Polk Extension Service District Notes

March 6, 2024

In attendance:  Commissioner Pope, Commissioner Jeremy Gordon, Commissioner Mordhorst, Greg Hansen, Richard Riggs, Alisha Hutchison, Hayley White, Audrey Comerford, Todd Anderson, Alex Paraskevas

 1.   Commissioner Pope called meeting to order at 9:32 am

2.   Comments for items not on agenda

·         None

3.   Approval of Agenda. Commissioner Gordon moved; Commissioner Mordhorst seconded. Passed by unanimous vote of the Board.

 4.   Approval of Consent Calendar. Commissioner Mordhorst moved; Commissioner Gordon seconded. Passed by unanimous vote of the Board.

 5. Greg Hansen provided background information on the Polk County Extension District Audit for FY 2022-2023 and is recommending that the Board approve and accept the audit. Commissioner Gordon moved; Commissioner Mordhorst seconded. Passed by unanimous vote of the Board.

6.       New Business

·         Hayley White, Small Farms Coordinator, prepared a PowerPoint presentation for the Board that went over an update on the Small Farms Program. Ms. White’s presentation went over the Small Farms Social, the Field-to-Market program and the Farm Succession class that was held back in November. Commissioner Gordon asked what challenges are they seeing with local farmers and Ms. White answered his question. Next, Ms. White shared some photos that she had taken around Polk County and she shared some examples of how she helped and connected with local farmers. Ms. White also shared some upcoming events happening in 2024. Commissioner Pope wanted to share his opinion on how hard it is for farmers in all aspects, these days. Commissioner Pope asked what is their strategy to try and curve those challenges and Ms. White answered his question. Commissioner Pope wanted to ask the Extension Service District to please be involved in this issue and be leaders that can help bridge that gap going forward. Commissioner Mordhorst provided his input with the challenges he is seeing with local family farms and is very hopeful that they are getting involved with the State Legislator. Commissioner Gordon stated that they would love to hear about anything she is hearing from local farmers and the community.

·         Audrey Comerford, Agritourism Coordinator, provided an update on the Agritourism Program. Ms. Comerford’s update went over a general program overview and how she has been a part of this program since 2019. Ms. Comerford shared some feedback that she hears on a daily basis from local farmers and that the local land use laws are making it difficult to bring the public onto their farms for agritourism events. Ms. Comerford shared some data and statistics with the Board regarding the recently completed Agritourism Impact Study. Commissioner Pope wanted to give Ms. Comerford kudos to everything that she has done and wanted to thank her for the compliments to the Polk County Community Development team. Commissioner Pope stated that there are rules in place for a reason and then talked about how they county has received complaints from the public from neighboring properties for trespassing, or road complaints, and that it would be beneficial for more education on this topic for the public. Ms. Comerford responded to his statement and spoke about Neighborhood Relations. Commissioner Mordhorst talked about environmental impact and what he would like them to talk more about and what he would like her to look into more with her research.

·         Richard Riggs, Regional Director, introduced Todd Anderson who is on the new OSU Extension Small Farms Faculty. Mr. Andersen provided some background information on himself and what he is hoping to bring to the OSU Extension District for Polk County. Next, Mr. Riggs gave an extension admin update and spoke about their current staffing levels. Mr. Riggs announced that the Livestock and Forage specialist position, formerly held by Gene Pirelli, has been approved to be refilled, and recruitment will start soon. Recruitment for the Polk/Yamhill/Washington county Field Crops position is ongoing. The Marion/Clackamas Field Crops position has been filled. Mr. Riggs announced that Surrendra Dara, Director of NWREC is stepping down. Commissioner Mordhorst asked about the sale of the 4-H center and Mr. Riggs answered his question.

·         Alisha Hutchinson, Extension Office Manager, provided some office updates and stated that their new kitchen is complete. She stated that they have already hosted some baking classes there and they are getting a lot of use out of it. Mrs. Hutchinson stated that they are now fully staffed and opened 5 days a week. Mrs. Hutchinson talked about the SNAP-Ed position and explained what types of classes that position is responsible for.

6.       Public Comment, Discussion, Announcements –

·         None

Adjourned at 10:49 AM.