

Special MEETING Minutes

August 30, 2023. 3pm-5pm



**EAST MERCED
RESOURCE
CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

**East Merced Resource Conservation District
2926 G Street, 2nd floor Board Room, Merced CA 95340**

In-Person for Board Members

In-Person, Call-in, Online Options: Join Zoom Meeting

In-Person: Ursula Stock, Shirish Shah, Jean Okuye, Lynn Sullivan, Reyn Akiona, Trevor Hutton, Jacob Wright, bill Nicholson of LAFCO

Online: Trina Walley, Emma Adest, Sarah Bell

Welcome and Introductions:

Public speak, limited to 6 min./ person. Public may address any item on Agenda before & during consideration of that item.

Oral Communications:

At this time any person may comment on any item that is not on the Agenda. Individual comments are limited to 6 minutes per person. Please state your name and address for the record.

Testimony Corrections and/or additions to the Agenda:

EMRCD board may take action on items not appearing on the posted Agenda under any of the following conditions:

1. Upon determination by a majority vote that an emergency situation exists
2. The item was posted for a prior meeting of the EMRCD board occurring not more than 5 days prior to the date action is taken on the item and at the prior meeting the item was continued to the meeting at which action is being taken
3. Upon determination by a unanimous vote that the need to take action arose subsequent to the Agenda being posted
4. Addition to the agenda: possible Board members to consider: Scott Magnussen and Sarah Bell

SPECIAL RCD Board Meeting called to order at 3:12 PM

1. Consent Agenda (**ACTION**) 5 min

- A. Minutes approval and signature: July 19, 2023 Stock

Motion to approve July's minutes MSC: (Jean/Shirish) Passed Unanimously

- B. Treasury Report for July, 2023 Stock
- i. Income statement, balance sheet, cash reserve: \$18,971
 - ii. WETA invoice out for \$45,908 which will be paid in the next couple of weeks.
 - iii. Net income was negative for July

Motion to approve July's minutes MSC: (Shirish/Reyn) Passed Unanimously

2. Written and Oral Updates from Partners and Projects- **3 minute each**, except guest speaker

- A. Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) presentation Wright
- i. Jacob: finishing up contracting, 3.7mil obligated for the year. Last year was 5mil, and the year before was 2.
- B. Sustainable Groundwater Agencies (SGA) Okuye/Stock
- i. Merced GSA meeting: 09/18/23 from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.
- C. East Stanislaus Resource Conservation District (ESRCD) Walley
- i. Ursula and Trina to meet with East Turlock subbasin on MLRP grant, will be working with both ESRCD and EMRCD, will be mostly outreach with some technical assistance work possible.
 - ii. GW basins - GrizzlyCorps member will be attending meetings. EMRCD accepted GC fellow for 25% of the total hours at \$5,000. To pay for this, Trina suggest EMRCD can use excess grant funding, like internship funding from WETA this method is approved by WETA. Reyn suggests asking Lacy for Merced MLRP funds, also appropriate funding.
 - iii. Board approved CDFA Conservation Planning grant, ESRCD trying to put together a template and doing first site visits this week. Landowners expressed interest in pollinator plantings, hedgerows, and cover cropping and they are producers that ESRCD has worked with before.

- iv. ESRCD applied for RCPP grant that the Almond Board mentioned to them, 25 million RCPP to do a climate-smart commodities type of program with RCPP funding. EMRCD can do work under a subcontract on that program. There are no funds for indirect or training. The RCPP grant is probably about a year out.
- D. John Vollmar, Vernal Pools project Vollmar
 - i. No report.
- E. Manager's Report Stock
 - i. Maria Cortez - completed the WETA 12 week internship. She worked 30 hour weeks, completed 5 irrigation evaluations, assisted with 4 others and attended the 3-day Cal Poly training and one day training with East Stanislaus RCD. Maria was a reliable intern. She was particularly grateful for the ability to work remotely and says thank you. She is considering staying in the Fresno area and in the environmental field. The WETA intern budget was for 40/week, leaving EMRCD 10 hours a week of unclaimed money from 2023 internship funding
 - ii. Ursula may well be moving to the Sonoma area, and she would still like to train and support a new District Manager for a smooth transition and knowledge transfer and retention. She is grateful for EMRCD.
- F. Trevor Hutton, Irrigation Specialist Hutton
 - i. This year, we have more Irrigation Evaluations in Merced County, and a few more in Stanislaus County over last year, when most were in Madera/Chowchilla.
 - ii. Contacted Paul Lum from AFT about SWEEP funding, and EMRCD can do a case study with the funding. Proposing to do a study together with Paul.
- G. Update on new Board Members (ACTION) Okuye
 - i. Introduction of Sarah Bell - would like to learn more but wants to be in the know about grants, projects, and be able to help and connect folks in the county, and is interested in conservation. She is a 4th generation cattle rancher in Merced County.
 - ii. Sarah would fill out an application, submit to the Board, and then County Supervisors decide ultimately about the appointment. Sarah would need a recommendation from a Merced County homeowner since she doesn't live in Merced County. Her mom can do this.
 - iii. Need a recommendation for Sarah to be on the Board.

