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MINUTES

November 18, 2024

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82239894144>

Present

Ben Barstow, District VI-Barley / Chair
Kevin Klein, District VII-Barley / Vice Chair
Ty Jessup, Position 2-Wheat Industry Rep / Treasurer
Mike Carstensen, District I-Wheat
Gary Bailey, District II-Wheat
Brit Ausman, District III-Wheat
Ben Adams, District IV-Wheat
Brian Cochrane, District V-Wheat
Brian Liedl, Position 1-Wheat Industry Rep
Scott Steinbacher, WA ST Dept. of Agriculture Rep

Absent

Barley Industry Rep - *Vacant*

Staff:

Casey Chumrau, Chief Executive Officer
Mary Palmer Sullivan, Vice President
Lori Maricle, Director of Communication
Jake Liening, Market Development Specialist
Sheila McCrea, Finance & Administrative Specialist
Parker Dawson, Systems & Data Processing Specialist
Shari McCarthy, Receptionist/Accounts Specialist

Visitors:

Industry, general public and media

Call to Order – Chair Ben Barstow called the regular meeting of the Washington Grain Commission (WGC) to order at 9:00 a.m. on November 18, 2024.

Administrative

1. Additions to Agenda
2. Introductions and Roll
3. Open Forum – Public Comment Period. No visitors addressed the board.
4. Approval of Minutes – September 24-25, 2024 and September 30, 2024. The minutes of the regular meeting and special meeting were circulated to the members of the WGC prior to this meeting.

Motion was moved, seconded and passed to approve the minutes of the regular September 24-25, 2024 meeting as recorded.

Motion was moved, seconded and passed to approve the minutes of the special September 30, 2024 meeting as recorded.

5. Approval of Financials – Chair Ben Barstow reviewed the WGC financial statements for the months of September and October, 2024 with the board as follows:

BALANCE SHEET FOR THE GENERAL FUND

October 31, 2024

Assets:	
Checking – US Bank	110,451.93
Petty Cash	200.00
W – US Bank Saving	1,173,267.97
B – US Bank Savings	89,855.19
W – Robert W. Baird Mmkt Acct	24,092.36
W – Robert W. Baird Investments	17,884,303.29
B – Robert W. Baird Mmkt Acct	2,191.54
B – Robert W. Baird Investments	206,623.31
Assessments Receivable	<u>133,980.47</u>
Total Assets:	<u>\$19,624,966.06</u>
Liabilities:	
Accounts Payable	22,561.26
ID Withholding Payable	184.00
WA Cares Fund	368.26
Paid Family Medical Leave	270.59
L&I Premium Payable	350.99
Unearned Assessments Revenue	133,980.47
Unearned Revenue (Renter Deposit)	<u>3,000.00</u>
Total Liabilities:	\$160,715.57
Equity:	
Retained Earnings-Current Year	1,139,694.58
Fund Balance (Unassigned)	11,424,555.91
Reserved Fund Balance (Assigned)	5,400,000.00
Marketing Reserved Fund Balance (Assigned)	<u>1,500,000.00</u>
Total Equity:	\$19,464,250.49
Total Liabilities & Equity	<u>\$19,624,966.06</u>

Transfers and disbursements were reported to the board for the periods of September and October 2024 and recommended that all disbursements be approved and authorized for payment. There were no voided Checks.

Motion was moved, seconded and passed to approve ACH Transfers 290-308, and Checks #33128 - #33149 representing **September 2024** expenditures, and ACH Transfers 309-336, and Checks #33150 - #33172 representing **October 2024** expenditures.

6. Assessment Collections / Investments – CEO Casey Chumrau referred to the Analysis of Assessment Collection report which showed that as of October 31, the following amounts were received: barley assessments \$38,533; and wheat assessments \$2,078,187. By today's meeting date the amounts were approximately \$54,000; and \$2.6 million received, respectively. This collection amount is representative of more bushels being sold rather than higher prices.

Current investment details of certificates of deposit and federal notes for barley and wheat, which are tracked separately per RCW 15.115.280, were communicated to the board. Combined CD and FN investments for barley totaled \$211,000; and wheat investments totaled \$19,743,794. Interest rates for new investments options with Robert W. Baird & Co. (RWB) are falling and some securities are being called due. Continued efforts to reinvest any residual funds at the highest interest rates possible.

7. Office Operations – Chair Ben Barstow and CEO Casey Chumrau addressed the following:
 - a. Revised Policies & Procedures – Changes were drafted based on state recommendations to update language regarding the VEBA Medical Expense Plan employee benefit; the Deferred Compensation Program mandatory sign-up upon hire; and the public disclosure and management of records requirements. Other changes include staff positions listing, and property security (codes) protocol.

