

MINUTES

Temecula-Elsinore-Anza-Murrieta Resource Conservation District

Regular Board Meeting

Thursday, May 13, 2021 at 4:00 PM

Truax Building
41923 Second Street, Fourth Floor
Temecula, CA 92590

I. PRELIMINARY FUNCTIONS

Call to Order, 4:00 p.m., meeting recorded by Rose Corona

Flag Salute

Roll Call/Establish a Quorum

Directors Present: Rose Corona (President), Lisa Battiato (Vice President), Newt Parkes (Secretary/Treasurer), Teri Biancardi (Director), Randy Feeney (Director)

Directors Absent: None

Associate Directors Present: Rick Neugebauer

Associate Directors Absent: None

Office Manager: Deborah Getty – Present

Natural Resources Conservation District (NRCS): Robert Hewitt – Absent

District Counsel: Melissa Cushman

Guest Speakers: Scott Murray – President of Mission Resource Conservation District.

Public Guests: Andrea Mares – District Supervisor Chuck Washington's office.
David Murray – Member of the public.

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

President Corona called for a motion to approve the agenda, consent calendar, financials and correspondence as presented. Director Parkes moved and Director Battiato seconded. **Motion passed unanimously 5-0.**

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

III. ACTION ITEMS/ DISCUSSION CALENDAR

Item 1: Bob Hewitt – Report and Update on NRCS activity and ongoing projects. Discussion and potential inclusion of Chipping program on the website.

In Bob Hewitt's absence President Corona reports that in addition to the CropSWAP and RootStock programs, landowners can also put in an application to receive monies for the trees they chip down. The money for the program has been spent for this year, however NRCS will start looking at applications again in September and October of 2021. After a general discussion, Director Battiato makes a motion to include the NRCS Chipping program information as a link and put it on our website. Director Parkes seconded. **Motion passed unanimously 5-0.**

Item 2: Discussion and potential approval of Board Policy norms to be added to the Board Policy Manual.

Director Battiato asks the Board to refer to the Operating Principles of the Board that were included in the packet. Director Battiato made a motion to accept the document as proposed. President Corona seconds. General discussion ensues and following is the transcript from this portion of the meeting.

LB: If you folks would refer to your packet we decided to start this late last year, just to get some procedures in writing. I think it's on your action items, discussion calendar. It's the operating principles of the board. I'm assuming everybody has had the opportunity to read it since it was in our agenda packet. I would like to make a motion to accept this document as proposed.

RC: I'll second. Shall we have a discussion here?

LB: Sure.

TB: I have some comments. I think a document like this could be incredibly useful to help directors understand their roles and responsibilities, but I think it needs to be an inclusive effort. Some of the things that jumped out at me are that it seems to me the definition section, where it's norm, member, authority, reach, speaker TEAM RCD, things that I think needs to be defined.

The process by which a breach is determined is not explained. Frankly, as a new board member, I found the whole document a little scary, because it starts off by saying we have these norms. If you don't abide by these norms, someone's going to give you a stiff talking too. Then only at that point do we start talking about what these norms are.

I don't know if that's exactly the tone that our district wants to promote. I also found some inconsistencies with our policy manual, which I think needs to be rectified, for example, that the part about representing our assigned area. Our policy manual says that directors do not represent any fractional segment of the community, but are rather a part of the body that represents an act for the community as a whole.

I think there's some inconsistency there. There is also references to a hierarchy. I am a little bit confused about where a hierarchy came because I understand that board members all have equal rights. In fact, it says that in our policy manual presidents have the same rights as directors. The Board of Directors is a unit or authority within the district, directors have no individual authority. It also concerns me that it requires that we directors surrender our right to add items to the agenda. I'm definitely not comfortable with that. In the fifth bullet point, it's written as though attending meetings is banned. Personally, I attend probably 10 a week, so I'm confused by that. I think there's some language, it really needs some revision to. My suggestion would be that, that we set up an executive committee to go over this so that we can have a truly inclusive process, so that everyone gets an equal say, and we move forward that way.

RC: Are you making a substitute motion?

TB: Yes, I would make a substitute motion that we set up an executive committee to review this document before it moves forward.

