

LOWER BIG BLUE NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT
BOARD MEETING
September 19, 2024
Immediately following budget and levy hearings

Notice of the meeting was published in accordance with Section 84-1411, Nebraska Statutes, in the Beatrice Daily Sun and the Wilber Republican. Notice was also sent to Radio Station KWBE, Crete News, and Fairbury Journal-News. In accordance with the Nebraska Open Meetings Act, the Open Meetings Act is posted on the north wall of the meeting room for public viewing.

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Larry Barta at 9:02 a.m.

Directors Present: Larry Barta, Ryan Birkett, Brent Katz, Steve Kelley, Bob Lorenz, Duane Parde, Jason Pohlmann, Dean Roehr, Jason Sand, Rodney Skleba, Doug Stokebrand, Chad Weichel.

Staff Present: Scott Sobotka, Manager; Tyler Weishahn, Assistant Manager; Adam Kimmerling, Office Administrator; Nick Schroeder, GIS/IT/Data Specialist; Ryan Thomas, Resources Specialist; Brandy Scholl, Gage County NRD Secretary, Programs Assistant.

Others Present: Josh Malchow, Gage County NRCS

CONSIDERATION OF EXCUSED ABSENCES

None

APPROVAL OF SEPTEMBER 19, 2024, CONSENT AGENDA

MOTION #1 was made by Doug Stokebrand, seconded by Duane Parde, to adopt the Consent Agenda for the September 19, 2024 board meeting, which includes: adoption of the agenda as submitted, approval of the August 29th, 2024 meeting minutes, financial status report dated August 31, 2024, August 2024 revenues, and expenditures; Beatrice West and Wymore Rural Water financials.

YEA: Barta, Birkett, Katz, Kelley, Lorenz, Parde, Pohlmann, Sand, Skleba, Stokebrand, Weichel. **NAY:** None
ABSTAIN: Roehr

OPEN PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

WATER COMMITTEE REPORT

Chad reviewed the water committee minutes from September 11, 2024. Two complaints have been received recently, one regarding irrigation of uncertified acres and another regarding the use of an irrigation well to fill a pond without the proper permit. These complaints are being investigated and dealt with according to the District's current rules and regulations.

A summary of the Rules and Regulations revisions was presented and discussed. Substantive changes include management by subareas delineated by geology and development, as well as area-specific trigger levels, the installation of flow meters on all high-capacity wells in the district by June 30, 2029, a pumping test alternative for well permits that do not meet the requisite score for the subarea, changes to large water user requirements, and definitions for *certified expanded acres* and *historically irrigated acres*. In addition, the water committee recommended limits on any user who intends to modify any existing well or construct a new well to use 400 acre feet per year or 1,200 acre feet during a groundwater use period. Applicants who wish to use more than that amount would be required to pay for a hydrogeologic evaluation with a minimum 20 year impact calculation of the effects of such use. A public hearing for comments on the proposed Rules and Regulations revisions is

scheduled for November 6th at 6 P.M. at the 4-H building on the Gage County Fairgrounds. The Department of Natural Resources will review the rules and provide comments at the public hearing.

MOTION #2 was made by Steve Kelley, seconded by Jason Pohlmann to approve the changes as presented.

YEA: Barta, Kelley, Lorenz, Parde, Pohlmann, Roehr, Sand, Skleba, Weichel. **NAY:** Birkett, Katz, Stokebrand
ABSTAIN: None

Tyler updated the Board on the third Water Sustainability Fund Application. The application scored highest in small project submittals. WSF will cover 60% of the \$250,000 project.

MOTION #3 was made by Dean Roehr, seconded by Chad Weichel to approve the WSF agreement.

YEA: Barta, Birkett, Kelley, Lorenz, Parde, Pohlmann, Roehr, Sand, Skleba, Stokebrand, Weichel. **NAY:** Katz
ABSTAIN: None

FY 2025 BUDGET APPROVAL

Scott summarized the Budget Hearing that was held prior to the NRD Board meeting. Scott presented an updated budget. The FY 2025 budget calls for expenditures of \$3,985,286 as compared to FY 2024 of \$3,845,976. The FY 2025 expenditures include \$275,000 for the Little Indian Watershed Flood Prevention Project, \$148,000 for the buffer strip program, \$130,000 for NRD land treatment and flowmeter cost-share, \$30,000 for Water Quality Programs, \$50,000 for NRD Small Dams Program, \$100,000 for flood control maintenance work, \$25,000 for P.L. 566 emergency watershed maintenance work, \$85,000 for recreation and wildlife management area operation and maintenance, \$421,166 for Water Sustainability Airborne Electromagnetic Surveys, \$50,000 for Clatonia Creek 3A renovations, \$65,000 for the Nine County Hazard Mitigation Plan Update and \$10,795 for the Blue Basin Groundwater Model – Interactive Producer Portal and Turkey Creek Stream Gauge. The District has \$900,000 budgeted for office design and construction and \$98,440 for the Urban Conservation Assistance Program. Separate expenditures include \$89,124 for the Beatrice West Public Water Project and \$355,591 for the Wymore Rural Water Project.