Motion was moved, seconded and passed to approve the revised WGC Policies and Procedures.

See Attachment A at the end of these minutes.

- b. Ag Forestry Lease Agreement – A lease agreement was recently signed by the new Executive Director Carolyn Kadyk. As she did not feel comfortable committing to a longer timeline due to financial challenges, a one-year lease was executed with a 30-day clause to vacate. Higher cost of registration to their 18-month Leadership Program was mentioned (\$42,000 each participant). The commissioners commented that they appreciate another ag organization utilizing the building and would like to keep them as tenants. They agreed to discuss at a later time the possibility of fully funding any small grains growers who opt to go through the Ag Forestry Leadership Program as a way to support the excellent work by this ag group.

Motion was moved, seconded and passed to approve the one-year lease with Ag Forestry.

- c. District Meetings 2025 – Jake Liening addressed the option of holding additional district meetings next year to obtain feedback from constituents on various topics. It was felt that adding ½ hour to an existing industry meeting already being held may be a more effective way to gain participation. It was suggested that if pesticide credits were offered, it may attract more growers to attend. Also, adding 15 minutes to the end of an Agricultural Marketing and Management Organization (AMMO) session could also be beneficial. Casey Chumrau requested that commissioners attending such district meetings provide details of their participation (agenda; topics, etc.) to the WGC office to ensure grower concerns are addressed timely.
- d. Election Update – Casey Chumrau relayed the current status of nomination letters received by WSDA, necessitating the run-off election of two wheat districts (Districts II and V), and one barley (District VI). Brit Ausman was renominated for District III. Final voting should be tallied by the second week of December. A new commissioner onboarding process is being created.

District Reports

- Mike Carstensen (District 1: Ferry, Lincoln, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens) – There are some really good stands where rain came through early, others spotty. Emergence has been slow. Many growers had to wait for rain. There is still anxiety over input costs.
- Gary Bailey (District 2: Whitman) – Had some bare spots, but emergence has filled out. Pretty decent crop set.

- Brit Ausman (District 3: Asotin, Columbia, Garfield, Walla Walla) – No report.
- Ben Adams (District 4: Adams, Chelan, Douglas, Grant, Okanogan) – Got some rain finally, area was very dry.
- Brian Cochrane (District 5: Benton, Franklin, Kittitas, Klickitat, Yakima) – Rain fall varies across the region; his farm is above average so far. Approximately 50% of planted acres have emerged; 50/50 dusted, deep furrow. Small wheat plants going into winter have the potential for weed pressure, so growers will need to be proactive. Profile down 2' is still dry. He related that this could be his last report depending on election results. Two contributions are still not completed: CL2+ club wheat and HB4® game plan from breeder to market.
- Ben Barstow (District 6 Barley: Asotin, Benton, Columbia, Franklin, Garfield, Klickitat, Walla Walla, Whitman, Yakima) – Reported that with Great Western Malting facility in Vancouver closing, it could mean the end of barley production in Washington.
- Kevin Klein (District 7 Barley: Adams, Chelan, Douglas, Ferry, Grant, Kittitas, Lincoln, Okanogan, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens) – Stands are marginal, depending on conditions. Fall re-crop has been slow to germinate between dry and cold.

Industry and WSDA Reports

- Ty Jessup (Position 2-Wheat Industry Rep) – Russia slowed sales pace, which has helped put a floor on the price. Australian crop is good so that may influence market but is still unknown. U.S. corn was big; beans were down. The market will react to Black Sea and Australia in the next few months. Most PNW wheat is 60% marketed. Bigger carry-ins.
- Brian Liedl (Position 1-Wheat Industry Rep) – Traveled to Asia in October and buyers are very pleased with soft white (SW) wheat, pulling the cart for the whole PNW. Spring and red were both above Canada, so SW was the driver for sales. If it wasn't for SW, the combo cargos wouldn't be coming off of PNW ports. Koreans are concerned with HB4®, same with Japanese. Concerns about premiums on non-GMO segregated crop in the future. May not have mass resistance in most markets.
- Scott Steinbacher (Eastern Washington manager of the Warehouse Audit/Grain Inspection Programs, Washington State Department of Agriculture) – Getting prepared for new district elections; new governor could mean new Ag Director appointment. The Ag groups collectively signed on to a letter of support for Derek Sandison, WGC included.

Policy

1. WAWG Update – Tony Smith, Washington Association of Wheat Growers president, reported that Olympia Days are January 19-21 and encouraged participation from the WGC. Nationally, the Farmer Assistance and Revenue Mitigation Act (FARM Act) was introduced. NAWG and other commodity groups have endorsed this bill, which, if enacted, would provide economic assistance to producers who are experiencing high input costs and low commodity prices as Congress continues debate of a long-term Farm Bill. As with most government programs any potential assistance from this would be months before any details are concrete. The Farm Bill continues to be talked about; however, it remains to be seen if any action will be taken prior to the end of the year. WAWG representatives participated in the NAWG Fall Conference where they reviewed and finalized their resolutions.