RC: Okay, so for the board that's never really has, as I recall, had a substitute motion, this is how substitute motions work. We already have a motion on the floor with a second. Substitute motions, always go before a general motion. The substitute motion that Terry just made needs a second. If it doesn't get a second, it dies for lack of a second and we go back to the first. Teri, you want to state your motion? You just did. Is there a second? There is no second, it dies for lack of a second. Let's go back to Lisa's first, except before we finish that I like to hear from the rest of our directors. Newt, do you have anything to say?

NP: I don't really have much I apologize in advance for not having looked at it before the meeting today. I've read it in the past, but not at the level that it should be. I'd be happy to be part of an executive group that does that. I've got some experience in such types of documents. At this point, without having reviewed it, and particularly in the depth that you have, there's not much I can comment on.

RC: Anyone else, Lisa?

LB: I would just like to ask Melissa, did you find anything that was objectionable in the document?

Melissa: I did not find anything legally objectionable. It's a fairly flexible, not particularly formal document. It could be made much more formal, it could have provisions added that are mandatory, rather than more discretionary as it's written now. That's all up to the board. What the board's preferences are for a lot of these items. Legally, I don't have any objections to it or the way it is written now. The board certainly has the ability to change its focus, its specific provisions and this level of formality as the board sees fit.

LB: Thank you.

RC: My final thing on that is that we tried to make it flexible. I think if we needed to get into specifics down to every single inch, we are going to have to create just a subcommittee to take on every single thing we try to do our best here, as well. All of these things can always be brought up and changed in the future. We have a motion on the board on the floor.

RC: So we have discussion?

TB: Shall we have a discussion?

TB: Is there further discussion allowed?

RC: Well, we can have further discussion, if you like.

TB: Yes, I would like to have further discussion. I'm very concerned that this concept is a huge concentration of power in the President's hands. It's extremely micro-managing. It also sets up a system in which work can't actually be done.

NP: How so?

TB: Because if you have to, at every step of the way, get the approval of the President and the board to actually attend a meeting or set up a meeting, then nothing will get done. We understand that as Chris Grey said last month, that grants are increasingly the way that things are being funded. We see that grants come out with really unforgiving timelines of about one month, maybe two months. It does not give us the ability to gather our research, develop proposals and then get the approval of the board under this existing system. Newt, I really would wish that you would read this when you go home, if you decide to approve this because I find it a shocking document. very unprofessional.

NP: Well, as I said, it's been a while since I read it and I certainly didn't have that type of reaction to it. With respect to the timeframes that are necessary to respond to grants, obviously, we'll have to take that

into account as we make decisions as to what sorts of grants we might want to propose on. I don't see that being that big of a deal, or that difficult to accomplish when we need to.

LB: I would like to jump in. When I read the document, I actually thought to myself, "Well, these are my expectations in writing." It's following a chain of command and following the process. I felt completely comfortable with it.

RC: Randy, do you have anything that you want to say I'm sorry?

RF: What's that?

RT: Do you have anything you want to add?

RF: Nothing constructive.

NP: Honest.

RTC: Well, there you go.

RF: I have just emotions. That's it.

RC: Let's go back to the initial motion by Lisa. Lisa, do you want to restate the motion?

LB: I'd like to make a motion to accept the operating principles of the board as a document for to abide by for future interaction with respect to our work.

RC: Okay and there was a second, I seconded. All in favor? Aye.

LB: Aye

NP: Aye

RC: Randy?

RF: Aye.

RC: Teri?

TB: Emphatic no.

RC: All right, passed four to one.

Item 3: Discussion and review of submitted two (2) choices by each Director for potential inclusion on the annual work plan.

President Corona reads the annual work plan submittals as included in the packet. President Corona suggests a sub-committee be formed to include two of the executive directors and our associate director to look at the potential ideas and determine if they are really feasible. After a general discussion, President Corona makes a motion to form a sub-committee to include Director Parks, Associate Director Neugebauer and Director Feeney. Director Parkes seconded. **Motion passed unanimously 5-0.**

IV. NEW BUSINESS

Item 1: Discussion and potential approval of executive sub-committee to review grants.

