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MINUTES
VEGETATION MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
January 13, 2010

MEMBERS PRESENT: John Sundquist, James LaRue, Jan Nelson, Ross Penhallegon, Kai Williams, Jan Wroncy

MEMBERS ABSENT:

STAFF PRESENT: Arno Nelson, Orin Schumacher and Steve Smith

BCC PRESENT:

GUESTS PRESENT:

PUBLIC PRESENT:

Kai Williams called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

I. PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: Sundquist moved to approve the November 4, 2009 minutes.
Williams seconded the motion. **Vote:** All in favor. Motion passed.

III. GENERAL COMMENT

Wroncy informed the committee of a no-spray pilot program on Hwy 36, that Commissioner Handy asked her to distribute an ODOT letter dated January 4, 2010 (*copies distributed*), and the possibility of BCC advisement concerning the addition of noxious weed control to the County's adopt-a-road program.

LaRue asked if any other jurisdictions have added weed control to adopt-a-road programs.

Schumacher replied that he only knew of the adoption of weed control by ODOT.

Wroncy suggested that the committee could list examples of how the County dealt with problem areas without the use sprayed herbicides, as ODOT still considers it necessary to spray the sides of the roads for control.

Williams said that she hadn't had to fully review the ODOT correspondence, but that she expects to see more of the referenced methods.

Wroncy added that ODOT does mulch, as it is necessary for fire control.

Sundquist inquired if the ODOT correspondence would be discussed at this meeting

Williams asked the committee if they wanted to discuss at this meeting or at the next.

Penhallegon and the other members agreed that the topic be postponed until the next meeting.

Sundquist asked if changes to the agenda for the next meeting would be discussed.

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Williams suggested adding election of a new chairperson to tonight's agenda, and then the new chairperson could address agenda changes; however, she would suggest adding illegal spray/ODOT letter to the Temperature of the Community section, and having an update from staff when the her soon-to-be open "at-large" position would be filled.

Election of Chair and Vice-Chair Person

J. Nelson nominated John Sundquist for Chair. He accepted the nomination.

Sundquist nominated Jan Wroncy for Chair. She declined the nomination.

Williams nominated Ross Penhallegon for Chair. He accepted the nomination.

Vote: J. Nelson, Wroncy, and Sundquist voted for John Sundquist. Williams, LaRue, and Penhallegon voted for Ross Penhallegon. Result: Tie vote.

Members/staff discussed voting procedures.

Motion: Penhallegon moved that John Sundquist be Chairperson and that Ross Penhallegon be Vice Chairperson. **Vote:** All in favor. Motion passed.

IV. TEMPERATURE OF THE COMMUNITY

Williams suggested that the committee view the County's adopt-a-road safety video, and then discuss HB2424. The members were in agreement and the ten-minute video was shown.

Wroncy asked if staff was working on the language to add the option of pulling weeds to the County's adopt-a-road program, as Commissioner Handy has given his approval.

Schumacher said he was working on the board packet language to add weed pulling as option to the adopt-a-road program. He said that HB2424 just adds that option to the State's program.

Sundquist asked if the weeds pulled would be bagged for pick up. Wroncy suggested using different colored trash bags for weeds.

Schumacher replied that disposal would be discussed, as well as if it's practical to add weed pulling to the adopt-a-road program. He is drafting language for the board to add the pulling of noxious and invasive plants as an option to the adopt-a-road program with parameters.

J. Nelson asked how the waste would be handled if both trash and weeds were gathered.

Schumacher replied that they would both be dumped in a landfill. No sorting would be done.

Sundquist asked if infested areas would be the assigned to a group or by what method.

Schumacher said that the groups adopt a section of road for litter patrols, and they could also adopt a section of road with weed pulling, too.

Sundquist asked if a weed pulling video would be produced.

Schumacher replied that he did not see a need for another video, as the adopting groups will probably have a knowledge base, or perhaps that could be a qualification to add weed pulling as an option to their adopted road.

Williams suggested providing a most-wanted list of noxious weeds.

Penhallegon said that a simple, easy to identify weed list would be helpful.