Scott reviewed the county valuations for FY 2025 and provided a summary of the current sinking fund amounts and expected additions to those funds in FY 2025.

MOTION #4 was made by Duane Parde, seconded by Dean Roehr, to approve the FY 2025 Lower Big Blue Budget as presented, with total Expenditures of \$3,985,286.00 and Revenues of \$3,690,176.

YEA: Barta, Birkett, Kelley, Lorenz, Parde, Pohlmann, Roehr, Sand, Skleba, Stokebrand, Weichel. **NAY:** None
ABSTAIN: Katz

Scott asked for a motion to transfer any unused budgeted FY 2025 Operations Land and Building Project Funds into the designated sinking fund account at the end of the fiscal year.

MOTION #5 was made by Doug Stokebrand, seconded by Dean Roehr, to transfer any unused budgeted FY 2025 Operations Land and Building Project Funds into the designated Land and Building Capital Improvements sinking account at the end of the fiscal year.

YEA: Barta, Birkett, Kelley, Lorenz, Parde, Pohlmann, Roehr, Sand, Skleba, Stokebrand, Weichel. **NAY:** None
ABSTAIN: Katz

FY 2025 LEVY AND TAX REQUEST APPROVAL

Scott summarized the Levy and Tax Request Hearing that was held prior to the NRD Board meeting. Revenues from all sources for FY 2025 are expected to be \$3,690,176 as compared to FY 2024 Revenues of \$3,474,585. The District begins FY 2025 with \$98,742 cash on hand and \$224,522 in Nebraska Public Agency Investment Trust. In FY 2025 we expect \$489,849 from state funds (FY 2024 \$523,804), including \$294,999 from the Water Sustainability Fund for Airborne Electromagnetic Surveys and Little Indian Watershed Flood Prevention Project, \$35,117 from the Water Quality Fund and \$154,754 for buffer strips. FY 2025 Federal funds are estimated to be \$298,908 (FY 2024 \$148,688) with \$200,000 for the Little Indian Watershed Flood Prevention Project and \$65,000 for the Nine County Hazard Mitigation Plan Update. Property rent will be \$20,701, customer charges for camping, tree planting, tree protectors and flags is \$59,100; Miscellaneous Revenues, \$79,428; and \$2,758,013 from property taxes. The District has \$266,411 in a P.L. 566 dam operation and maintenance and emergency watershed repair sinking fund, \$1,957,080 in a building sinking fund. Separate revenues include \$33,210 for the Beatrice West Public Water Project and \$197,400 for the Wymore Rural Water Project.

MOTION #6 was made by Doug Stokebrand, seconded by Duane Parde, that a resolution be adopted for the Lower Big Blue NRD Fiscal Year 2025 Tax Requirement of \$2,758,013.26 and a Fiscal Year 2025 Tax Levy of \$0.036652/\$100 valuation, and that said resolution is submitted to the County Clerks on or before October 15, 2024.

YEA: Barta, Birkett, Kelley, Lorenz, Parde, Pohlmann, Roehr, Sand, Skleba, Stokebrand, Weichel. **NAY:** None
ABSTAIN: Katz

LITTLE INDIAN WFPO AND NEW WFPO APPLICATIONS

Scott reported that NRCS has received comments from national headquarters. Staff plans to meet with NRCS to review changes and discuss setting a public hearing on the plan.

NRD ACTIVITIES

Scott reported that the NRD was able to purchase playground sets from two of the former Beatrice Public Schools elementary sites at a cost savings over purchasing new sets. The sets have been removed and are stored at the new building site until they are ready to be installed at recreation areas.

Pictures of a new concrete tube coating at Clatonia 3-A were shown. The new material was provided and installed on the tube in coordination with DNR officials.

Ryan reported that mailings went out to Phase II landowners regarding possible nitrogen reduction programs.

Tyler stated that flow meter reading requests will be going out soon

Copies of the FY 2024 audit were distributed to the Directors.

