

Skagit Watershed Council – Final Notes

Meeting of the Board of Directors – May 4, 2017

(* indicates action item; indicates decision)

Attendance: Richard Brocksmith, Michael Kirshenbaum, Colleen McShane, and Jon Vanderheyden.

Not in attendance: Chair Ken Dahlstedt, Carolyn Kelly, Jon-Paul Shannahan, Brendan Brokes, and Steve Hinton. (Ken had back surgery this past week, please send him well wishes!)

Introductions, Determine Quorum, Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:01 am without a quorum.

Approve Agenda and Notes

No quorum, so no vote on agenda or last month's notes. However, those present felt that the notes (and financial reports) on today's agenda did not require any corrections or changes.

Executive Directors Report:

No approval of the April Financial Report due to a lack of quorum.

Committee Reports: Technical Work Group, M&AM Subcommittee, LECC, and CEC

The following list of M&AM members was brought forward for appointment: Eric Beamer, Steve Hinton, Kate Ramsden, Richard Brocksmith, Chris Vondrasek, Ed Connor, Erin Lowery, Rick Hartson, Leah Kintner, Jeff McGowan, Jennifer O'Neal, and Bob Warinner. ***Regarding the adoption of this slate of members and of a purpose statement, a vote will be taken next month when there is a quorum.**

TRC and LECC site visits for six projects are next week. There were 8 proposals, but one got diverted and the other wasn't officially submitted. Total requests just about match the allocated amount.

CEC: Resource Guide captures information for 47 different programs. Look-up tables represent grade level, school districts, costs, topical focus, and NextGen standards, among other attributes. Each program has a one-page summary as well. The Burlington-Edison School District (B-ESD) received the Guide very positively and have great ideas about how to apply it in their district. B-ESD is eager to integrate the Guide with a teacher resource fair in August.

The potential to collaborate with Whatcom is emerging regarding a regional online environmental/outdoor education database. Funding for development of an online presence is

not secured at this time. The Forest Service received free Microsoft programmer time to help with a digital project – perhaps this could be considered for the Guide. To fund the online Guide, sponsors could share the burden. There is a lot of potential value and worth investment.

The question is whether the SWC is the right organization to take a permanent lead? Some felt that without an LIO in Skagit, perhaps SWC is a possible lead group since education is part of the SWC mission. Richard also shared that the EcoNet is searching for a way to define its purpose which the CEC members felt is to continue broader but very efficient coordination but to also expand training opportunities to add more value to meetings.

***Richard will circulate the Whatcom Environmental Educators Purpose Statement to the Board.** It outlines the collective vision for environmental literacy created in Whatcom County recently with funding from the Whatcom Community Foundation and participation of a dozen organizations embarking on a similar education-focus as SWC.

Nominating Committee Report and Nominations

The Nominating committee met this month to identify and secure new Board member nominations. With the departure of Carolyn Kelly, Board membership needs to be renewed as well as a new Treasurer secured to fill her role and to be able to meet quorum more easily. With a limited number of people in leadership positions in the watershed that aren't already too busy, the search may need to be broader.

Treasurer: Richard spoke with Jon V about his interest in the role of Treasurer, but Jon declined due to travel responsibilities.

Education: Saul Weisberg, NCI Director, ***will meet with Michael at the end of May.** If Saul should decline, the Board discussed alternates.

Federal/Forest Service: Erin Uloth declined. Richard spoke with Loren's replacement in the USFS Fisheries Program Manager out of Everett. ***More outreach and information sharing is needed. Jon will reach out as well to learn more about how outreach is currently structured at USFS and share information with the committee and the Board.**

Agriculture: Richard called Brandon Roozen, but he has not heard back yet. He's very involved and may be too busy. Bill Blake, Carolyn's replacement at SCD, is well qualified and interested, though timing is important. Mark Hitchcock has been involved in ag and forestry, as well as conservation efforts. ***Board should keep working on this.**

Old Business - 2017 Protection Strategy Update

Since the last TWG and Board meetings, SWC staff has been busy implementing additional refinements to this landscape-scale assessment. The TWG met on April 20 and were able to see updated habitat/area scores for the mainstem for the first time. The TWG members want more TWG review of parcels with restoration needs so an assessment of impairment extent and distribution is being drafted.

The Board felt unclear about what they need to respond to since the issues brought to them are also technical in nature and not always in their wheelhouse. They are waiting for the TWG and staff to narrow it down to policy decisions. In summary, a small subset of policies addressing restoration are holding up the process. These policies are significant to some. Others feel that thresholds (e.g. tree cover) should trigger a review on a case-by-case basis and that it is sufficient to prevent any potential issues with greenlighting inappropriate parcel acquisitions.

Board members wouldn't want to see a cumbersome process where they would have to wait around for TWG and Board to do review parcel acquisition. This would reduce the big advantage of block grants which allow a purchaser to act quickly. They accept that there may be some acquisition proposals that will require qualitative human review. Slowing it down by a month to allow for review is ok, but they wouldn't advocate for extended delays. Some members said that the amount of political churning is discouraging TWG members.

Richard indicated that this is a consensus process and there will need to be give and take in good faith. ***Staff will complete impairment assessments to establish objective thresholds for hydromodifications and tree cover. The Board asked for a summary of these.** The Board would rather provide staff and committees time to make informed decisions on these issues so as to avoid unintended consequences in the future.

New Business - 2017/2018 Work Plan and Budget; Estuary Restoration

***The members present tabled this discussion for next month for a larger group discussion.**

Adjourn: 11:10 am