Schumacher added that a pamphlet with web links to useful sites; such as, the Oregon Department of Agriculture's Weed List could be provided.

J. Nelson suggested asking the adopt-a-road program applicants if they had any knowledge of noxious weeds, and that the subcommittee could provide assistance.

Wroncy suggested using general wording to describe the addition of weed control to acquire BCC approval and then work out the details of the program.

Schumacher and A. Nelson said that it would be better to present the BCC with a detailed program for their approval.

Williams asked what the next step should be to move forward on the issue.

Schumacher suggested that this topic should be scheduled for a long discussion at the next committee meeting in order to work out the program details.

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Sundquist asked staff about the purpose of the liability release required for the current adopt-a-road program, and if “adopted” roads are tracked on any computer systems (GIS).

A. Nelson replied that the liability release form is a “hold harmless” agreement for the County’s protection, and that program is not currently tracked in that manner.

Wroncy said that the program should be presented as both pleasant and constructive.

J. Nelson suggested advertising to inform the public of the program.

Williams recapped that the first public outreach subject was to be Knotweed, and that Ross Penhallegon had pamphlets to show the committee.

Schumacher added that the pamphlets were to be used as part of the Invasive Vegetation Management Program (IVM) to give to property owners and to assist the County in weed control; however, they were not used in the IVM program as it is not currently focused on weed management. He added that there is a supply of the pamphlets on hand, if needed.

Williams suggested distributing the pamphlets to local nurseries.

Penhallegon added that the Knotweed outreach would be a good vehicle to also mention the weed-control aspect of the adopt-a-road program to local gardeners and plant societies.

Sundquist asked if it was a problem that the focus of the pamphlets is not noxious weeds, and if the County’s focus is on mowing and trimming rather than weed control.

Schumacher replied that the County’s focus is roadside vegetation management, cost issues, road preservation, and roadside safety. And noxious weeds are an ever-growing problem.

Sundquist mentioned that Benton County is spraying their roadsides for Spiny Thistle and Blue Lettuce, they are both chemically resistant, and they are both spreading in to the woods.

Schumacher clarified that he was speaking of noxious weed management, not just roadside shoulder spraying, and that the County lacks funding to pursue it in the manner needed.

A. Nelson added that the County’s workload has increased, but staffing has decreased.

Sundquist asked if the County was tracking weed infestation areas.

Schumacher replied that the weed inventory is currently listed on the TransMap program.

Sundquist suggested that interested parties could tackle “hot spots” of noxious weeds as part of the adopt-a-road program.

Wroncy said that the State’s has a non-spray program, however, the State still requires spraying for some maintenance and that the County does not. The County is still mowing for control, and that can be successful, too.

Williams suggested that the Knotweed posters be brought to the next meeting for review. The members were in agreement.

V. TECHNICAL COMMITTEE ADVISORY

Wroncy reported on the use of boiling water and wool mulch for vegetation control and suggested setting up demonstration test sites for possible use in Lane County.

Schumacher said that boiling water treatments do not stay where applied, and that the costs for the wool material and its installation/application could be problematic.

LaRue asked if there was any research data available on those treatment methods.

J. Nelson said that she’d research the material options, costs, availability and report back.

Wroncy suggested using wool material or pavers to control blackberries along guardrails.

J. Nelson said that the blackberries would grow out from underneath.

Schumacher agreed that the material or pavers would not stop the blackberry growth.

LaRue asked if recycled rubber mats could be used along the guardrails.

Schumacher replied that rubber, fabric or other covering materials are not an effective solution to stop the growth along guardrails, and that using rubber could cause additional problems.

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Sundquist asked what effect the blackberry removal has on the structural integrity of the roads. LaRue if any research had been done to redesign guardrails.

Schumacher said that blackberries can help hold the integrity of the shoulders, but that it can also harm shoulder structures. He added that grass is preferred for stability purposes.

A. Nelson said that guardrail design is constantly being reviewed for safety purposes but not for installation/vegetation control.

Sundquist asked what types of grasses worked best.

Schumacher replied that Rye and Fescue grasses work well, and that cost is a factor, too, as native grasses are more expensive.

