

MINUTES

LOWER LOUP NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

October 22, 2020

Ord, Nebraska

The October 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 October 22, 2020. Chairman Citta called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER

Directors in attendance:

James C. Adams
Darwin B. Anderson
Robert L. Bauer
Joseph L. Citta, Chairman
Jim Eschliman, Vice Chairman
Randy Kauk
Matt Lukasiewicz
Todd Nitsch
Chad J. Podolak
Dean G. Thede
Rick Vlach

Rollie D. Amsberry, Treasurer
Timothy E. Bartak
Beth Boesch
John Coffey
N. Richard Hadenfeldt
Gary A. Kruse
Larry Mohrman
Alan D. Petersen
Gerald Smith
Henry J. Thoene, Secretary

Directors absent:

None

Staff in attendance:

Russell G. Callan, General Manager
Irene F. Kreifels, Administrative Assistant
Richard L. Woollen, District Forester
Larry D. Schultz, I&E Coordinator
V. Anne Freeman, Water Programs Secretary

Tylr Naprstek, Assistant General Manager
Kim A. Lyons, Financial Secretary
Dell R. Harris, Water Resources Specialist
Cameron Conrad, Water Modeling Coord.

Guests in attendance:

Bryce Bauer, Liaison DC, NRCS, Ord
Sam Brower, Omaha

Tyler Kaps, Severson, Lammers & Abel

NOTICE OF OPEN MEETING LAW POSTING

Chairman Citta referred those in attendance to the open meeting law information posted in the Board room and stated that meeting material was available at the entrance to the Board room.

VERIFICATION OF MEETING NOTICE AND ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Chairman Citta 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 web site, and in the eight field office locations.

ROLL CALL

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

EXCUSED ABSENCES

Chairman Citta stated Thoene was on his way to the meeting, so there were no absent Directors.

MINUTES

Chairman Citta asked for corrections and/or additions to the September 24, 2020, Board meeting minutes. None were heard.

Boesch motioned, seconded by Smith, to approve the September 24, 2020, Board meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried by roll call vote. Directors voting yes: Adams, Amsberry, Anderson, Bartak, Bauer, Boesch, Citta, Coffey, Eschliman, Hadenfeldt, Kauk, Kruse, Lukasiewicz, Mohrman, Nitsch, Petersen, Podolak, Smith, Thede, Vlach. Director absent: Thoene.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Thoene arrived at 5:05 p.m.

Russell Callan, General Manager, highlighted expenditures of \$1,737.00 to JEO for work on the drought plan; \$3,861.07 to HDR for project construction costs on the Columbus Project; and \$39,298.25 to JEO for work on the Mud Creek WFPO.

Boesch asked about expenses of \$3,595.55 to Kruml Law Office. Callan reported it was for appraisal work. Coffey asked what the water quality expenses entail. Callan stated they could be any number of things, including supplies such as ice and sampling expenses.

Eschliman motioned, seconded by Coffey, to approve the October 22, 2020, Treasurer's Report and pay all bills. Motion carried by electronic vote. Directors voting yes: Amsberry, Anderson, Bartak, Bauer, Boesch, Citta, Coffey, Eschliman, Hadenfeldt, Kauk, Kruse, Lukasiewicz, Mohrman, Nitsch, Petersen, Podolak, Smith, Thede, Thoene, Vlach. Director voting no: Adams.

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

No comments.

FY 2020 AUDIT REPORT

Tyler Kaps of Severson, Lammers and Abel, stated he appreciated the work the NRD staff put into compiling the information for the audit. Kaps gave a detailed explanation of the audit to the Directors and answered questions that were presented. He stated the audit turned out well with no discrepancies. The full audit report can be viewed at the office of the Lower Loup Natural Resources District during regular business hours.

Smith motioned, seconded by Anderson, to approve the FY 2020 Audit as presented. Motion carried by electronic vote, all present voting yes.

