Upper Salinas – Las Tablas Resource Conservation District

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

January 24, 2019

1. Call to Order. Chair Susan Cochrane called the meeting to order at 5:02 pm and determined a quorum was present. Directors present: Susan Cochrane, Eric Kaltenbach, Chuck Pritchard, Mike Bonnheim, George Kendall, Tom Mora . Associate Director present: Mary Bianchi. Staff present: Executive Director Devin Best. Members of public present: none. Director Randy Heinzen arrived during RCD reports.
2. Additions/Changes to Agenda. The NRCS representative is not present so there will be no official NRCS report.
3. Public Comment. None.
4. RCD Reports.
5. Board Updates. Mary Bianchi reported on a public meeting about a county ordinance to regulate mobile accessory dwelling units (tiny houses on wheels). 400 sq ft maximum. May not be the only “structure” on a property. Chuck Pritchard reported that Utah State University has spectroscopic equipment available to analyze forage for protein and other nutrients. He shared literature from Royce Larson discussing recent changes (declines) in local forbs versus grass. Randy Heinzen discussed research about the impact of soil amendments on arid land. The impact can be negative depending on resulting changes in plant species. Mike Bonnheim discussed use of a mechanical pasture aerator for improving moisture retention and forage growth.
6. Executive Directors Report. Devin Best distributed and discussed the Executive Director’s Report. Several projects are on hold because of the federal government shutdown. An annual grant request for $50,000 was submitted to SLO county; the increase over previous requests is related to possible fuel reduction and related projects. The Healthy Soils Program was explained. The first part is the Healthy Soils Initiative whereby landowners can receive a cost share for implementing new and beneficial practices on their land, such as cover cropping, mulching, etc. The RCD can assist landowners in entering this program. The second part is the Healthy Soils Demonstration and must be run by a RCD. A farm or ranch must first do a specific practice, including testing/monitoring to evaluate the impact of the practice. Then the farm/ranch must participate in a work shop to demonstrate the results. There was board discussion about various types of practices to do.
7. Justin Phase One. Devin Best reported on the Justin Subcommittee (Chuck Pritchard, Eric Kaltenbach, Mary Bianchi, Devin Best) meeting and Justin site visit (Eric Kaltenbach, Mary Bianchi, Devin Best). The subcommittee is considering four general areas of use for the property: community involvement, agriculture, restoration, wildlife. Concerns brought up by the board include: 1) Property tax liability. Does the property owner need to be a 501C3 organization to be property tax exempt as County Tax Collector Bordonaro has mentioned? Devin Best says no since the RCD is a public entity. 2) Access via easement. Would improvements to the road be required or neighbor approval needed? 3) How would activities be funded? The subcommittee plans to meet February 13 at 9:00 am. Devin Best will then discuss the subcommittee’s concerns with Justin. Mike Bonnheim was added to the subcommittee.
8. FY 16/17 and FY 17/18 Audit Results. Eric Kaltenbach briefly discussed the two audits. There are no irregularities to report.
9. Consent Agenda. Eric Kaltenbach discussed the October, November and December Treasurer’s reports. Accounts receivable have been increasing, and methods to reduce expenses and also obtain payments from past due invoices were discussed. The NRCS Cooperation Agreement for $37,000 was cancelled by the NRCS and has contributed to cash flow concerns. Tom Mora moved to accept the October 2018 board meeting minutes and also the Treasurer’s reports for October, November and December. Chuck Pritchard seconded. Passed unanimously.
10. Other Agency Reports.
11. NRCS. No official report. Chuck Pritchard discussed Royce Larson’s comments regarding the decrease in forbs relative to grass in county range land. This is a long term concern possibly related to drought. There was general board discussion about grazing practices and their impacts on changes in the varieties of grass present.
12. WRAC. George Kendall reported on recent presentations to WRAC. Jason Yeager of Niner Winery had discussed Niner’s operation with emphasis on irrigation scheduling, irrigation practices and water use. Monitoring of soil moisture and precise irrigation amounts are emphasized. Arne Anselm of the Fox Canyon Groundwater Management Agency (Ventura Co.) had discussed the groundwater marketing program that has been set up (but not yet started) for farmers on the Oxnard Plain. Tightly controlled well monitoring is key to this program. The area is in serious overdraft and is facing significant irrigation reductions per SGMA. George Kendall also mentioned a newspaper opinion about stormwater capture in the Los Osos Valley. There was board discussion about the former Recharge Working Group and managed aquifer recharge with flood waters on agricultural land. No action was taken.
13. Board Action Item.
14. ALAB. Chuck Pritchard nominated George Kendall to be ALAB representative and Mary Bianchi to be ALAB alternate representative. Tom Mora seconded. Passed unanimously.
15. Agenda Setting. Justin Subcommittee Update. Discussion of Accounts Receivable status/action. Discussion of cash flow/expenses. Next meeting will be February 28 at 5:00 pm.
16. Adjournment. Meeting was adjourned at 7:02 pm.