Andy Juris, WAWG past president, reported that the WSDOT transportation study will be released December 20. River stakeholders will then have the opportunity to provide comments for the record. The Torrey Advisory Group is working on a strategy regarding visits to offices that must be completed as there will be lots of changes in the members' offices and committees with

the new administration. Later this week, there will be an “All River Matters” session Thursday afternoon at the Tri-State Grain Growers Convention where the growers and industry will be updated on all the latest information on Columbia River Treaty, Lower Snake River Dams, infrastructure needs, etc. The next WAWG board meeting is January 7, where they will be setting their priorities for their National and State advocacy trips.

2. State Legislative Update – Mark Streuli, Streuli Public Relations, and Diana Carlen, Gordon Thomas Honeywell Governmental Affairs, provided updates on the recent election results which showed that while the country veered red, Washington state turned blue. Democrats will continue to hold all statewide elected positions and have slightly expanded their majorities in the legislature. Democrats currently hold majorities of 58-40 in the House and 29-20 in the Senate. Three of the four initiatives to roll back the state cap-and-trade program and state tax policies to repeal the capital gains tax and the payroll tax for long-term care insurance have failed. The only initiative that was approved by the voters was Initiative I-2066 to block state and local efforts to phase out natural gas service which passed by a margin of 51.64% to 48.36%, but opponents have already indicated that they plan to sue, arguing that it violates the single subject rule which was the demise of many Eymann initiatives by the Washington State Supreme Court. Washington state will continue to discuss linking their carbon market to California and Quebec. They anticipate seeing legislation in the upcoming legislative session beginning in January on making tweaks to the law that will further linkage and implementing the program. They plan to be actively involved in these conversations to ensure that the exemption for agriculture on exempt fuel is honored.
 - a. The board reviewed the draft 2025 legislative priorities document that was distributed and determined that there were no changes.

Motion was moved, seconded and passed to approve the 2025 Legislative Priorities for work to be conducted by the WGC’s Lobbyists, Mark Streuli and Diana Carlen.

See Attachment B at the end of these minutes.

3. Government Relations – Mike Miller, Washington Genetics, related that he had been to Washington, D.C. twice. He recently attended the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities (APLU) annual meeting held in Florida and he reported on topics and priorities presented at the meeting.
4. NAWG Proposal – At the previous board meeting, there was discussion on the National Association of Wheat Growers’ supplemental proposal that requested additional funding for various projects. It was determined that more information was needed prior to any funding. Andy Juris explained that the timing of the request was not ideal, however, he learned that this request would be for their strategic plan as well as the promotion and education of the wheat life cycle assessment. Two states have already committed to funding of \$10,000 total.

Motion was moved, seconded and passed to approve funding of \$5,000 towards a national wheat strategic plan via the WAWG contract utilizing the Unforeseen Events clause.

Market Development

1. USW – Gary Bailey and Mike Carstensen reported on the 2024 Joint U.S. Wheat Associates-National Association of Wheat Growers board meeting. Updates were provided on the USDA Regional Agricultural Promotion Program (RAPP). They are requesting \$25.5 million. They were awarded \$13 million last go round through 2030. RAPP II will be coming out a week before Christmas. They identified geographical areas including Africa where a significant amount of funding would go. The funding program would also allow for the hiring of technical staff in

certain regions like South Asia, Africa, and Latin America. It was noted that Roy Chung, Singapore Office bakery consultant, will soon be retiring. It was reported that Vince Peterson will be retiring in 2025, and the board has selected Mike Spier, current vice president of overseas operation, to be promoted to president.

