

MINUTES

LOWER LOUP NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

July 28, 2022

Ord, Nebraska

The July meeting of the Board of Directors of the Lower Loup Natural Resources District was held at the Headquarters Office, 2620 Airport Drive, Ord, Nebraska, on July 28, 2022. Vice Chairman Eschliman called the meeting to order at 5:03 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER

Directors in attendance:

James C. Adams
Darwin B. Anderson
Robert L. Bauer
John Coffey
N. Richard Hadenfeldt
Gary A. Kruse
Todd Nitsch
Chad J. Podolak
Dean G. Thede

Rollie D. Amsberry, Treasurer
Timothy E. Bartak
Beth Boesch
James Eschliman, Vice Chairman
Randy Kauk
Larry Mohrman
Alan D. Petersen
Gerald Smith
Rick Vlach

Directors absent:

Matt Lukasiewicz

Henry J. Thoene, Secretary

Staff in attendance:

Russell G. Callan, General Manager
Kim A. Lyons, Financial Secretary
Cameron Conrad, Water Modeling Coord.
V. Anne Freeman, Water Programs Sec.
Kevin Gustafson, District Engineer

Tyler Naprstek, Asst. General Manager
Larry D. Schultz, I&E Coordinator
Alan Bartels, Information Specialist
Richard L. Woollen, District Forester
Jason Moudry, Water Programs Specialist

Guests in attendance:

Bryce Bauer, LDC, NRCS, Ord
Mike Bechtold, Ord

Jim Nelson, Cairo
Dennis Hirschbrunner, Columbus

VERIFICATION OF MEETING NOTICE AND ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Chairman Eschliman asked for verification of the meeting notice. General Manager Russell Callan stated that the agenda was current, and that the meeting notices were properly published in all newspapers, posted at the NRD Headquarters office in Ord, on the NRD website, and in the eight field office locations.

ROLL CALL

Roll Call was conducted. Directors present: Adams, Amsberry, Anderson, Bartak, Bauer, Boesch, Coffey, Eschliman, Hadenfeldt, Kauk, Kruse, Mohrman, Nitsch, Petersen, Smith, Thede, Vlach. Directors Absent: Lukasiewicz, Podolak, Thoene.

EXCUSED ABSENCES

Eschliman stated that Directors Lukasiewicz and Thoene had asked to be excused.

Smith motioned, seconded by Adams, to excuse Directors Lukasiewicz and Thoene. Motion carried by electronic vote, all present voting yes.

MINUTES

Eschliman asked for corrections and/or additions to the June 23, 2022, Board meeting minutes. None were heard.

Thede motioned, seconded by Coffey, to approve the June 23, 2022, Board meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried by electronic vote, all present voting yes.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Russell Callan, General Manager, highlighted expenditures of \$10,000.00 to NARD for the Lower Platte River Basin Coalition dues; \$291,582.56 to Chief Construction for the building addition; \$10,000.00 to Greater Loup Valley Activities for the contribution to the Valley County Water Trail Project; \$46,264.64 to JEO Consulting Group for work on the WFPO projects and \$3,795.00 and \$945.00 to Speed Services, LLC for septic pumping at Davis Creek and Pibel Lake, respectively.

Bartak asked when the building construction was expected to be completed. Callan stated at the end of August. Adams asked if the land treatment cost-share of \$34,031.18 was to one producer. Callan stated that it was and that it was only a partial planned grazing system because the remainder could not be completed this year.

Boesch motioned, seconded by Mohrman, to approve the July 28, 2022, Treasurer's Report. Motion carried by electronic vote, all present voting yes.

The Treasurer's Report Approval Policy states that the approved expenditures are to be published and each director who has per diem and/or reimbursement of expenses included in such financial reports, abstains from voting for the approval of his or her own per diem and/or expense reimbursement.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Eschliman asked if anyone from the public had any comments. None were heard.

FORESTER'S REPORT

Richard Woollen, District Forester, reported on the funding available from the Nebraska Department of Ag for buffer strip contracts. He said there was close to \$90,000 available and that payments range from \$25 to \$225 an acre for either grass buffer or riparian buffer strips. Woollen also showed a summary of the funds available throughout the state. He presented a map showing buffer locations throughout the District and explained a new layer that was developed for the GIS program to assist technicians in conducting status reviews.

Bauer asked about the length of contracts. Woollen explained that most are 10 years; however, they can be written for less.