President Corona reviews the need for a sub-committee to review potential grants. President Corona volunteers to be on the sub-committee as she already is the liaison with Chris Gray of WRCOG. Director Biancardi nominates herself and Director Battiato second. Both Director Battiato and Director Parkes state that they cannot participate on the sub-committee due to other commitments. After general

discussion and clarification by District Counsel Melissa Cushman regarding notice of meeting and quorum restrictions should three (3) executive members be on the sub-committee. Director Biancardi moves to nominate herself, President Corona and Director Feeney to form the sub-committee to review grants. Motion dies for lack of a second. President Corona moves to nominate herself, Director Feeney and Associate Director Neugebauer to form the sub-committee to review grants. Director Parkes seconded. **Motion passed 4 – 1.**

V. OLD BUSINESS

Item 1: Update on Homeless Task Force.

Director Parkes reports upon receiving the April reports from SAWA there are two sites with activity at the San Gertrudis Channel, one near Chaparral High school and another location. Director Parkes reported the activity to Mike Wooten giving them a better sense of what is going on. He will continue to follow up on the progress there. Director Parkes further reports that the Homeless Task Force meeting had been postponed a week and will include any updates at the next Board meeting. Associate Director Neugebauer recommends looking into activity in the creek that is just South of the auto dealerships between the freeway and Ynez. Director Battiato recommends reaching out to Larry Markham as he is involved in this project. President Corona reports that Larry Markham had reached out a few months ago to talk about potentially taking that as a conservation easement in terms of adding it to our monitoring and monitoring through Flood Control. President Corona will call Flood Control and ask if that is something they are particularly interested in as well as contact Larry Markham. No motion necessary.

Item 2: Update and discussion on AEIP and CropSWAP reports.

Director Battiato reports that we billed and received a nice deposit from the CropSwap program from RCWD. The program is slowing down but everyone who is enthusiastic about the Rootstock and have already submitted applications with quite a few from McMillian properties. As noted earlier, Director Battiato will go and retroactively notify all those who have done the CropSWAP about the chipping grant. No motion necessary.

Item 3: Update on Anza/Aguanga area.

Director Biancardi reports she abandoned any work on the cannabis watershed grant because she was told that we wouldn't be discussing it until today, With it being due in two days there wasn't the capacity to put that together in that short period of time, but it did emerge that there is an appetite for the development of a map by the residents of Anza that would show the historic sites of cannabis grows as well as the present ones that they on their own can start to monitor the movement of the toxins through the watershed. Director Biancardi spoke with her CDFW contacts, also Water Master, and they both thought that would be quite an interesting project and have value in and of itself to their own respective agencies. There's the seeds of a potential partnership between the locals and those two agencies to develop this map. No motion necessary.

Item 4: Update and discussion of the TEAM RCD website progress.

Deborah Getty reports that after our monthly meeting with RCWD we can finalize the CropSWAP and AIEP pages, we have met all of our transparency items and a few required items for the Board Directors and we should be ready to go live prior to our next Board meeting. Director Battiato reports that we are working with RCWD to make sure they have all of our forms on their website to help automate the process as well. No motion necessary

VI. SPEAKERS AND PRESENTATIONS

Introduction of Scott Murray – President of Mission Resource Conservation District who also has his own organic farming operation and presents on Agri-ecology programs run by MRCD.

Speaker Murray first gave an overview of his District and the work they are doing in their area along with the collaboration that Mission RCD has with TEAM RCD. He then expanded into the Agroecology, Farming and Food Pathways (AFFP) program that they are working on in expanding the knowledge of farming to the average everyday individual as well as the farm community.

They are working with a nonprofit organization based in Berkeley California called the MESA Program. This program concentrated on bringing agricultural interns to study in the US from 57 different foreign countries. There are local programs now to work with stimulating the increase in agriculture in California especially but also the entire U.S. and worldwide. The program is run through the USDA and also includes underserved farmers.

There are two six week sessions for training and it includes three training days on a farm and one farm visit. Some of those training sessions have been live but most have been virtual during the pandemic. Director Battiato asked what was included in these training sessions.

Mr. Murray explained that in the first six weeks, there is a lot of training about the principles of agroecology. The first six weeks is more of the theoretical part of an agroecology and how farm design is an integrated approach from this viewpoint. The second six weeks, according to Murray, is more practical. There are discussions about different systems on the farm such as irrigation, planting crops, planting design, and biodiversity to sites. After a brief discussion on pollinators, Murray notes that the key is to get people a hands-on experience with different types of agriculture. Most training days are half days on three Saturdays a month. Then the program moves to an advanced stage and that is called a fellowship. At that stage, they work on specific projects.

