

MINUTES

LOWER LOUP NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

June 22, 2023

Ord, Nebraska

The June 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 June 22, 2023. Vice Chairman Thoene called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER

Directors in attendance:

James C. Adams
John R. Coffey, Secretary
Randy Kauk
Gary A. Kruse
Todd Nitsch
Chad J. Podolak
Henry J. Thoene, Vice Chairman
Rick Vlach

Timothy E. Bartak
N. Richard Hadenfeldt
Thomas L. Knutson
Larry Mohrman
Alan Petersen
Gerald Smith
Alexander L. Vlach

Directors absent:

Rollie D. Amsberry, Treasurer
Robert L. Bauer
Matt Lukasiewicz

Darwin B. Anderson
James Eschliman, Chairman

Staff in attendance:

Russell G. Callan, General Manager
Irene F. Kreifels, Administrative Assistant
Alan Bartels, I & E Coordinator
Dell Harris, Water Resources Specialist
Kevin Gustafson, District Engineer
Brian Kolar, Projects Specialist

Tylr Naprstek, Asst. General Manager
Kim A. Lyons, Financial Secretary
Brant Bechtold, I & E Specialist
V. Anne Freeman, Water Programs Secretary
Cacey Wilken, Water Modeling Coordinator

Guests in attendance:

Bryce Bauer, NRCS, Ord

Katy McNeil, Exec. Dir., Col. Area Children's Museum

VERIFICATION OF MEETING NOTICE AND ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Acting Chairman Thoene 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 required newspapers, posted at the NRD Headquarters office in Ord, on the NRD website, and in the eight field office locations.

EXCUSED ABSENCES

Thoene stated that Directors Amsberry, Anderson, Bauer, Eschliman, and Lukasiewicz had asked to be excused.

Knutson motioned, seconded by Coffey, to excuse absent Directors Amsberry, Anderson, Bauer, Eschliman, Lukasiewicz. Motion carried by electronic vote. Directors voting yes: Adams, Bartak, Coffey, Hadenfeldt, Kauk, Knutson, Kruse, Mohrman, Nitsch, Petersen, Podolak, Smith, Thoene, A. Vlach, R. Vlach. Directors Absent: Amsberry, Anderson, Bauer, Eschliman, Lukasiewicz.

MINUTES

Thoene asked for corrections and/or additions to the May 25, 2023, Board meeting minutes. None were heard.

Kauk motioned, seconded by Adams, to approve the May 25, 2023, Board meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried by electronic vote. All present voting yes.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Russell Callan, General Manager, highlighted expenditures of \$300.00 to Ord FFA Chapter and \$525.00 to Wheeler Central FFA Chapter for 2023 Range Camp Scholarships given from the Larry Schultz Outdoor Education Memorial Scholarship; \$3,360.00 to Baird Holm for work on the Platte Republican Diversion; \$4,660.00 to Speed Services LLC for pumping out outhouses at Davis Creek and Pibel Lake. He also noted expenditures of \$43,935.11 to NARD for conservation tree inventory; \$6,400.00 to EA Engineering for work on the Cover Crop Study; \$3,000.00 to Sherman County for contribution for Bowman Lake maintenance; \$5,561.50 to JEO Consulting Group for work on the WFPO Projects; and \$1,221.00 to the Village of Arcadia for a contribution to their kayak launch.

Knutson motioned, seconded by Petersen, to approve the June 22, 2023, 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

Thoene asked for comments from the public. None were heard.

FORESTER'S REPORT

Callan stated that Lewis was not present; however, there was an update in the agenda.

NRCS REPORT

Bryce Bauer, NRCS, Ord, reported that they are finishing up 2023 CSP and EQIP contracts and reviews for HEL and wetland compliance. He said out of all 10 counties, there were 7-8 contracts that were out of compliance. He stated that there has been less no-till and less cover crops this year. Bauer stated that they are starting to promote their 2024 programs – nutrient management and cover crops in high nitrate areas. There will be more funding available from Federal Inflation Reduction Act climate allocations. He also reported that there were the first two signups for the Advanced Nutrient Management Program.

COLUMBUS AREA CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

Katy McNeil, Executive Director, Columbus Area Children's Museum, gave a presentation on the museum project they have been working on. She said that the museum will be in the Columbus Community Building and is set to open in October of this year. McNeil reviewed the history of the \$2.3M project and went over some of the various stations that will be set up in the Children's Museum. She also reviewed the staffing plan, as well as educational session plans that included guest educators. She added that potential plans are to be open most days, including some holidays, from 10:00 a.m-5:00 p.m., with possibly some evening hours, but said that an exact schedule has not been set. Operations will be funded by admission costs, and the museum will rent the 10,000 sq. ft. space in the facility after the first year, based on number of visitors.

McNeil answered questions from the Board. She reviewed their funding plans and reported that they have raised just over \$1 million so far for the project. She also reviewed several grants that will or have been applied for.

Callan stated he thought the project fit into the NRD's education efforts on water and production and that the Lower Loup NRD could easily fit into the \$30,000 contribution range. After further discussion, it was decided to have the Programs/Projects Committee further review the project before taking formal action.