Scott told the Directors that an agreement has been finalized for the NRD/NRCS employee partnership. Staff will meet with NRCS staff in the coming months to coordinate the hiring process.

A recent leak repaired on the Wymore rural water line was discussed.

Tyler updated the Board on the WATERSMART and RCPP funding sources for flow meter cost share.

Adam noted that he, Brandy and Scott met with Lancaster County Rural Water #1 to review their cellular read meter system. The same system would cost around \$20,000 to implement for Beatrice West.

Scott shared that state NRCS offices have officially relocated to 1121 Lincoln Mall.

BUILDING COMMITTEE REPORT

Dean reported that plans are complete with the exception of a few minor details and are expected to let for bids soon. He also stated that the city has contacted the NRD to start extending the road to the south along the west edge of the building site.

AGENCY REPORTS

NRCS

A report was distributed to the Directors.

EXTENSION OFFICE

No Report

NRC

Steve reported that they will meet October 2nd.

NARD

Steve reported that they will meet at the annual conference.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

- September 23rd – 24th - NARD Annual Conference
- October 2nd - Southeast Regional Land Judging Contest – Nemaha NRD
- October 10th - Board Meeting 7:00 p.m.
- October 14th - Office Closed - Columbus Day
- November 6th - Groundwater Quantity Rules and Regulations Public Hearing –
Gage County Fair Grounds 6:00 p.m.

Being no further business, Chairperson Ryan Birkett adjourned the meeting at 10:16 a.m.

Secretary, Jason Sand

I, the undersigned, Secretary of the Lower Big Blue Natural Resources District, hereby certify that these are true and correct minutes of the meeting of the Board of Directors of the District held September 19, 2024, that all of the subjects discussed at the meeting were contained in the agenda for the meeting, kept continually current and readily available for public inspection at the principal office of the District during normal business hours, and except for items of an emergency nature, the agenda was not altered later than twenty-four (24) hours before the scheduled commencement of the meeting; that at least one copy of all reproducible material discussed at the meeting was available at the meeting for examination and copying by members of the public; that the minutes were in written form and available for public inspection within ten working days and prior to the next convened meeting for said body; and that all news media requesting notification of the meeting of said body were provided advance notification of the time and place of said meeting and the subjects to be discussed at said meeting.

:amk

LOWER BIG BLUE NRD 2024-2025 BUDGET HEARING

Chairperson Barta opened the Public Hearing at 8:30 A.M. and stated that the purpose of the hearing was to hear support, opposition, criticism, suggestions or observations of taxpayers relating to the Lower Big Blue NRD's budget for FY 2024-2025. Chairperson Barta appointed Scott Sobotka, Manager of the District, to be the District Hearing Officer to explain the proposed budget. Scott entered into the record of the hearing that public notices appeared once in the Beatrice Daily Sun on September 12th, Wilber Republican on September 11th, Fairbury Journal News on September 11th and the Pawnee Republican on September 12th, 2024. In accordance with the Nebraska Open Meetings Act, the Open Meetings Act is posted on the north wall of the meeting room for public viewing.

Directors Present: Larry Barta, Ryan Birkett, Brent Katz, Steve Kelley, Bob Lorenz, Duane Parde, Jason Pohlmann, Dean Roehr, Jason Sand, Rodney Skleba, Doug, Stokebrand, Chad Weichel.

Staff Present: Scott Sobotka, Manager; Tyler Weishahn, Assistant Manager; Adam Kimmerling, Office Administrator; Nick Schroeder, GIS/IT/Data Specialist; Ryan Thomas, Resources Specialist; Brandy Scholl, NRD Clerk.

The FY 2025 budget calls for expenditures of \$3,985,286 as compared to FY 2024 of \$3,845,976. The FY 2025 expenditures include \$275,000 for the Little Indian Watershed Flood Prevention Project, \$148,000 for the buffer strip program, \$130,000 for NRD land treatment and flowmeter cost-share, \$30,000 for Water Quality Programs, \$50,000 for NRD Small Dams Program, \$100,000 for flood control maintenance work, \$25,000 for P.L. 566 emergency watershed maintenance work, \$85,000 for recreation and Wildlife management area Operation and Maintenance, \$421,166 for Water Sustainability Airborne Electromagnetic Surveys, \$50,000 for Clatonia Creek 3A renovations, \$65,000 for the Nine County Hazard Mitigation Plan Update and \$10,795 for the Blue Basin Groundwater Model – Interactive Producer Portal and Turkey Creek Stream Gauge. The district has \$900,000 budgeted for office design and construction and \$98,440 for the Urban Conservation Assistance Program. Separate expenditures include \$89,124 for the Beatrice West Public Water Project and \$355,591 for the Wymore Rural Water Project.