FORESTER'S REPORT

Richard Woollen, District Forester, reported that buffer strip renewals were going well, and he had heard from all producers with upcoming expiring contracts stating that they wanted to renew.

Woollen reported that the Spring, 2021, tree planting request had been submitted and he would be working on planning inventory for the season. He stated that usually he could go to the nursery, but this year visitors were not allowed due to the COVID-19 situation. However, he was able to take a look at the crop and see the new building the nursery was constructing to house more seedlings when he made a trip to pick up the fall planting container trees.

NRCS REPORT

Bryce Bauer, NRCS, was present via teleconference. He reported that they were currently taking applications for the 2021 EQIP and CSP program and that the deadline was November

20th. He stated that last year there were a lot of brush management projects and they have been working on getting other projects. Bauer also reported that the NRCS offices are remaining closed to the public and that staff was allowing appointments with masks required, but staff has been trying to do most meetings outside.

Callan stated he was approached by the Rainwater Basin people for doing a cost-share for brush grinders for contractors. They told him there was a shortage of contractors and he asked Bryce if he had seen that issue arise. Bauer stated he had seen some of that, but felt that as more projects were started, more contractors would start coming in if they saw there was money to be made. Bauer stated that there was a need right now and a lot of producers were purchasing their own machines due to the shortage of contractors.

Adams expressed concerns about NRCS needing more staff. Bauer stated they were strapped for help but had been working on hiring new people and building staff up. However, he does feel that they were working more efficiently with the procedures that were developed for working away from the office and have been able to spread the workload out more.

INFORMATION & EDUCATION REPORT

Larry Schultz, Information & Education Coordinator, reported that the Hazard Mitigation Plan grant was received. He said he had been in touch with FEMA and JEO and they were working on getting the plan updated. He said they were looking at kicking off on the project in January or February. The plan update would cost \$180,000 and the grant would cover all but \$45,000.

Schultz reported that he was planning for the awards dinner which is currently set for December 17th at the Trotter Event Center, but could be rescheduled if needed depending on the COVID-19 pandemic. He stated that, in the past, the meeting time had been changed to allow for the dinner to take place and asked if the Board wished to do the same this year.

Adams motioned, seconded by Anderson, to set the start time for the December Board of Directors meeting to 4:00 p.m. Motion carried by electronic vote, all present voting yes.

Schultz also reported that the Envirothon would be held virtually next year.

ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

Davis Creek

Tyler Naprstek, Assistant General Manager, reported that Davis Creek had been winterized and that the NRD was working with the county to work on the road to Davis Creek.

Pibel Lake

Naprstek reported that facilities at Pibel Lake had been winterized.

Cover Crop Study

Naprstek reported that the fields have had cattle panels installed around the sensors and that cover crops had been planted, so everything is on track for moisture monitoring for the off-season. He stated that Central Platte NRD field staff had been helping Lower Loup NRD staff with the project.

WATER RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Columbus Recharge Project

Callan informed the Board that he and Citta had met with the advisory group and that he had received the MOU back from the City of Columbus. He reported that he thinks it is close to being finalized; however, there were a few things the City wanted to adjust and it has been sent back to their attorney for review. Callan stated that ADM, Platte County, Christopher's Cove, and the City of Columbus were all present for the advisory group meeting.

2020 New Irrigated Acres Allocation

Dell Harris, Water Resources Specialist, explained a power point showing a breakdown of the acres sought in the 49 applications received. He reviewed the high scores for each basin and the proposed timeline. He stated that if the new acres were approved tonight, approval letters would be mailed tomorrow, and producers would have until July 1, 2021, to complete certification. Naprstek explained that there was no requirement to irrigate.

Cam Conrad, Water Modeling Coordinator, explained the modeling slides showing impact to the basin and showed a layout of each application location on the map. He explained the estimated groundwater levels in the year 2065 and highlighted the effects in the high-water areas. He also showed the report given to the Lower Platte River Basin Coalition.