INFORMATION & EDUCATION REPORT

CCC – Ord Campus Entomology Camp

Alan Bartels, I&E Coordinator, reported that the CCC-Ord Campus Entomology Camp was held at Aagaard Farm in mid-June and that Moudry and Ruterbories spoke about NRD work

and history. He also stated that a few days later he did a biodiversity educational activity with 10 students attending. Bartels said that a beginner's entomology camp would be held in July through CCC, and that he would assist with that as well.

2023 LLNRD Photo Contest Winners

Bartels reported that Robyn Koelling won first place, with Ryan Flynn and A.J. Dahm following for 2nd and 3rd place entries in the annual contest. He stated that the first place winner will receive their print on canvas after the next winner is selected.

Crop Water Use Report

Bartels reported that Brant Bechtold, I&E Specialist, using data from the High Plains Regional Climate Center Network and UNL, has created a new crop water use report online which is different than what has been used in the past. Information will be updated on Wednesdays through harvest with data for corn, soybeans and potatoes.

Mudfest

Bartels reported that there will be a Mudfest educational event to be held in late September in the Arboretum. He stated that he has helped other NRDs with events and that volunteers from Central Platte, Lower Niobrara, and Lewis & Clark NRDs will help, along with volunteers from Nebraska Extension, JEO Consulting and NRCS. The event will feature six 30-minute sessions on soil and water.

Outreach

Bartels reported that "*In the Loup*" was mailed out on May 12th and "*Water Matters*" was mailed the beginning of June. He said there will be media mailings every two weeks which will also be posted to social media and on the NRD website, and that single page mailers will be sent to producers in water quality areas when needed.

CITY OF FULLERTON SELENIUM PROJECT

Alan Klopek, City Administrator, City of Fullerton, met with the Board to request a funding contribution to do a study on selenium. He stated that the water that comes into the community crosses the Cedar River and that test wells have shown high concentrations of heavy metals and clay. He said that the community can no longer use 2 of the 3 municipal wells due to the selenium levels exceeding the current maximum contaminant levels.

The City of Fullerton is hoping to find a location for a new municipal well, using Lower Loup NRD's AEM studies. They are also seeking financial assistance for the project.

Klopek stated that they would like to take water samples from existing wells, as well as to possibly drill test wells where water is scarce, in areas that are not in the wellhead protection area. He said the total cost for the project is around \$46,000. Selenium levels were discussed,

with Klopek stating that the threshold is 50 ppm and that levels of the city well are testing at about 30 ppm in winter and 40-41 ppm after heavy usage. He stated that water restrictions must be put in place to do what they can to protect the current well.

Naprstek stated there would be twenty sites tested.

Smith asked about any grant funding to drill and install a new well. Klopek stated that they have funding for installation once a site is found.

Callan stated we can have them come back for a second meeting; however, they were wanting to start in July. Participation percentages and total allowable amounts were discussed.

Bartak motioned, seconded by Kauk, to participate in the City of Fullerton Selenium Project at a rate of 20% not to exceed \$9,200. Motion carried by electronic vote. Directors voting yes: Adams, Bartak, Coffey, Kauk, Knutson, Kruse, Nitsch, Petersen, Podolak, Smith, Thoene, A. Vlach, R. Vlach. Directors voting no: Hadenfeldt, Mohrman. Directors Absent: Amsberry, Anderson, Bauer, Eschliman, Lukasiewicz.

ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

Recreation Areas

Naprstek reported that the Davis Creek reservable sites were full for the next five weekends and that there will be a camp host on site through the rest of the season. He stated the reservoir is 90% full and may not get any higher because water is being diverted already.

Naprstek stated that on Memorial Day weekend, there were 576 crossings recorded on the traffic meter, which was higher than counts in past years.

He also reported that Nebraska Game and Parks Commission had a goose roundup on Tuesday at Pibel Lake and that 26 goslings were counted.

Drought Report

Naprstek gave a presentation on the drought conditions throughout the District. He showed the 20 management areas and highlighted the most severe areas.

Naprstek reviewed the spring static water level readings with a high concentration of "lowest level on record" around the Columbus area. It was also reported that severe drought conditions exist around Columbus and in Areas 20 and 18. He showed the regional outlook of the United States, showing improvement due to rain.

Discussion was held on trigger spots in the North Loup River near St. Paul as being lower than what we are used to. The Middle Loup River is at or slightly above median levels. Naprstek stated that there have not been any reported localized drought impact issues from producers.

Naprstek also reported that Area 18, south of the South Loup River, has 479 certified irrigated fields, with 57,000 irrigated acres. Twenty-six of the fields have meters and there are 426 surface acres. Areas 20, 28, and 30 are fully metered. Outside of that, in Area 20, there are 305 irrigation systems, with 22 having flow meters installed, totaling about 20,000 acres. Surface water rights total 2,362 acres.

Chemigation

Naprstek reported that so far 3,330 permits have been issued with approximately 1,200 inspections to do this year.