NRCS REPORT

Bryce Bauer, NRCS, Ord, reported that they would be advertising for the RC position in Burwell and St. Paul. He also reported that all the 2022 Compliance Reviews had been completed and that only 2 in the District were out of compliance. Bauer stated that additional funding had been requested for CSP and that exact dollar amounts available would be known later. He also reported that the EQIP contracts were completed for the year and that there was a lot of pipe being installed and cedar cuttings conducted.

Bauer stated that Grant Gydesen and Lisa McMillan would be focusing on programs for burning grassland in the Sandhills area. Smith asked if they would write plans. Bauer answered that they would, but some would be taken care of locally. Boesch asked how many EQIP contracts there were and Bauer said there were close to 60.

Podolak arrived at 5:14 p.m.

INFORMATION & EDUCATION REPORT

Crop Water Use

Larry Schultz, I&E Coordinator, reported that the NRD had worked with the Northeast Research Center and that crop water use reporting for the entire state was now available on the NRD website. He stated that it shows usage from crops such as alfalfa, corn, soybeans, and also provided bluegrass lawn data.

“Know Your Well” Program

Schultz reported that he and Alan Bartels, Information Specialist, had attended the Statewide I&E staff meeting and took part in the “Know Your Well” program. He said the program was used to collaborate with high schools to conduct water quality testing and that with the program the kids will be sent out within a few miles of their school to test for various water contents.

ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER’S REPORT

Davis Creek Recreation Area

Tylr Naprstek, Assistant General Manager, reported that Davis Creek water levels had started to decline as expected due to irrigation demands. He also reported that the campground reservations have slowed down toward the end of August. He stated there had not been any issues and he had received lots of positive comments.

Chemigation

Naprstek reported that 906 inspections had been completed and that there were 53 suspensions, all due to mainline check valves. He stated that the techs had roughly 300 sites left to check. He said the techs were also offering water sampling while at the site. He said samples in Area 30 had been completed by Ed Drozd and that Mike Lorenz still had some left in Area 28. He also reported that Jason Moudry and Ken Dawson had completed isotope samples in Area 29 and were working on nitrate samples.

Drought Monitoring

Naprstek reported that last week most of the District was between Levels D1 & D2 and that there were still a few dry spots, but things were looking better.

NDEE Beach Watch

Naprstek reported that Moudry and LeeAnn Smith had been testing area lakes for bacteria and blue-green algae and that Pibel Lake was high for E.coli this week. He speculated that it was due to a lot of geese activity, the recent fish kill, and possible restroom issues.

PROGRAMS/PROJECTS COMMITTEE

Master Plan Update

Kruse reported that the draft of the Master Plan had been sent to the tablets for review.

Naprstek stated there were some grammar corrections, that OPPD had been removed, and that “Tire Collection” had been renamed “Alternative Collection Events,” to include tires, electronic, etc.

Kruse motioned, seconded by Boesch, to approve the LLNRD Mater Plan Update as presented. Motion carried by electronic vote. Directors voting yes: Amsberry, Anderson, Bartak, Bauer, Boesch, Coffey, Eschliman, Hadenfeldt, Kauk, Kruse, Mohrman, Nitsch, Petersen, Podolak, Smith, Thede, Vlach. Director voting no: Adams. Directors absent: Lukasiewicz, Thoene.

Mira Creek

Kruse reported that Kevin “Gus” Gustafson, District Engineer, told the Committee that there would be a meeting held September 8th at the 60% completion benchmark. Gus stated the meeting would be used to explain where the project was at in the process and what all was being done. The meeting would be held in person only and there would be stations set up explaining the process.

Mud Creek

Gus reported that JEO was putting together a letter for Villages with no identified projects and that there would be meetings in Broken Bow and Ansley on August 8th.

Pibel Lake Discussion – Restrooms

Naprstek stated that the foundation on the restroom located by the boat launch and the dually in the main camping area have begun to show age. He stated that they were both there when the NRD took over the lake. Naprstek said that the old restrooms have enough solid mass at the bottom of the pit that it cannot all be pumped out. He was working on getting quotes to have them replaced.

Sargent Flood Project

Kruse reported that Sargent was working on the HMP grant application and that they had another bad rain event. He stated there was more flooding within the city. It was reported that they would know more on grants in the fall. Callan reported that the WSF grant application would be submitted tomorrow.

Building Update

Kruse reported that, at the time of the Committee meetings, painting was being done. Callan reported that they were putting up cork boards and that the shop was now useable and that windows could be installed in the next couple of days. He stated that the project should be completed by the end of August.

