

LOWER BIG BLUE NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT
BOARD MEETING
November 14, 2024
1:30 P.M.

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 1:30 P.M.

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

Directors Absent: Jason Sand, Doug Stokebrand.

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

Others Present: Dave Hicks.

APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER 14, 2024, CONSENT AGENDA

Bruce Weise noted that his name was misspelled in the minutes.

MOTION #2 was made by Duane Parde, seconded by Chad Weichel, to adopt the Consent Agenda for the November 14, 2024, board meeting, which includes: adoption of the agenda as submitted, approval of the October 10, 2024 meeting minutes, financial status report dated October 30, 2024, October 2024 revenues, and expenditures; Beatrice West and Wymore Rural Water financials.

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

OPEN PUBLIC COMMENTS

Dave Hicks addressed the Board and advocated for an education-based approach as opposed to requiring the installation of flow meters district wide.

CONSIDERATION OF EXCUSED ABSENCES

Jason Sand and Doug Stokebrand have asked to be excused from the November 14, 2024 board meeting.

MOTION #1 was made by Steve Kelley, seconded by Ryan Birkett, to excuse Doug Stokebrand from the November 14, 2024 board meeting.

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

MOTION #3 was made by Brent Katz, seconded by Jason Pohlmann, to excuse Jason Sand from the November 14, 2024 board meeting.

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

WATER COMMITTEE REPORT

Scott spoke about the Governors' attendance at the most recent NRD managers meeting. Governor Pillen shared his views on water management including being a proponent of the installation of flow meters. He also is in favor of efficient government and again touched on the idea of combining State agencies like NDNR and NDEE and other funding options for the NRD's. Scott also touched on a \$307 million grant from NDEE for reducing carbon emissions and decarbonization that includes measures to reduce emissions in agricultural practices. This could be a possible source for flow meter funding.

Comments from the public hearing were reviewed. A quorum of directors were present at both public hearings. Comments from the 7th were played for the full board.

Discussion was held on the need for allocation amounts to be set at a level which can sustain groundwater levels.

The Board also had considerable discussion on whether or not district wide flow meters was the best approach. Some Directors felt that focusing on certain sub areas first would provide the greatest benefit.

Tyler reminded the board that the NRD has applied for a WaterSMART grant for additional flow meter cost share.

Members of the water committee asked the board what direction they would like to see management options go from this point forward.

Discussion was held on the cease and desist order issued against Justin Niederklein for violating the district-wide moratorium on the expansion of irrigated acres. The District can assess a penalty for the alleged violation following a penalty hearing. The board would need to set a date for the penalty hearing.

MOTION #4 was made by Duane Parde, seconded by Bruce Weise, to set a penalty hearing on the cease and desist on December 12, 2024 at 10:00 A.M. at the Lower Big Blue NRD Office.

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

Staff are measuring fall static water levels in NRD monitoring wells.

WATER WELL PERMITS, IRRIGATION AGREEMENTS

Tyler presented a well registration for Scott Spohn. The well was drilled prior to the 1970s and has certified irrigated acres but was never registered. Mr. Spohn wishes to get the well registered.

MOTION #5 was made by Chad Weichel, seconded by Brent Katz, to approve the well registration for Scott Spohn.

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

PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS REPORT

Ryan presented information on the Nitrogen Reduction Incentive Act(NiRIA). NiRIA funded by the Legislature will allocate approximately \$31,000 to the Lower Big Blue NRD to provide up to \$15/acre to producers who can show a 40lb reduction in applied nitrogen. The Lower Big Blue needs to approve guidelines for the program. Proposed guidelines would allow applicants to apply for up to 160 acres and would require one deep soil sample for each field. Ryan reminded the directors that the NRD currently cost shares on one soil sample district-wide and three in the Phase II area.

MOTION #6 was made by Jason Pohlmann, seconded by Rod Skleba to approve applications up to 160 acres and require one deep soil sample per field.

Following discussion, Jason asked to withdraw his motion.

MOTION #7 was made by Jason Pohlmann, seconded by Bruce Weise to approve applications up to 160 acres and require one deep soil sample per 40 acres.

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

The Farming for the Big Blue River partnership with The Nature Conservancy(TNC) will provide \$10/acre to producers who can show a reduction in nitrogen.

Scott Theis provided an overview of a proposed memorandum of understanding between the Lower Big Blue and Nemaha Natural Resources districts. The agreement would allow both NRD's to purchase larger quantities of trees together resulting in a savings over individual purchases.

MOTION #8 was made by Duane Parde, seconded by Chad Weichel to allow the Chairman to sign the memorandum of understanding for the purchase of trees.

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

Scott Theis summarized the Nebraska Buffer Strip program noting that the Lower Big Blue NRD leads the State in contracts. Recently, some participants have elected to enroll their acres in CRP rather than reenroll in the state program due primarily to higher soil rental rates in the CRP program. Staff will be working with NDA on proposed rule changes to the program, including the increase of soil rental rates in order to keep the acres enrolled on the program.

Scott Sobotka discussed the Little Indian WFPO project. An open house is scheduled for tonight at 4:30 at the Pickrell Community Building. The project proposes building 24 dams throughout the watershed to improve flood protection.

BUILDING COMMITTEE REPORT

Dean reported that the building committee has met three times since the last board meeting. They have met to discuss interior design consultants, tree cooler needs and window specifications. Bids for the building project were sent out on November 4th with a bid opening scheduled for December 2nd.

NRD ACTIVITIES

Scott Sobotka has contacted NDNR Floodplain Management division and highlighted a need to finish DeWitt flood plain mapping in order to close out the Turkey Creek NRDF Project.

AGENCY REPORTS

NRCS

A report was distributed to the Directors.

EXTENSION OFFICE

No Report

NRC

Steve reported that the next meeting will be February 19th.

NARD

Steve reported that he attended the NARD meeting in Valentine on November 4th. Steve reviewed the current financial status of the NARD and NARD Risk Pool.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

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| November 24 th – 26 th | - Nebraska Water Resources Association Conference |
| November 28 th & 29 th | - Thanksgiving Holiday – Office Closed |
| December 12 th | - Board Meeting 1:30 p.m. |

Being no further business, Chairperson Larry Barta adjourned the meeting at 4:15 P.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 November 14, 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.

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