VI. COUNTY ADVISORY

Sundquist reported on the Illegal Spray Subcommittee has drafted a public announcement regarding illegal spraying of pesticides or herbicides in a County-owned right of way; as such activity is a threat to the citizens and the environment. This reminder letter could be distributed with noxious weed pamphlets to property owners near illegal spray sites.

J. Nelson said that it was a work in progress, and that the subcommittee could work on it.

Schumacher suggested that the letter should be shortened to four or five lines.

A. Nelson added that the letter should not threaten, as there is no enforcement.

Sundquist said that this letter could be patterned after the form letters used for illegal activity in the right of way, and it could remind property owners about facility permits.

LaRue asked if mowing in the right of way was illegal and if letters would be sent.

Schumacher and A. Nelson replied that such activity was illegal.

Wroncy added that the letter could provide details of when a facility permit is required, what it allows and doesn't allow, and that people do it even if it is illegal.

LaRue said that property owners might not appreciate being told that there would be a fee charged for a permit to mow their own entry way.

Penhallegon said that the focus should be on those actions that can be accomplished in a meaningful manner.

Williams said that the outreach should remind the property owners what they can and can't do in the right of ways and explain the reasons.

Sundquist added that the letters could inform the property owners that they need to acquire a facility permit to mow in the right of way.

LaRue said the County mows twice a year; however, the growth can get very high and be an obstruction. He asked if he would be ticketed by the County if he mowed in the right of way.

A. Nelson replied that, as with illegal spraying, the County does not have enforcement resources.

Williams said the discussion should be about the specific language used in the letters; such as, all activities or just illegal spraying in the right of ways. The public could be given a list of things that they can't do in the right of way, but the main focus of the letter should be illegal spraying.

Sundquist said that illegal spraying should be the topic, as it's a health concern.

J. Nelson said that the County has a moratorium on the use of herbicides along the roadsides, so the letter should be a public announcement. She added that the subcommittee will continue to work on the illegal spray letter, as that is the charge of the Illegal Spray Committee.

VII. VEGETATION COORDINATOR & STAFF UPDATES

Schumacher reported that the botanist is finishing up the weed inventory and the T&E sites, and that new signage will be posted. Additionally, the 2010 Summer road projects are now planned, along with the corresponding tree/brush clearance work. He is also planning the tree work needed for the urban slurry seal road projects and rural roads projects outside the urban growth

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boundary. He added that there are now four licensed Arborists on staff, as funding was reallocated for the required staff training, licensing, and continued certification. This staff will greatly assist with all pending tree work and public education/contacts.

A. Nelson said that the urban tree work began approximately a year and a half ago in the Santa Clara/River Road area, and that it will take four more years to finish up that area.

LaRue said that he receives queries at his nursery about what trees to plant under power lines, and that he spends time educating the public.

Schumacher agreed that tree education needs to come from the nurseries, too.

J. Nelson said that the Lane Electric Coop provided a list of appropriate trees to plant, along with a discount for nursery purchase.

Sundquist asked if the botanist was able to complete the weed mapping for the entire county.

Schumacher responded that she was not able to finish the entire county, but that the work will continue in the future if the budget allows.

VIII. WORK PLAN UPDATE

Williams suggested that the right-hand "Discussion/Action" column of the Work Plan be deleted in order for it to be updated for the 2010 year.

Schumacher added that items could be added at this meeting or added to the next agenda. The members agreed to discuss topic at the next meeting.

IX. FINAL COMMENTS

Schumacher presented departing at-large member, Kai Williams, with a Letter of Appreciation from the BCC, a "Movin' On" cake from members/staff, and expressed appreciation and gratitude for her contributions to Lane County.

X. SUGGESTIONS FOR NEXT MEETING

Williams suggested the Garrett/ODOT letter, adding noxious weeds to the adopt-a-road program, and weed maps to the agenda for the next meeting.

Sundquist said committee membership applications should also be added to the agenda.

Wroncy added that illegal spraying should also be listed.

Motion: LaRue moved to adjourn.

J. Nelson seconded. **Vote:** All in favor. Motion passed.

Meeting adjourned at 7:32 p.m.

Steve Smith

Recording Secretary