WATER RESOURCES COMMITTEE

New Nitrate Rules and Regulations Draft Discussion

Naprstek reported that the Committee discussed the nitrogen vulnerability model Cam Conrad had been working on. Callan stated that he would be talking to the Nitrogen Efficiency Use Group next week in Lincoln and would discuss the model. Naprstek stated that the rules were in draft form and were being reviewed by Blankenau. He said staff would continue to work to develop the model further.

NARD/UNL Nitrogen Dashboard Tool Discussion

Naprstek reported that NARD had funding available from the Corn Board and various ag groups to analyze nitrogen use efficiency and they were working on a dashboard. Callan and Naprstek advised that it would be good to stay involved with their discussions and that more information would be available later.

Buffalo County GW Model

It was reported that the Committee reviewed options to have LRE use AEM flight data and use a model to see how the aquifer was affected in the area. The project objective was reviewed, and it was discussed that the data provided could be used to do a closer analysis where water levels were not rebounding. Two options were discussed -- a change model and robust model. It was discussed that there was a WSF grant that could be applied for to cover the costs of the modeling.

Smith motioned, seconded by Podolak, to approve the “Robust” model at a cost of \$175,000 and apply for the WSF grant for the remaining \$275,000.

Boesch asked what the likelihood of getting the grant was. Naprstek stated it would depend on how many applications were received. He added that in the past there were some NRDs that were able to get full funding.

Motion carried by electronic vote, all present voting yes.

Columbus Recharge

Callan reported that the pumps had been running for seven days. He said they had been pumping into Lost Creek and that the well into Christopher’s Cove was running well. He said water made it to the river so there was still a ways to go. Callan also stated that the controls would be switched over to City operation soon. Naprstek reported that the well readouts were available in real-time on the NRD website.

Callan stated that the NRD was planning to have an open house for the project on August 24th.

SUBDISTRICT 8 VACANCY REQUEST

Eschliman reported that the vacancy had been advertised and that Dennis Hirschbrunner has expressed interest. He stated that Hirschbrunner's introduction letter was available on the tablets for review.

Dennis Hirschbrunner, Columbus, introduced himself to the Board. He reviewed some of his background, including work done as a civil engineer for various organizations.

Anderson motioned, seconded by Smith, to appoint Hirschbrunner to fill the Subdistrict 8 vacancy. Motion carried by electronic vote, all present voting yes.

Callan stated that Dennis had been part of the discussions on the Columbus project since the beginning.

BUDGET HEARING TIME AND DATE

Callan reported that the Board needed to set the time and date for the budget hearing.

Adams motioned, seconded by Nitsch, to set the Budget hearing for September 1, 2022, at 5:15 p.m. at the Lower Loup NRD Headquarters office. Motion carried by electronic vote, all present voting yes.

MANAGER'S REPORT

Litigation Update

Callan reported that he still had not heard anything on the Platte Republican Diversion.

New Hires

Callan reported that Mike Bechtold would be helping with IT support until Conrad's position was filled.

Non-action Reports

Callan showed the history of the NRD's tax asking from several years past. He also reviewed the numbers approved from the budget workshops. He reported that he added money to the vehicle fund because the NRD's order was cancelled this year. However, he could order for next year, but at a higher cost. He stated that the budget increased 36.2%. He said if money was taken out of flood and land rights, the budget could be lowered to a 23% increase. After discussion, it was decided to stick with the lowered budget and take the information to the accountants to finalize numbers.

NARD REPORT

Eschliman reported that there would be a benefits committee meeting tomorrow in Grand Island.

NRC REPORT

Hadenfeldt stated there was no new information to report.

RC&D REPORT

Adams reported that a metal collection event was held and was very successful. He also reported that the RC&D had bikes to give away and salt lick tubs available as well. He said that they take electronics donations at any time and have a clothing closet set up at the Christian Church. He reported that they were also selling raffle tickets to help fund the new Legion Club project.

ANNOUNCEMENTS / FUTURE MEETING TOPICS

It was announced that this would be Conrad's last meeting. Also, Committee meetings would be held on August 23rd and the August Board meeting would be held on September 1st to accommodate budget requirements.

It was also announced that the NRD Annual Conference would be held the end of September.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business before the Board, Chairman Eschliman declared the meeting adjourned at 6:22 p.m.

Roster for attendance of this meeting and tally of votes cast on motions at this meeting are being filed with the official minutes of this meeting at the Lower Loup Natural Resources District's Headquarters Office, 2620 Airport Drive, Ord, Nebraska. Publication notification of this meeting was made via a newspaper in each county within the district. The next Board of Directors meeting will be held September 1, 2022, at 5:00 p.m., at the Headquarters Office in Ord, Nebraska.

Henry J. Thoene
Secretary