

# WEST EXTENSION IRRIGATION DISTRICT

P.O. BOX 100 IRRIGON, OREGON 97844

PHONE: (541) 922-3814 FAX: (541) 922-9775

April 15, 2021

## **Monthly Board Meeting**

Chairperson Philippi called the Board meeting to order on April 15, 2021 at 9:00 a.m. at the Columbia Improvement District meeting room located at 501 E. Columbia Ave. in Boardman. Those in attendance were: Board members, Dalarie Philippi, Vern Frederickson, Bob Mueller and Whitney Coffman; Board Secretary/Manager, Bev Bridgewater; Administrative Services Manager, Lisa Baum; Field Supervisor, Ben de los Santos; Guests, Sean Kimbrel, Hermiston Field Office Manager and Matt Deamico, Civil Engineer, from the Bureau of Reclamation. Director Abe McNamee arrived at 9:15 am.

**AGENDA:** Mueller moved to approve the agenda as presented. Frederickson seconded. Motion passed.

### MONTHLY BUSINESS

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Frederickson moved to approve the minutes of the March 2021 Board meeting. Coffman seconded. Motion passed.

**BILLS PAYABLE:** After review, Mueller moved to approve the March accounts payable list in the amount of \$244,022.04. Frederickson seconded. Motion passed.

### REPORTS AND CORRESPONDENCE

**OPERATIONS:** Ben reported the following:

- Start-up in Irrigon has been tougher than normal this year. There have been a few leaks that have tied up the crew and equipment. Idaho and 2<sup>nd</sup> required replacement of 120-feet of line. The Huke manifold had separation from a repair in the fall; a leak appears to be developing at the 7<sup>th</sup> St station.
- All equipment is currently running.
- Tassie is continuing to work part-time now. We have three full-time, trained employees. John, our leased worker, will be training for ditchrider and we have one temporary leased worker. We continue to look for a qualified field person to fill the vacant position..
- Boardman area seems to be up and good. Crew will get back to finishing the Lateral 12 project after start-up repairs are complete.
- Relocation Canal. Long-time employee of Strebins Farms, Randy Tovey, is retiring. He has run the Relocation Canal for over 30 years, so we will need to spend more time monitoring that canal until Strebins have someone trained.

**WIND ISSUES:** Wind issues became a real problem at I-84 again this year. This last storm caught everyone a bit off-guard as 15-20 mph were predicted and there were sustained winds at 40-50 mph. The canal had to be shut down for 36 hours while weeds were cleared. Ben recommends that we find a way to install a travelling screen at the siphon. Discussion. Ben pointed out that the excavator had dead batteries when we went to move it to the siphon. We had to call Jason Wise in to clear the siphon of packed sagebrush. More discussion. The Board directed Ben to see about putting a dead battery switch on the excavator.

**CHECKBOARDS:** Monitoring all the checkboards in the canal was another problem during the windstorm. We had all five possible workers out (3 WEID and 2 leased), but it wasn't enough this time. First of all, the new guy did not know where to go and ended up helping out Randy from Strebin on the Relocation Canal instead of finding Alan at the Orchard check. We realize the next day that Cleaver was willing to send someone out to help. Several other farms have said they could help out. Discussion. We will check into volunteer liability coverage. Abe also had a good idea for some of the checks and that was discussed.

Reclamation has a review coming up at the end of the month. Ben can take the new engineer on a tour and ask him some of the questions we have.

**LATERAL 31:** We received a letter from Kelly Doherty asking for assistance with her headgate on the ditch that serves them. Abe mentioned some old pipe he has from the District. He thought that could be used if we haul in some dirt. Dohertys could use a piece of plywood to check the water. Ben will see how close we can get with a dump truck and talk to Kelly.

**TELEMETRY REPAIRS/MAINTENANCE:** The problems continue with communication. It is unreliable. Vern, Bev and Dalarie met with Cecil Rock a few weeks ago. He hasn't done irrigation district work yet, but is willing to help the District with its telemetry and look at upgrades, as needed. He is working up a document that will outline the replacement of the master antenna at the District office. He wants a 40-foot tower and the City will allow 30-feet so we need a variance. Cecil will get that. He thinks that general housekeeping of the field boxes is needed. Once he sees what we have, he can make other recommendations.

Cecil called during the meeting and said that he has bids on the tower. \$15,000. For new equipment. Budget is \$13,500, so we are in the ballpark. Vern said we will need to add steel conduit for extending the height.

**UMATILLA PUMP STATION (UPS):** Mueller wondered when we last ran the UPS. It was in 2013. He recommends that we continue to exercise it and do housekeeping at the site to keep it viable. Ben took note. Discussion.

**ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT:** Lisa reported that Casey Kroske has filed an unemployment claim. Discussion. If he is awarded, we will file a dispute, per Mike Snyder our labor consultant. The Board wondered if he would be in breach of contract. Lisa also reported that our new credit card payment system is really picking up interest, and use. She is very happy with it.

**MANAGER'S' REPORT:** A written report was distributed to the Directors and is attached to and a part of the minutes. It was reviewed and discussed.

**DOLLAR GENERAL PROJECT/IRRIGATION SERVICE:** The Dollar General project is going forward. They plan to close on the Huwe property in Irrigon on May 6. The District has proposed relocating the irrigation line for Kroske and Huwe on the south side of Hwy 730. ODOT has issued the permit for this work and we have prepared the contract for Dollar General. After the work is done, Reclamation will release the easement. Discussion.