Motion to recommend Sarah Bell for EMRCD Board of Directors membership (Reyn/Shirish), Passes Unanimously

3. Financial and Project Review **15 min**

- A. Transactions and Invoices for approval of payment (**ACTION**) Stock
 - i. Elite Card, prepaid per consent in Jan 2023
 - ii. Choice Administrators, health insurance for Sept, \$556.70
 - iii. Reimbursement: Trevor Hutton - grant expenditure, mileage, supplies
 - iv. Reimbursement: Maria Cortes - grant expenditure, mileage, supplies
 - v. Staff cell phone reimbursement
 - vi. Reimbursement: Sean Murray, 22-23 financials consultant,
 - a. He is asking for reimbursement for data recovery program only - \$119.
 - b. His time to do this work is voluntary
 - vii. Pay off change fund on county reports, missing prior to U's arrival \$25.00
 - a. Total of all invoices due this month is: ~\$1780

Motion to approve paying of all the transactions (Reyn/Jean) Passes Unanimously

- B. Budget for 23-24
 - i. Ursula reviewed the annual budget submitted to the county with updated wage rates and a corrected formula. She went over financial reports generated by Sean including the Balance sheet and Income & Expense report with three columns showing reported numbers for 2024 now that the accruals have been completed, as well as the conservatively estimated budget for 23-24, which will

stay the same all year, as well as the projected budget which will reflect monthly updates. These reports include a monthly proforma by grant and by income and expense as well as the annual version. The reports were printed prior to the final signing/ start date for the \$30,000 IRWMP grant.

a. Holding off for QuickBooks until next month.

C. Annual Plan 23-24, proposal to add retirement match **(ACTION)**

- i. Add retirement match, employees are only eligible after working at EMRCD for a year. Trevor has been with EMRCD for over a year now and it shouldn't take more than 3 or so hours to do the work.
- ii. Lynn states that EMRCD is responsible for tracking employee retirement funds forever.
- iii. Reyn recommends more research for the next Board meeting, and information about what that would look like. The new hire might have some options about choosing a plan that would work the best for everyone. Discussion postponed until the next meeting.

No Action Needed

D. CARCD loan status, projected payoff date Stock

- i. Agreed to pay off in December, may have to borrow 5k from the County line of credit to pay off.
- ii. Previous discussion about paying it off early and decision to pay off last minute
- iii. EMRCD's responsibility to notice County line of credit withdrawal and repay - there is interest associated with it.
- iv. Request to reach out to CARCD to inquire about the loan status and terms of re-opening it.

E. EPA Invoice for submission for payment – no update. Vollmar/Stock

F. WCB VP Invoice for submission for payment – no update. Vollmar/Stock

G. CDFA SWEEP grant – no further updates. Stock

H. RCPP AFT (USDA-NRCS) grant – no updates. Stock

I. WETA (mobile irrigation lab begun in July 2022, invoice for \$45,908 submitted) Stock

J. MID Water Trailer – no updates. Okuye/Stock

K. WCB/CARCD CFP & Habitat Implementation, looking for ideas for public land location Stock

- i. Board packet included - Part 3 of grant, looking for public land location for pollinator habitat. Includes making a plan, purchasing plants, and getting them planted. Suggestion of Merced College, but a caveat about the manager that sprays everything. It could go along the bike trail. No executed agreement in the board packet, and there should be an email trail with CARCD.