- a. PNW Team to South America Report – Mike Carstensen related there is extreme respect that the millers have for the USW personnel. This was not the same sentiment years ago, and the amount of money that the PNW has funded to the Chilean and Peruvian markets has really paid off. In a month or two, Chile will use the first SW wheat in a batch for salmon feed. Opportunities were identified for increasing SW wheat sales for aquaculture feed in Chile, which could lead to additional imports of milling what in the south of Chile. However, competition from lower-cost Canadian wheat remains a challenge in the region. The group discussed possibly jointly purchasing RVA equipment to address quality testing issues that have limited hard red spring (HRS) wheat sales. Mr. Carstensen recommended that the PNW conduct a group tour to South America every few years, really pushing PNW wheat instead of it being a U.S. Wheat-sanctioned trip. Casey Chumrau mentioned that the funding the WGC approved for a new technical position years ago has positively improved the area as well as relations in South America.
 - b. Crop Quality Seminars – Discussions centered around hard white winter (HW) wheat and the possibility of creating a new class of wheat. Kansas is pushing mainly for it which could cause issues for the PNW wheat supply chains and cross-contamination. Justin Gilpin, CEO of Kansas Wheat Commission, stated that SW wheat has something going for itself that no other class has, in that the customers brand themselves as SW clients. Casey Chumrau participated in three crop quality seminars during her trip. She really enjoyed that the CQS had the trade involved so after each crop quality update, they have a trade analyst talking about buying opportunities and market outlook. They received an update on the HB4® situation. The most consistent question was if GE (gene editing) would be considered a GMO. Ms. Chumrau visited with the Philippine millers which account for 38% of SW exports. Almost 50% of SW wheat exports go to SE Asia. Everyone in that region has embraced the Solvent Retention Capacity (SRC) test which provides data of starch quality within protein and significantly favors SW over alternatives.
 - c. Trade Teams/Office Visits – Casey Chumrau related the various trade teams hosted this fall. Indonesia wants to double the amount of fumigation, but APHIS won't condone or authorize such levels as it is not fit for human consumption. The suggestion is to have them change their specifications regarding SW wheat, as its low moisture content (9%) doesn't necessitate such high fumigation levels.
 - d. Appoint new USW Director – With Gary Bailey's retirement, a new representative from the WGC will need to be selected. The consensus was that Ben Barstow would be the next representative if he is elected to the wheat District II seat.
 - e. SE Asia Board Team – March – Casey Chumrau related that the next trip will be to the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. USW will pay for one commissioner to travel and the WGC will cover the Market Development Specialist Jake Liening's travel. It was agreed that Ben Barstow would be the commissioner to travel if he is elected to the wheat District II seat.
2. Barley Update – Chair Ben Barstow related concern that Great Western Malting will be closing their Vancouver, WA facility and will not be contracting for malting barley in 2025. Kevin Klein reported he and Mary Palmer Sullivan plan to participate in the National Barley Growers Association winter board meeting in early February.

3. Wheat Marketing Center – Brit Ausman stated that the building is quite the albatross and no new direction has been set regarding selling of the property. Lab services are keeping busy with scheduled teams while generating substantial income for the center.

Communications and Education

1. Portland Grower Tour – Mary Palmer Sullivan provided an overview of the PNW grower tour to Portland, OR November 4-6 via PowerPoint. Bonneville Dam, Mondelez (Nabisco), gets flour from ADM Cheney; Columbia Export terminal, Wheat Market Center, presentations from Columbia River Pilots, Bar Pilots, the PNW Waterways Association; Shaver Transportation tour, all went very successfully. Rob Rich will be retiring in January. Four participants were from WSU, some filling slots of growers that had cancelled.
2. Cotton Foundation Education Tour – Mary Palmer Sullivan reported on her participation in the Multi Commodity Education Program Tour. This is a tour open to both wheat and barley producers by invitation. She provided an overview of the cotton production process. Wire worms are beginning to be an issue in cotton fields. They address it by rotating in wheat that is treated with Teraxxa® and then rotated back to cotton. Also viewed wine, black eyed peas, and peanut production. Texas is in a three-year drought, and cotton takes up a lot of water. Many acres won't be harvested. The growers rely on crop insurance a lot. Most of the country's cotton is exported.

Research

1. WSU Report – Rich Koenig Crop and Soil Sciences (CSS) Professor, Washington State University, informed the WGC that many researchers from WSU were planning to participate in the Tri-State Grain Growers convention. A search committee has been established for the new dean of the College of Agriculture, Human and Natural Resource Sciences (CAHNRS), and that Casey Chumrau as WGC CEO is named to the committee. They will be meeting soon, with the goal of having a replacement by the end of May. The USDA-ARS building continues to make great progress, and is on schedule. The Wheat Academy will be held December 10-11, and there are still openings for attendees. Dr. Drew Lyon has announced his retirement for next fall. There was concern over whether the CAHNRS could provide startup funds for his replacement, thereby limiting when it could be refilled. It was determined that there is enough funding in the endowment account that could be used as an enticement for approval by the dean, which they are hoping to get filled by the winter of 2025/early spring 2026. The deadline has been set for the WGC Research for Proposals to be received by January 6; with the new and renewal proposals to be presented at the Research Review on February 11.
2. WSU/ARS Committee Reports – The WSU Cereal Variety Testing Committee met with the CAHNRS and Department of Crops and Soils administration to discuss the concerns and status of the program, as well as how it may be improved. The administration emphasized the importance of the program and the many areas of research that it impacts. It was determined that CAHNRS will be working to develop a path forward and what that means to the personnel and program.
3. Research Pre-Proposals – The WGC reviewed and discussed the four preproposals presented and determined that all four would go forward to a full proposal at the Research Review on February 11 in Pullman.

