Upper Salinas – Las Tablas Resource Conservation District

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

February 28, 2019

1. Call to Order. Vice Chair Mike Broadhurst called the meeting to order at 5:04 pm and determined a quorum was present. Directors present: Mike Broadhurst, Mike Bonnheim, Chuck Pritchard, Eric Kaltenbach, Tom Mora, George Kendall, Randy Heinzen. Associate Director present: Mary Bianchi. Staff present: RCD Executive Director Devin Best, NRCS District Conservationist Hilary Phillips. Members of the public present: none.
2. Additions/Changes to the Agenda. ALAB update was added as Section VI c.
3. Public Comment: none.
4. RCD Reports.
5. Board Updates. Chuck Pritchard discussed recent data showing livestock’s contribution to green house gas emissions being low relative to those from transportation, energy production and wildfires. (Susan Cochrane arrived at 5:09 arrived at 5:09 and assumed the Chair.) Randy Heinzen reported that he had been appointed to the Paso Robles Wine Country Alliance board and to the State Pierces Disease – GWSS board. Mary Bianchi stated she would like to be considered for a full director position.
6. Executive Director’s Report. Devin Best reviewed key parts of the Executive Director’s Report, which had been distributed by email. The RCD was awarded a $653,000 grant from the State Dept. of Fish and Wildlife for the Gerhardt project (road stabilization and habitat restoration along Santa Rosa Creek Road). Additional project funds are expected from PG&E ($99,000) and SLO County ($65,000). The RCD is withholding some funds from the subcontractor in the IPC project in Carpenteria pending satisfactory work progress. A new subcontractor may be needed to finish the work if the current one does not improve performance.
7. R-RAW Phase 1. Devin Best handed out a summary of R-RAW: the Restoration and Regenerative Agriculture Workspace envisioned for the Justin Vineyards property. He discussed the main points. The RCD’s objective is to have Justin pay for the establishment and maintenance of the project. Courtney Taylor is a local land use attorney who may be able to assist the RCD. Devin Best is working on a budget for the project. There was board discussion about: 1) Using an attorney to advise on a possible endowment; 2) Possible hoop house agriculture; 3) Existing well capacity; 4) Access/easement issues, including the potential for access via neighboring property; and 5) Star thistle and other invasive weed issues. Devin Best solicited additional board input/questions to be sent via email. He hopes to approach Justin with a proposal by about September.
8. Conservationist of the Year. Devin Best noted that other RCD boards recognize a Conservationist of the Year for outstanding and long term conservation efforts and achievement. There was general agreement. He suggested Mike Bonnheim be considered for recognition and solicited additional nominations for consideration at a future meeting.
9. Form 700. Devin Best reminded board members of the annual need to update Form 700 by April 2.
10. Consent Agenda. Chair Susan Cochrane asked for questions/comments about the January meeting minutes. There were none. Eric Kaltenbach reviewed the highlights of the Treasurer’s Report. Tom Mora moved to accept both the minutes and the Treasurer’s Report. Chuck Pritchard seconded. The motion passed.
11. Other Agency Reports.
    1. WRAC. Tom Mora reported that the whole February WRAC meeting was devoted to the Water Conservation Subcommittee Recommendation. George Kendall reviewed the seven recommendations. Two important recommendations are for the WRAC and ALAB to form a joint water conservation subcommittee and for the requirement of actions at drought Level of Severity II instead of at LOS III. There was general discussion about California’s history of wet and dry cycles and of SLO County’s variable water situations.
    2. NRCS. Hilary Phillips provided an update on recent NRCS activity. The new Farm Bill has rolled the CSP into the EQIP program.
    3. ALAB. George Kendall gave an update on the Marcy ALAB meeting which focused on the county’s progress in updating the ordinance about ag-related housing. There was considerable discussion and agreement to discuss in detail at a future meeting.
12. Board Action Items. Devin Best presented Resolution No. 2019-01 to reappoint Mike Bonnheim, Mike Broadhurst, Randy Heinzen and Susan Cochrane to the board. The resolution was discussed and edited. Mike Broadhurst moved the changes be approved. Chuck Pritchard seconded. The four remaining board members approved the motion.
13. Agenda Setting. R-RAW Phase 1 Development Document. County presentation re ag housing. Addition of Mary Bianchi as a full director. Consideration of Conservationist of the Year. Next meeting will be March 28 at 3:30 pm.
14. Adjournment. Meeting was adjourned at 6:50 pm.