Flowmeter Grant

Naprstek reported that the Nebraska Environmental Trust grant is done, and the final report will be prepared soon. He stated this was a 2019 grant that was extended due to COVID. Between the Lower Loup NRD and NET, about \$171,000 was spent on a total of 130 meters throughout the District. NET funds cannot be used for Areas 28, 29, or 30. Approximately 1,300 meters have been installed throughout the District, including Areas, 28, 29, and 30.

Other

The Lower Loup NRD is one of three districts helping to do future training for natural resources technicians. Bartels has started putting together some videos highlighting some of the jobs our technicians do. They are being shown on YouTube and our Facebook page.

ENGINEER'S REPORT

Annual Dam Inspections

Kevin Gustafson, District Engineer, reported that all the 22 dam inspections were completed. There are 6 in which the agreements had not been located; of those 6, 2 are in decent shape and the other 4 are not. He added that of the remaining 16 with agreements, 4 were in decent shape and 8 were in good shape but needed immediate maintenance. He also stated that 4 were identified as dams that Lower Loup NRD's involvement with them should cease.

Pibel Lake

Gustafson reported that the ADA ramp was completed connecting the parking area to the restrooms.

Kruse asked if there was anything to report on the North Loup or Sargent projects. Gustafson stated that on the Sargent project, FEMA asked for more information from NEMA. His thoughts were that they wanted clarification on budget numbers. He added that there needs to be an O&M agreement between the City of Sargent and the Lower Loup NRD. They also wanted verification of water sustainability funds that would be available.

Gustafson stated that the North Loup project is under review at the Water Management Center, and they had requested background information on where figures were obtained for damages.

MANAGER'S REPORT

Litigation Update

Callan reported that the Platte Republican Diversion appeal is being put together.

New Hires

None

Non-Action Reports

None

FY 2024 BUDGET WORK SESSION #2

Callan went over the following budget codes and the suggested amounts for budget.

Code 475 – Buffer Strip Program - \$150,000
Code 462 – Arboretum Budget - \$10,000
Code 438 – Special Projects – \$1,215,296
Code 473 & 301 – Water Quality Fund - \$185,000
Code 301&303 – State and Federal Grant Funds - \$4,000,000
Code 422 – Scrap Tire Collection - \$45,000
Code 471 – Water Well Decommissioning Fund - \$30,000
Code 470 & 440 – Land Treatment - \$440,000
Code 441 – Project Construction - \$7,000,000
Code 443 – Project Land Rights - \$800,000
Code 445 – Project Legal Costs - \$70,000
Code 447 – Assessment Projects - \$2,500 (Duncan East IPA)
Code 448 – Assessment Projects - \$300 (Lost Creek IPA)
Code 449 & 309 – Stock and Stock Purchases - \$160,000
Code 165 – Machinery & Equipment - \$65,000
Code 476 – Community Forestry Program - \$35,000
Code 477 – Prescribed Burn Program - \$30,000
Code 441.01 – Park and Recreation Financial Assistance Program - \$12,000
Code 163 & 161 – Capital Improvements & Land - \$300,000

Kruse stated that with land values up, he thinks the levy could be lower. Smith asked about pulling money out now, or waiting to see what the valuations are. It was discussed that the August meeting will be held on the 31st, so there would be time to review the valuations and determine if cuts can be made.

Smith motioned, seconded by R. Vlach, to tentatively approve the second half of the FY 2024 Budget as presented. Motion carried by electronic vote, all present voting yes.

NARD REPORT

Eschliman was not present to report.

DUNCAN EAST ASSESSMENT

It was discussed that an additional assessment was needed to continue maintenance payments.

Kruse motioned, seconded by Mohrman, to approve an assessment for the Duncan East IPA area. Motion carried by electronic vote. Directors voting yes: Adams, Bartak, Hadenfeldt, Kauk, Knutson, Kruse, Mohrman, Nitsch, Petersen, Podolak, Smith, Thoene, A. Vlach, R. Vlach. Director abstaining: Coffey. Directors Absent: Amsberry, Anderson, Bauer, Eschliman, Lukasiewicz.

NRC REPORT

Knutson reported that the scoring committee will meet next Monday and that there are eleven large projects and a number of small ones. He stated that he believes the NRC Board meeting will be in July.

ANNOUNCEMENTS / FUTURE MEETING TOPICS

Callan stated that vulnerability modeling should be available for the next Water Committee meeting.

Kruse asked about the operation of the Columbus project. Callan stated that it has been running and that pumps were shut down for storms and then started again. He added that operations & maintenance will be split between the NRD and ADM.

Callan provided an update on the leaking roof at Headquarters. He said that the construction company was looking at wrapping the whole wall.

Coffey stated that Loup Power was unhappy with their fiberglass fishing pier, stating that it had broken.

R. Vlach asked if there was any updated information on the property in the flood buyout near Columbus. There was no current information.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business before the Board, Acting Chairman Thoene declared the meeting adjourned at 7:05 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 required newspapers. The next Board of Directors meeting will be held July 27, 2023, at 5:00 p.m., at the Headquarters Office in Ord, Nebraska.

John R. Coffey
Secretary