Other Topics

1. Center for Sustainability and Working Rivers – Leslie Druffe and Adam Ratliff displayed a PowerPoint outlining their organization's mission and request to the board for funding to combat the negative perceptions of the dams on major waterways impeding endangered fish

species (salmon). They are currently in the process of obtaining their IRS designation – 501(c)3. Messages need to reach the public of the tremendous benefits river/barge transportation provides for the moving of commodities to market while minimizing pollution that would otherwise take place via trucking by road. Hydropower is one of the cleanest energy modes available which directly improves the impacts to climate change. The removal of dams on the Columbia and Snake Rivers would impact all growers in the state whether they use barges or not, as rail costs would most likely go higher without river transportation competition. Their request was for \$25,000 in funding for one year. The commissioners agreed that a higher amount was necessary to adequately address this crucial issue and that a longer-term commitment was warranted, and the following motion was made:

Motion was moved, seconded and passed to approve funding to the Center for Sustainability & Working Rivers at \$75,000 per year for two years.

2. Dr. Chris Riley Tillman, WSU Provost, was unable to attend this meeting.
3. Dr. Arron Carter – Winter Wheat Breeding Program Professor and O.A. Vogel Endowed Chair of Wheat Breeding and Genetics, WSU addressed the board on current SW wheat research. He asked for feedback on the biggest pest and production concerns currently and expectations for future concerns. There was a discussion on what efforts should be made to register new chemicals for wheat to fight weeds. The HB4® drought-tolerant trait developed by Bioceres and being used in Argentina and Brazil was discussed in detail. He stated that it probably wouldn't do well in Washington State due to the higher moisture availability East of the Cascade Mountains and larger bushels-per-acre produced. He thanked the commissioners for continuing to support WSU research at priority funding levels and encouraged them to contact him with any questions or concerns.
4. Mike Carstensen related that another commissioner will need to become the WGC representative on the National Wheat Industry Committee (NWIC) as he anticipates going through the USW officer rotation and, if elected, would be ineligible to sit on that committee. It was noted to be added at the next board meeting when committee assignments would be determined.

Calendar & Travel Authority

1. Approve Travel Authority

Motion was moved, seconded and passed to approve and authorize travel and virtual attendance as follows:

Retroactive Travel

October 20-25	Nat'l Cotton Council, Lubbock, TX Mary Palmer Sullivan
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Future Travel

December 10-11	Nat'l Wheat Improvement Committee, Austin, TX Mike Carstensen / Ben Adams
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January 13-17, 2025	USW/NAWG Board Meetings, Washington, D.C. Mike Carstensen / +2 Commissioners / Casey Chumrau / Mary Palmer Sullivan / Lori Maricle / Jake Liening
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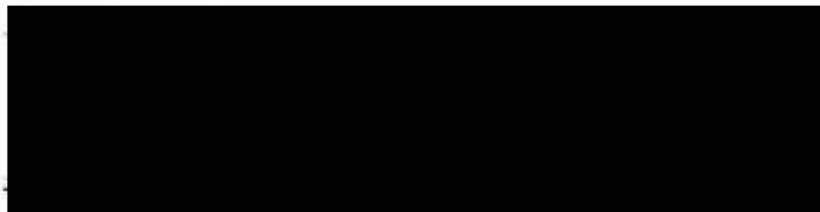
- January 19-21 WAWG Legislative Days, Olympia
Commissioners / Mary Palmer Sullivan / Lori Maricle / Jake Liening
- January 23-24 WSU Endowed Chairs Review /
WGC Board Meeting, Pullman
Commissioners / Staff
- January 29-31 PNW Wheat Quality Council, Portland, OR
Commissioners / Mary Palmer Sullivan
- February 3-6 Nat'l Barley Growers Association, Washington, D.C.
Kevin Klein / + 1-Barley Commissioner / Mary Palmer Sullivan
- February 10** Priority Session #1, Pullman
Commissioners / Staff
- February 17-21 IGP Intro to Milling Course, Manhattan, KS
Casey Chumrau / Jake Liening
- March 3-11 USW Board Team – SE Asia, Philippines, Thailand, Singapore
+1 Commissioner / Casey Chumrau / Jake Liening
- March 25** Priority Session #2, Spokane
Commissioners / Staff

Date/Place Next Meeting

Chair Ben Barstow designated January 24, 2025 as the date of the next regular meeting of the commission to be held at the Marriott Residence Inn, 1255 NE North Fairway Road, Pullman. *(This is a change from the earlier published date of January 23.)*

Adjourn

There being no further business before the commission, this meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.



