<https://www.bellinghamherald.com/news/local/article222247350.html>) (https://www.goskagit.com/news/local_news/skagit-river-picked-to-be-on-a-stamp/article_dadabef0-3e93-5458-bf31-224676b7c07c.html)
- 2019 Lead Entity Program

Richard shared a memo which was not in the packet to keep them in the loop regarding changes in the Lead Entity Program. No action required yet since ***TWG will have first crack at this and the Board can make final approvals in January.**
- Draft 2019 Meeting Calendar (#6) No objections or conflicts noted, yet.
- Riparian Actions Database – It was agreed that the database should be updated every year or two and makes for less work if kept up. ***This is on Aundrea's work plan to reach out to partners implementing riparian projects ASAP.** Good project for the winter. Partners will try to provide support to Aundrea to get this done.
- Status of Director Terms (three-year)

The three-year Board of Director terms for Colleen, Michael, Jon V, and Brendan will be expiring in spring 2019. Jon has approached SFEG as willing to stay on the SWC Board unless missing up to four meetings might impact his ability to contribute (vacation/retirement calls!). Brendan is willing to serve another term. Colleen is retiring from SCL sometime in spring 2019 after her replacement is hired and a transition overlap period. ***Colleen will see if there are appropriate colleagues that could step into SWC. SCL appreciates being a part of the Board. Richard will speak with Colleen about next year's contract.**

Nominating Committee will need to meet in the next couple months. They will seek more diversity on the Board. Richard will keep his ears open for other interest groups to have on the Board.

Brendan updated that Jenny Baker was hired for the WDFW position vacated by Jenna as project lead on all Skagit restoration projects. She starts Monday, December 17. ***Brendan will approach her about participating on the TWG for awhile.** He noted that her position was reclassified to remove regulatory oversight. She will still be doing 3FI, DFI and TFI. ***Richard indicated a desire to have Jenny work on the restoration plantings database which Brendan noted.** All were excited about this hire!

Adjourn – 11:01 am

Next SWC Board Meeting: January 3, 9am to noon