**FARMERS CONSERVATION ALLIANCE:** Farmers Conservation Alliance received approval from Oregon Energy Trust to go ahead with our modernization grant. It had been on hold while Energy Trust took a look at hydro potential for the District. The main potential is at Three Mile Dam and that interests them. Discussion. The Board is extremely interested, but doesn't want open discussion on this topic until things are more settled. It may become a part of the CTUIR water right negotiations.

**BOR MODELING:** Kimbrel reported that they received 55 comments on the lower river model that Reclamation sent out a few months ago, including WEID comments. They are still processing these. He thinks there will be a response to the comments.

**UMATILLA PUMP STATION (UPS):** Abe asked about the UPS inlet and how we could get it deepened. Our permit is with the Corps of Engineers. During his cleaning of the inlet, Abe became aware of the issues that are there and blasting could eliminate the silt build-up. Bridgewater explained that the only answer to the issues at UPS are to extend pipes out into the Columbia River. What she didn't say is that we are constricted at the mouth of the river as well. Lower river levels with those restriction have impacted the amount of water available to the UPS. There is not one fix to the problems at that pump station. Discussion ensued with ideas about how to increase flows.

Sean and Matt left the meeting at 10:20 a.m.

## DISTRICT BUSINESS

**REVIEW – UEC REQUEST FOR CROSSING:** Bridgewater doesn't usually bring these requests to the Board, but the Umatilla Electric Co-op work in this area is of general interest to the District. They will be crossing the main canal at I-84. Discussion. The Board had no issue with the crossing.

**REVIEW – UEC PARTITION REQUEST:** UEC is working with the Port of Morrow and plans to purchase a small piece of ground south of our canal, between it and Hwy 730. It would be partitioned from Port ground. There is no access to the property and the UEC wondered about using the canal road. Reclamation has fee title in this area, so it's not a likely option. Discussion. We will remain open to possibilities.

**RESOLUTION NO. 21-008 – RESTRICT LOT SIZE FOR IRRIGATION:** We handed this out for review at the last meeting. Attorney, Bill Kuhn, made a few changes and it ready for approval. These points were brought up during discussion.

- Frederickson wondered how many current patrons the District have under 1/3 acre of water rights.. We checked after the meeting and there are 56 in Irrigon and 23 in Umatilla. In both cases, these are in City limits.
- Bridgewater stated that the counties have a 2-acre lot minimum right now. The cities have a much smaller lot size and these are the concern. Right now, the City of Irrigon has four subdivisions being discussed – all with lots under 8000 sq feet.
- The City of Irrigon is water short, so how will this affect them? A developer could keep the irrigation water rights and enter in to a contract with the District. The policy allows that.
- Mueller pointed out they would need two delivery systems and would need to manage their own system. Discussion. Whitney mentioned an HOA and she has experience setting one up.
- Mueller was concerned that these landowners would want an on-demand system. Bev recognized that our system is interruptable and this would be in the contract.
- Philippi said we would get revenue for the system from water delivery to one spot and the developer or HOA would take it from there.
- McNamee believes these small lots would cost the District more time and money and take away from the ag users. Bridgewater supports this comment, which is why she recommends the limit. Buyers now, and definitely in the future want service, clean water, and constant availability. It is not what we can deliver.

Motion was made by Frederickson to adopt Resolution No. 21-008 and was seconded by Mueller. With no further discussion, a vote was taken and the motion passed.

## OTHER BUSINESS

Ben was reminded about the excavator battery cut off. McNamee said there should be one on the backhoe too. Vern wondered who would contact Kelly Doherty. Ben will do the that.

**LATERAL 12/GRANT PROJECT:** It is on hold while we are in start-up and with all the breaks in Irrigon. We will try to get a couple of folks back to the project when we have a few days clear. All the pipe is in. Deliveries need to be completed, fill hauled in to cover the pipe, and clean-up work. Abe hopes we can test it by the end of May. He wants to be sure the pump will work and not find out there are issues 1-2 years down the road.

**IRRIGON PUMP STATION (IPS):** Discussion about the 300 Hp power pump and cavitation issues. The Board explored other ideas for assistance. We know putting the existing pump in a can is not the environment for that pump. Cavitation happens. District crews have been able to control it by turning on one of the 100-HP, which keeps the hertz down and allows the pumps to meet demand. Whitney mentioned she can hear it from her house. Abe can tell cavitation from the amount of air he gets in his system.

Discussion ensued about different pump suppliers, taking bids on a new pump, is the meter working, the dimentions of the can, installing a different pump, tying the pumps together and so forth. Bev will look at all the ideas, but she thinks the crew is managing the pump as best we can right now. The best solution is a pump that fits how the system is set up today; about \$65,000 and eligible for incentive from BPA.

McNamee asked what pressure we are running. It is 32-34 typically. Ben mentioned that there are several steel lines left as part of the main system – one about 2500 feet of 12-inch supplying water to the Columbia station. Too much pressure on the system can cause leaks on that line. More discussion.

## ADJOURNMENT

With no further business, Chairperson Philippi adjourned the meeting at 10:50 am.

Signed:

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Bev Bridgewater, Secretary

Attest:

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Dalarie Philippi, Chairperson