Ben Barstow, Chair

Date



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Proposed changes to Policies & Procedures to be effective November 18, 2024:

Pg 14 – 3.1 Employment – **Change** staff positions listing.

Pg 16 – 3.9 Retirement and Deferred Compensation – **change** DCP language to state mandatory signup; employee may discontinue participation at later date.

Pg 19 – 3.18 Medical Expense Plan – **change** language to state all employees will participate in the VEBA upon retirement for the transference of remaining sick leave into HRA as WGC set policy.

Pg. 28 – 3.40 Commission Security – **Add** language.

Pg. 33 – 4.16 Public Disclosure of Commission Records – **Add** language.

Pg. 36 – 4.17 Records Management – **change** language.

3.1 Employment (last paragraph)

The Commission employees consist of: Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Vice President, ~~Communications Director,~~ **Director of Communication,** ~~Program Director,~~ **Market Development Specialist,** Finance/Administrative Specialist, Systems/Data Processing Specialist, and Receptionist/Accounts Specialist. The CEO has direct oversight over all employees. Job descriptions are on file and may be updated when necessary.

3.9 Retirement and deferred compensation

Starting day one of employment, all state employees are required to participate in the state mandated Retirement Program (PERS **Plan 2 or 3**). ~~In addition, the employee can participate in~~ **and** the Deferred Compensation Program (DCP). ~~with the state.~~ **Employees may choose to discontinue participation in the DCP at a later date.** Details on the retirement program and the deferred compensation plan can be viewed: www.drs.wa.gov.

3.18 Medical Expense Plan

In accordance with [RCW 41.04.340](#) the Commission ~~will~~ **offers** the post-retirement medical expense plan option (Voluntary Employees' Beneficiary Association-Medical Expense Plan) for eligible employees ~~to consider.~~ **upon retirement as set policy. The employee can use the funds in their VEBA MEP account to receive reimbursement for post-retirement medical expenses.**

~~The Commission will define eligible employees prior to the beginning of each year or designated time period. If the defined group consists of fewer than five (5) employees, those eligible employees will join the small agency voting pool conducted by the Department of Enterprise Services (DES). As part of the small agency voting pool, these employees will vote whether or not to participate in the plan prior to the beginning of the designated time period when the vote will be effective [for example: the following year or three (3) years]. A simple majority will be used to determine the voting results.~~ **The Commission defines it employee group as one which includes all employees of its agency as eligible to participate in the VEBA for transferring of sick leave into a health reimbursement arrangement (HRA) at 25 percent.**

~~If the majority of employees vote to participate, then all who retire during the designated time period must contribute their sick leave cash out to the medical expense plan or forfeit the sick leave cash out and balance. Once employees have voted to participate, that decision will remain in effect for retiring employees in that group throughout the time period for which the vote was conducted.~~

~~If the majority of employees vote not to participate, none of those retiring in that group will be eligible to participate in the medical expense plan during the designated time period affected by the vote. The vote not to participate will remain in effect throughout the designated time for which it was conducted.~~

The CEO will ensure that a designated employee will provide information to eligible employees and ensure communication with ~~DES that the Commission join the small agency voting pool as directed by the CEO and when applicable and necessary.~~ **the Voluntary Employees' Beneficiary Association Trust for Public Employees of the State of Washington (VEBA Trust).**

The Plan Year is the period from July 1 through June 30 of each year. No voting by employees for choice is allowed. Each retiring Eligible Employee must be enrolled via the paperless option or sign a VEBA MEP Enrollment Form in order to participate. Eligible Employees who retire are required to complete a Hold Harmless Agreement. If no agreement is received within 90 days of Eligible Employee's separation date, then the employee will forfeit all unused sick leave eligible for remuneration.

3.40 Commission security

To ensure the security of Commission premises, it is the policy that all doors remain locked during office hours. It is also the policy that no additional keys for Commission property be made without approval from the CEO. **Building and gate codes will be different from each other and are to be kept confidential.** Anyone found violating this policy will be subject to corrective action up to and including termination. It is the responsibility of the last employee to leave the building to set the security alarm and ensure all doors are locked.

4.16 Public disclosure of Commission records

The Public Records Act, [Chapter 42.56 RCW](#), requires that state and local government agencies make all public records available to the public upon request unless certain statutory exemptions apply. The act also establishes significant sanctions for agencies that fail to comply. This policy establishes roles and responsibilities for disclosure of and access to records held by the Commission to promote consistency and compliance with legal requirements. This policy applies to all employees and to all public records held by employees.

Definitions:

Electronic Records: An electronic record includes but is not limited to electronic documents, emails, websites, text messages, social media postings, and information stored in content management systems (Catalyst, DropBox, etc.)