Chairperson Barta asked for comments from the public. No members of the public wished to speak.

Following no public comments, the hearing was closed at 8:45 a.m.

This record shall be attached as part of the September 19, 2024, regular meeting minutes of the Lower Big Blue NRD.

LOWER BIG BLUE NRD 2024-2025 PROPERTY TAX REQUEST HEARING

Chairperson Barta opened the Public Hearing at 8:46 A.M. and stated that the purpose of the hearing was to hear support, opposition, criticism, suggestions, or observations of taxpayers relating to the Lower Big Blue NRD's Levy and Tax request for FY 2024-2025. Chairperson Barta appointed Scott Sobotka, Manager of the District to be the District Hearing Officer to explain the proposed tax request and levy. . Scott entered into the record of the hearing that public notices appeared once in the Beatrice Daily Sun on September 12th, Wilber Republican on September 11th, Fairbury Journal News on September 11th and the Pawnee Republican on September 12th, 2024. In accordance with the Nebraska Open Meetings Act, the Open Meetings Act is posted on the north wall of the meeting room for public viewing.

Directors Present: Larry Barta, Ryan Birkett, Brent Katz, Steve Kelley, Bob Lorenz, Duane Parde, Jason Pohlmann, Dean Roehr, Jason Sand, Rodney Skleba, Doug Stokebrand, Chad Weichel.

Staff Present: Scott Sobotka, Manager; Tyler Weishahn, Assistant Manager; Adam Kimmerling, Office Administrator; Nick Schroeder, GIS/IT/Data Specialist; Ryan Thomas, Resources Specialist; Brandy Scholl, NRD Clerk.

Scott reviewed the valuations and revenues from all sources. Revenues from all sources for FY 2025 expected to be \$3,690,176 as compared to FY 2024 Revenues of \$3,474,585. The District begins FY 2025 with \$98,742 cash on hand and \$224,522 in Nebraska Public Agency Investment Trust. In FY 2025 we expect \$489,849 from state funds (FY2024 \$523,804), including \$294,999 from the Water Sustainability fund for Airborne Electromagnetic Surveys and Little Indian Flood Prevention Project, \$35,117 from the Water Quality Fund and \$154,754 for buffer strips. FY 2025 Federal funds are estimated to be \$298,908 (FY2024 \$148,688) with \$200,000 for the Little Indian Watershed Flood Prevention Project and \$65,000 for the Nine County Hazard Mitigation Plan Update. Property rent will be \$20,701, customer charges for camping, tree planting, tree protectors and flags is \$59,100; Miscellaneous Revenues, \$79,428; and \$2,758,013 from property taxes. The District has \$266,411 in a P.L. 566 dam operation and maintenance and emergency watershed repair sinking fund, \$1,957,080 in a building sinking fund. Separate revenues include \$33,210 for the Beatrice West Public Water Project and \$197,400 for the Wymore Rural Water Project.

Valuations of the NRD for FY 2025, as provided by the County Assessors, are as follows:

<u>Valuations</u>	<u>2024</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>% of Change</u>		
Gage	\$3,703,880,963	\$3,333,469,272	11.11%	\$1,425,892.86	51.7%
Saline	\$2,558,523,479	\$2,355,274,110	8.63%	\$ 973,578.68	35.3%
Jefferson	\$1,051,489,788	\$ 940,651,927	11.78%	\$ 297865.43	10.8%
Pawnee	\$ 211,063,224	\$ 196,163,490	7.60%	\$ 60,676.29	2.2%
TOTALS	\$7,524,957,454	\$6,825,558,799	10.25%	\$2,758,013.26	100%

2024 Growth Value – \$76,413,838 = 10.93% Value Attributed to Growth : (Total Change: \$699,398,655)

Pawnee - \$ 1,439,873 (9.66%) Gage - \$30,472,476 (8.23%)
Jefferson - \$17,418,207 (15.72%) Saline - \$27,083,282 (13.33%)

The Tax Requirement for FY 2025 is \$2,758,013.26. Last year's was \$2,595,700.00.

The NRD levy for FY 2025 is \$0.036652/\$100 Valuation. Last year's was \$0.038029/\$100 Valuation.

Chairperson Barta asked for comments from the public. No members of the public wished to speak.

Following no public comments, the hearing was closed at 9:01 a.m.

This record shall be attached as part of the September 19, 2024, regular meeting minutes of the Lower Big Blue NRD.