L. RAC IRWMP outreach for \$30,000 Stock

- i. 30k over the next 2 years, outreach to adults. Will include grant information in next month's meeting.

4. Bookkeeping and Audit Updates **(ACTION)** Stock

A. Pending Grant Applications **(ACTION)** Walley/Stock

- i. Covered above in East Stanislaus RCD updates.

B. Pending Contracts with Partners **(ACTION)** Stock

- i. Funding for Grizzly Corps Fellow @ 24% time (\$5000) for 9 months
- ii. MLRP Grants with Merced Subbasin and East Turlock GSAs
 - a. More information needed. Ursula and Trevor working on the Merced subbasin communication.
- iii. USDA NAQI Agreement for fall intern- plan to apply next year
 - a. NRCS is supporting EMRCD to apply for grants and work collaboratively. NRCS is encouraging EMRCD to apply next year with hopes to fill a second intern position, 1 located in the Merced NRCS office to cover northern SJ valley
 - b. EMRCD greenlit to apply for the NRCS technical assistance grant again.

No Action Needed

5. Requirements of the Board 10 min **(ACTION)** Stock
- A. Create Hiring committee **(ACTION)**
- i. 5 current applicants, Ursula to sort potential applicants, send to Board members. Hiring committee will conduct interviews and make recommendation.

Motion to form hiring subcommittee of 2 board members and Trevor MSC (Reyn/Shirish), Passes Unanimously

- B. Introductory discussion for merging with San Luis RCD Akiona
- i. Landscape-level discussions: EMRCD was built on the consolidations of smaller RCDs, and there are still unfunded/unmanaged RCDs in the county. San Luis RCD and CARCD have brought up the idea of merging EMRCD and San Luis RCD. CARCD is offering to help accomplish the merging paperwork. San Luis RCD is unstaffed but are able to operate on a broader landscape. Gustine Romero had previously requested consolidation.
 - ii. LAFCO is starting a study of RCDs to review efficiency and functioning/non-functioning RCDs. Similarity between RCDs may help inform a merger, as well as RCD boundaries and sphere of influence. LAFCO will give lots of feedback and make recommendations at the end of this study (6 months for the bid time but probably more like a year). The alternative for the non-functional RCDs is dissolution, unless they have assets.
 - iii. To merge requires a LAFCO fee of \$2,700, public comment meetings, then board voting.
 - iv. Broader discussion, proposal from CARCD about their assistance, and Board revisiting the question next month.
- C. Policy manual updates, food policy, Juneteenth (see packet) **(ACTION)**
- i. Policy states strict food policy, which caused a reimbursement issue. Ursula proposes to go to the federal per-diem rates for food reimbursement and hotel reimbursement, which is location-based. Currently about \$64 for food and incidentals, and about \$130 for a hotel.
 - ii. Request to add Juneteenth to the federal holiday list in manual.

Motion to accept the proposed changes to the policy manual of updating the per-diem food and hotel rates, and adding Juneteenth to the list of federal holidays (Shirish/Reyn) Passes Unanimously

- D. Approve up to 30 hour work week for manager in September **(ACTION)** Stock
- i. Analysis of last year: DM's time was 50/50 billable to grants/gen funds, but anticipates being able to work on the CARCD grant. (this was updated to 28% gen fund use with improved numbers in Sept.)

Motion to approve up to a 30 hour workweek for Ursula MSC (Reyn/Shirish), Passes Unanimously

- E. Review and consideration of correspondence **(ACTION)** Stock
- i. No correspondence.
- F. Join CARCD and National Association of Conservation Districts <\$500 **(ACTION)** Stock
- i. Need Board approval of spending \$ from the EMRCD account to sign up for NARCD and \$400 for CARCD dues.

Motion to approve spending \$2 to join the National Association of Conservation Districts, and approximately \$400 to CARCD MSC (Jean/Shirish), Passes Unanimously

6. Adjournment at 5:17 p.m. Signature _____ Date _____
Rehn Akiona, EMRCD Board President

NEXT MEETING: September 20, 2023, 3:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

5. Requirements of the Board 10 min (ACTION)

Stock

A. Create Hiring committee (ACTION)

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B. Introductory discussion for merging with San Luis RCD

Akiona

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Rahn Akiona, EMRCD Board President

Date

9/20/23

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