Smith motioned, seconded by Eschliman, to grant 49 requests for 2,015.62 new irrigated acres for 2020 – 852.98 acres in the North Loup Basin; 689.31 in the Beaver Basin; and 473.33 acres in the Middle Loup Basin.

Kauk asked what could be done if excess water was depleted. Callan stated that the drought mitigation plan would be followed.

Motion carried by electronic vote, all present voting yes.

Kauk asked if the acre information would be posted for public view. Callan stated it would be available online.

Lower Platte River Basin Coalition

Naprstek reported that the NRD had used only about 15% of their allotment, while other NRDs were at about 18%, so he felt that things were going well. Citta asked if Lower Loup had

updates on what other NRDs have released for acres. Naprstek stated information would be available at the next Committee meeting.

Water Modeling: ELM & CENEB Comparison

Naprstek explained that CENEB is a derivative of ELM and that staff was looking at how the models react differently and hopefully be able to pick out the good from each. He reported that DNR wanted everyone to use the same models and numbers and that he and Conrad were reviewing and helping to develop a model for all to use going forward.

Cover Crop Study & Cost-Share

Naprstek reviewed the cover crop cost-share rate of \$30/acre with a \$4,500 maximum per field and that in the Clear Creek/Pibel Lake program \$80,951 in cost-share had been provided, and in Area 28 \$90,853 in cost-share was provided.

PROGRAMS/PROJECTS COMMITTEE

Kruse reported there would be an update on the NARD building during the NARD report.

North Loup Flood Mitigation

Kruse reported that the interlocal agreement with North Loup was approved at their last board meeting and the NRD had a scope of work with some changes that staff would be discussing with JEO and then given to the Board.

City of Sargent Flood Project

Kruse reported that the interlocal agreement with the City had been approved and they were currently dealing with a grant that must be spent by the end of the year. Callan reported that if the money was committed to a project, it appeared that they would be able to keep the money. He said he would be in contact with them to see what they wanted to do.

Sargent East IPA

Staff met with JEO who was working to set up landowner meetings.

Sandhills Task Force Project (Kruml)

Callan informed the Board that the Task Force had backed out of the project.

Building Addition

Callan reported that he had been in contact with Cannon Moss, who did the Board Room addition to the building, and that the cost estimate for the entire addition being considered was \$1.29 million. He stated the design and blueprints would cost around \$124,000 and the tree

cooler portion would be around \$16,800. Adams asked about tree sales and if there was a decline. Woollen stated that sales had been roughly 80,000 to 90,000 seedlings per year but the actual count varied from year to year.

Adams also asked if there was a need for more office space and what staff would be added. Callan stated that the NRD was looking to hire an engineer and a secretary for the engineer and that money has been budgeted for a range conservationist and an I&E assistant. He said two people were currently sharing an office. Callan showed a layout of the proposed addition.

Kruse motioned, seconded by Boesch, to approve architect/design fees of \$124,000 for the proposed additions to the NRD Headquarters.

Boesch stated she thought this was a good starting point and that design must be done before bids can be taken to see if additions should continue. Lukasiewicz stated he had a hard time spending that kind of money if it was not going toward a project that is open. Callan explained that there was \$1 million set aside in the budget for the building addition that is separate from other projects.

Adams asked if current staff still does maintenance on the NRD vehicles in the shop. Callan replied that they do maintenance and oil changes but do not completely overhaul engines like they used to because everything is now electronic.

Podolak stated he thought it was important that the Board be convinced that this was necessary. Eschliman stated that we must follow the process to get more information. Kruse stated that the tree coolers needed to be replaced. Petersen stated that if space was not made available for more staff, the NRD may have to pull back on some projects because additional personnel was needed to handle everything. Lukasiewicz expressed concern over cost of materials and regulation changes. With no further discussion, the vote was held.