Exemption Log: A log identifying each record that is withheld in part or in its entirety that provides the following information: the type of record; the date of the record; the number of pages; the author and recipient of the record; and a brief explanation of the exemption and how it applies.

Public Record: Under [RCW 42.56.010 \(3\)](#), all information and documents prepared, used, generated, owned or kept by the department relating to the conduct of government or the performance of a governmental function. A "public record" may be in any format or medium such as electronic data, electronic records, written records, emails, texts, recordings, photographs, electronic disks, magnetic tapes, etc.

Public Records Officer: The employee designated by the CEO under [RCW 42.56.580](#) to serve as a point of contact for members of the public in requesting disclosure of public records and to oversee the department's compliance with the Public Records Act.

Records Management: The systematic control of records and information from creation to disposition. This includes how records are created, how they are managed throughout their life, and what happens to them at the end of their life.

Records Retention Schedule: A list of the types of records (record series) created, received, and used by an agency. The retention schedule authorizes the destruction/transfer of public records documenting common functions and activities of state government agencies.

Public Records Officer Responsibilities

The Commission Public Records Officer coordinates and manages the agency public records request process and serves as point of contact for members of the public seeking public records. In this capacity, the Public Records Officer must:

- a) Oversee and manage public records requests to ensure full compliance with the Public Records Act.
- b) Determine when records or portions of records are exempt from disclosure and produce all exemption logs, as required by law.
- c) Serve as lead on public records request and determine the necessary employees to fulfill the request.
- d) Provide consultation and training to employees and board members on the requirements of the Public Records Act and Commission procedures for compliance.
- e) Respond to each public records request for Commission records within five (5) business days of receiving the request in one of the following ways:
 - 1) Provide the requested record(s).
 - 2) Acknowledge the receipt of the request and provide a reasonable estimate of the time required to respond to the request.
 - 3) Request clarification or additional details on the request, providing a reasonable deadline for the requester to respond. If no response is received by the deadline, the request will be closed. The requester will be notified via letter or email that the request has been closed due to non-response.
 - 4) Deny the public records request and provide requester with Exemption Log.
- f) Complete records training course no later than ninety (90) days after assuming responsibilities as public records officer.
- g) Ensure that board members and employees have received initial open public meetings training (RCW 42.30.205) and refresher training at intervals of no more than four (4) years.
- h) Ensure that any major or minor updates to the State General Retention Schedule are promptly reflected in the Commission's Records Retention Schedule.
- i) Oversee the transfer and destruction of records once their retention period has been met.
- j) Oversee the inventor of Commission paper and electronic records.

Chief Executive Officer Responsibilities

The CEO must:

- a) Designate a lead coordinator responsible for management of the Commission's public records request process.
- b) Require all employees to comply with procedures established by the Commission's Public Records Officer to respond to public records requests.

Employee Responsibilities

All Commission employees must:

- a) Identify records request and follow agency procedures for response:
- b) Written requests must be forwarded to the Public Records Officer and CEO within twenty-four (24) hours of receipt.
- c) Verbal requests translated into an email with the requester's full name, mailing address, phone number and email address and forwarded to the Public Records Officer and Chief Executive Officer within twenty-four (24) hours of receipt.

- d) Search and disclose all responsive records as directed by the Commission Public Records Officer or CEO.
- e) Notify the Public Records Officer of exempt records identified in response to public records requests.
- f) Maintain records in accordance with the retention desktop guide specific to their positions.
- g) Provide the Public Records Officer with destruction logs and inform them of any records that need to be transferred to the Washington State Archives.

Commissioner Responsibilities

- a) Maintain records in accordance with the Commission's Records Retention Schedule, paper and electronic, regarding agency business.
- b) Submit the requested records to the Public Records Officer in response to public records requests.

Records Available for Inspection

All records maintained by the Commission are available for public review unless specifically exempted by law. The public is entitled to access public records, under reasonable conditions, during regular business hours, and receive copies of these records upon paying the cost of the copies, if applicable.

Records Exempt from Disclosure

Exemptions to public disclosure include, but are not limited to:

- Personal information in any files maintained for employees, appointees, or elected officials of any public agency to the extent that disclosure would violate their right to privacy (reference [RCW 42.56.230 \(3\)](#)). Records that are relevant to a controversy to which an agency is a party but which records would not be available to another party under the rules of pretrial discovery for causes pending in the superior courts (reference [RCW 42.56.290](#)).
- Lists of individuals requested for commercial purposes (reference [RCW 42.56.070 \(9\)](#)). Credit card numbers, debit card numbers, electronic check numbers, card expiration dates, or bank or other financial account numbers, except when disclosure is expressly required or governed by other law (reference [RCW 42.56.230 \(5\)](#)).
- Applications for public employment, including the names of applicants, resumes, and other related materials submitted with respect to the applicant (reference [RCW 42.56.250 \(2\)](#)).
- Residential addresses, residential telephone numbers, personal wireless telephone numbers, personal electronic mail addresses, Social Security numbers and emergency contact information of employees or volunteers of a public agency, and the names, dates of birth, residential addresses, residential telephone numbers, personal wireless telephone numbers, personal electronic mail addresses, Social Security numbers, and emergency contact information of dependents of employees or volunteers of a public agency that are held by any agency in personnel records, public employment related records, or volunteer rosters, or are included in any mailing list of employees or volunteers of any public agency (reference [RCW 42.56.250 \(3\)](#)).
- Records related to determining assessments and records of assessment payments under [RCW 42.56.380 \(3\)](#).