He proceeded to give one example called "Primal Pastures and how they have worked with several different challenges by designing their farm to accommodate for challenges that they are aware of. President Corona asked Mr. Murray to discuss the podcasts and give a general overview of how those work and were working for the program. Mr. Murray stated that at his District he is the person who the District refers "farm" questions so with this program, he can assist future farmers or the local community by helping them avoid huge financial mistakes or putting in or using products that may be detrimental to a more environmentally friendly approach or cause more damage. He also expanded on collaborating with not only TEAM RCD but other RCD's and the NRCS and suggested partnering with research institutions. Also working on mulching and compost to farmers in order to reduce water loss and improve the soil.

While giving a larger overview of the water issues in Southern California and discussed a myriad of issues from recharge to the level of water that is being dumped into our oceans. He also discussed the podcasts that he partners with in Phoenix Arizona called "The Urban Farm" where he has had the opportunity to discuss avocado and coffee farming. He also mentioned that he isn't the only resource that the AFFP program is where we have technicians providing direct support to the students. The teachers are all qualified and offer support during the classes but in the fellowship phase they get access to the mentors who will mentor them. Also, since the program is paid for through a grant, all one needs to start is an internet connection and the desire to learn. Mr. Murray indicated that that Mission RCD is at a point where they want to partner more with TEAM RCD to reach more members of the public.

President Corona asked if there was anything in the program as to education on livestock such as chickens or cattle. Mr. Murray responded that is the next step and once the program has collected enough good data to go back to the Government, it is only logical to include livestock since most every farmer has some animal component to their operations.

Director Battiato asked wanted to know what the water usage was between coffee compared to avocados. Mr. Murray responded that it was relatively the same amount but indicated that they were carefully tracking the difference between a monoculture of avocados and a polyculture of coffee and avocados. Plus including other tropical fruit like bananas and cherimoyas Mr. Murray expanded into the conversation of crossing different varieties of cherries, peaches, nectarines apricots and plum and how there are new varieties out there have created 476 new fruit varieties from just one man alone.

President Corona said she had reached out to the Riverside Farm Bureau and asked if this would be something they would be interested in and they said they would discuss and get back to her. Director Biancardi asked Mr. Murray what his vision of a partnership with TEAM RCD would look like. Mr. Murray responded It is something we've been building for 20 years. When we've been able to work together on common projects, we've done very well. We had a kerfuffle for a number of years where there were a number of years there was a political change on this Board. The Board actually attacked us. We just backed off. Then I got a call from Rose one day and she said "Hey we'd like to start working with Mission again" and I said "That's absolutely our priority. If we can find a way to collaborate, we are absolutely there."

AD Nuegebauer shared his meeting with Mr. Murray over a decade ago and shared his admiration of Mr. Murray's knowledge about soils and all the resources we have in the area. Mr. Murray responded by adding that we have to find ways to expand our collaboration and that agriculture is a primary way to do that through this Agroecology program. He also discussed looking forward in this area to potentially looking at the commercial business and governmental locations and their landscaping processes to see if we can improve the performance of their properties that have common areas with sharing simple techniques from NRCS. Director Battiato said that she works with developers all the time and where do we send them if they need more information.

AD Neugebauer said that the best place to start is with the city and county planners in order begin a change. He mentioned his 32 years of career experience as a landscape general Contractor and how over the years so much of the landscaping has rid itself of trees and other kinds of landscape that might be more effective in carbon drawdown. Director Battiato mentioned that if they could get lead credits or can promote their projects as carbon neutral in their landscaping that might prove very effective to get developers to start looking at other options.

VII. ORAL/WRITTEN REPORTS

DIRECTOR REPORTS

None

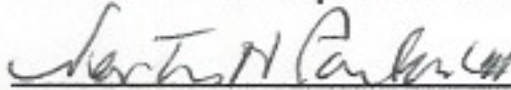
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR REPORTS

None

VIII. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

IX. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business, President Corona made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Director Batiatto seconded. **Motion passed unanimously 5-0.** Meeting adjourned at 5:54 p.m.



Secretary/Treasurer