Motion carried by electronic vote. Directors voting yes: Amsberry, Anderson, Bauer, Boesch, Citta, Coffey, Eschliman, Hadenfeldt, Kauk, Kruse, Nitsch, Petersen, Podolak, Smith, Thede, Thoene, Vlach. Directors voting no: Adams, Bartak, Lukasiewicz, Mohrman.

Sandhills Grant for Burning and NRD Involvement

Callan reported that Andy Bishop had contacted him about being part of a grant applying for \$100,000 to help with the purchase of tree grinding equipment. He said that, in the beginning, they wanted the NRD to purchase equipment and rent it out. However, Callan stated it may be better to do a grant for others to purchase their own equipment. Callan stated he would get more information for a later date.

Small Dams Program

Kruse reported that there was interest in creating a small dams program and that money could maybe be set aside in the budget for this use. Citta asked about the concept of the program.

Callan stated that Upper Big Blue NRD had a program that is 50% of repair with a \$50,000 maximum. He reported that they budget \$100,000 per year and have been doing 1-2 dams each year. Kauk asked if the program was for new dams or the repair of old dams. Callan stated it would be for repairing existing dams. Boesch asked if it covered private dams. Callan stated it does but would encourage habitat, streambank stabilization or something similar to also be included. Citta stated a scoring system would have to be developed. More information will be provided.

Parks and Rec Assistance Program

Kruse reported that Petersburg had contacted the NRD for cost-share for trees; however, their project was already completed, so they were informed of the process for future projects.

MANAGER'S REPORT

Citta announced that there would be an Executive Session at the end of the meeting.

Litigation Update

None

New Hires

None

Non-action Reports

None

Columbus Recharge Project

Callan stated this item would be discussed in Executive Session.

NARD REPORT

Eschliman reported that the Annual meeting was held in Kearney and that Dean Edson gave a building progress report. The NARD Board approved the purchase of a building in Lincoln and it had been purchased. He stated that a portion of the building was currently rented, and that that income would help offset some of the purchase cost.

Boesch asked if anything had been received from insurance. Eschliman reported that they were still working with the insurance company. Eschliman stated that the building should be closed on by the end of the year and that they were working on a rent agreement until closing is finalized.

Eschliman announced that Butch Koehlmoos would be inducted into the NARD Hall of Fame. He also stated that Edson offered his thanks for the NRD's contribution.

NRC REPORT

Hadenfeldt reported that the next meeting would be held Wednesday in Kearney and that they would vote on the scoring. He stated there were two major projects and five smaller projects.

RC&D REPORT

Adams and Thoene both reported that there was nothing new to report. There had been a weed management meeting held last week but neither were able to attend.

ANNOUNCEMENTS / FUTURE MEETING TOPICS

It was announced that the November meeting would be held a week early due to the Thanksgiving holiday.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Smith motioned, seconded by Kruse, to enter Executive Session to discuss legal issues and proprietary business matters at 7:33 p.m. Motion carried by electronic vote, all present voting yes.

Smith motioned, seconded by Boesch, to exit Executive Session at 8:01 p.m. Motion carried by electronic vote, all present voting yes.

COLUMBUS RECHARGE PROJECT

City of Columbus MOU

Smith motioned, seconded by Thede, to approve the revised Memorandum of Understanding with the City of Columbus for the Columbus Recharge Project, contingent of the city's approval of the agreement. Motion carried by electronic vote, all present voting yes.

Property Purchase and Easements

Smith motioned, seconded by Coffey, to approve the purchase of the Gates property near Columbus for the Columbus Recharge Project, contingent on the approval of the Memorandum of Understanding with the City of Columbus.

Coffey asked if it was for the pipe and easement and Callan stated it was.

Motion carried by electronic vote, all present voting yes.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business before the Board, Chairman Citta declared the meeting adjourned at 8:04 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 November 19, 2020, at 5:00 p.m., at the Headquarters Office in Ord, Nebraska.

Henry J. Thoene
Secretary