How Requests May Be Initiated

Requests for public records may be initiated in person, by mail, email, fax or telephone. If the individual makes a request over the telephone, it is standard operating procedure to summarize the request in writing and send it back to the requester so that there is a written record of the request, when the request was made, and a description of the request. Once the requester has verified the written summary created by the Commission is an accurate statement of their request, then the Commission will work to fulfill the request. If the requester does not respond to the Commission's request for verification, then the Commission will find the request null and void.

Costs

In accordance with [RCW 42.56.120](#), the Commission reserves the right to charge a fifteen (15)-cent per page fee if the requester chooses to receive hard copies. The Commission interprets per page to mean that each side of a sheet of paper is considered one page. There is no cost for examining a public record onsite.

4.17 Records management

The Commission shall comply with [Chapter 40.14 RCW](#) regarding records retention. The records retention schedule will require as a minimum the permanent safeguarding of board minutes, annual reports, audited annual financial statements, and documents specific to the history of the Commission. The CEO shall designate an employee as the Commission's records officer to carry out the responsibilities under [RCW 40.14.040](#).

It is recognized that electronic records (email, **texts, social media posts, etc.**) are part of the records of the Commission and are to be managed in such a way as to satisfy recordkeeping requirements applicable to other forms of communication. The Commission utilizes its server storage system **Laserfiche Cloud, and Archive Social** to be compliant with this law. All **email messages** **electronic records** that are public records are subject to record retention requirements. **Email is defined as not only the messages sent and received, but the transmission and receipt of metadata as well.**

Those critical records that are essential to the operations of the Commission in the event of a natural disaster or breach of security shall be duly noted and made secure. **Off-site storage of the network server data will be accomplished via switching out of backup tape drives stored in safe deposit box at the bank. IT services/cloud storage with outside vendor.**



A) Primary Issues for WGC

- 1) **Marketing:** Promote and ensure quality of wheat and barley by addressing marketing related issues with state and government agencies/legislature.
- 2) **Agricultural Research:** Encourage and support research and facilities to optimize grower, buyer and end user benefits for wheat and barley.
- 3) **Maintain a robust transportation system for wheat and barley.**
 - *Short-Line Rail Funding:* Support state and industry efforts that provide effective and efficient transportation. **Ongoing M & O to WSDOT (Transportation Budget)**
 - *Advocate/monitor Class I Railroads to provide available, timely, cost effective/competitive service.*
 - Support preservation and expansion of river navigation system as key part of state freight capacity.
 - Monitor legislative and administrative effort regarding dams and thus river navigation.

B) Expanding Understanding/Support for Agriculture Statewide: Promote and provide education that recognizes wheat and barley growers as producers of quality, healthy products and good stewards of the land.

- 1) **Work on annual "All Ag" legislator/staff tours with financial support from all of Washington's ag groups (WAWG)**
 - 2025 Tour - TBD
- 2) **Build/implement key stakeholder outreach plan with other ag groups. (Joint WGC/WAWG depending on topic)**
 - Public Ports
 - Chambers of Commerce/EDC's
 - Legislative Dam Tour(s) – 2025 TBD
 - Media Related
 - Legislative day efforts

C) Secondary Issues for WGC (WAWG lead)

- 1) **Water quality/non-point regulations**
- 2) **Pesticides**
 - Regulations/Compliance (pre-application notice, use reporting, buffers, etc.)
 - Farm worker training funding to WSDA
 - Support expanded pesticide testing options and availability legislation
- 3) **Cap and Invest**
 - Full implementation of agriculture's exemption
 - Potential new legislation, including new energy
- 4) **Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP)**
 - County planning funding (Operating Budget)
 - Landowner cost-share (Capital Budget)
 - Buffers
- 5) **Agricultural Tax Incentives**
 - Ag Wholesale B&O Exemption

- Sales Tax Exemption on Fertilizers and Pesticides
 - Off-Road Fuel Exemption
 - Ag Equipment Repair Parts Exemption
- 6) **Labor**
- Flexibility/Relief from Agriculture Overtime