

LOWER BIG BLUE NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT
BOARD MEETING
November 9, 2023
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 Ryan Birkett at 1:30 P.M.

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

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

APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER 09, 2023, CONSENT AGENDA

MOTION #1 was made by Doug Stokebrand, seconded by Duane Parde, to adopt the Consent Agenda for the November 9, 2023, board meeting, which includes: adoption of the agenda as submitted, approval of the October 12, 2023, meeting minutes, financial status report dated October 31, 2023, October 2023 revenues, and expenditures; Beatrice West and Wymore Rural Water financials.

YEA: Barta, Birkett, Kelley, Katz, Lorenz, Parde, Pohlmann, Roehr, Sand, Skleba, Stokebrand, Weichel **NAY:** None **ABSTAIN:** None **NOT PRESENT:** Sand.

Jason Sand arrived at 1:35 P.M.

OPEN PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

WATER COMMITTEE REPORT

Doug summarized the water committee meeting minutes from November 8, 2023, discussion of the current moratorium on the drilling of new wells and the expansion of irrigated acres was held. It was asked that the possible expansion of irrigated acres within a section be placed on next month's agenda.

Nick presented the fall water level measurements to the Board. Staff measured 172 wells during the first week of November. District wide, changes from spring of 2023 to the fall of 2023 averaged a decline of 5.33 feet. Nick reviewed graphs of groundwater static water levels from several wells.

Ryan told the Board that letters were sent out to landowners whose irrigation wells were sampled for nitrates. A reminder of the requirement to certify acres and update acres annually was also sent with the results.

WELL PERMITS, IRRIGATION AGREEMENTS

Scott noted that the Gage County Supervisors denied the special use permit for the Confined Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) near Liberty.

BEATRICE WEST RURAL WATER PROJECT

Adam reviewed minutes of the advisory committee meeting held October 30th at the Homestead National Historical Park. The committee discussed and recommended a rate increase for the project which has not changed rates since its inception in 1999. The recommended change would keep the base fee at \$27 per month and add a maintenance fee for water users of \$12.75 per month. The water rate would change to \$4 per 1,000 gallons. The proposed rate change would take effect in January 2024.

MOTION #2 was made by Larry Barta, seconded by Chad Weichel, to approve the addition of a \$12.75 meter maintenance fee for water users and a water rate of \$4 per 1,000 gallons.

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

Adam reviewed proposed changes to the project rules and regulations. A definition for Minimum Monthly Charge and Water Use Fee has been added. Other changes include the updating of fees charged for meter reading and disconnection, the addition of billing provisions for AMI meters, and a stipulation that past due accounts may request a payment arrangement. Provisions were also added providing for a feasibility study if there is a question whether the project can support added users. Discussion of the allowable uses was held. Staff will review the service contract with the City of Beatrice and will update the rules as needed. If the rules are changed in the future, the Board will review and approve the changes.

MOTION #3 was made by Jason Sand, seconded by Brent Katz, to approve the changes to the project rules and regulations.

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

Jason Sand left at 2:40 P.M.

WYMORE-HOLMESVILLE RURAL WATER PROJECT

Adam reviewed minutes of the advisory committee meeting held November 7th at the NRD office. The committee discussed and recommended a rate increase for the project which has not changed rates since its inception in 2013. The recommended change would keep the base fee at \$45 per month and add a maintenance fee for water users of \$12.75 per month. The water rate would change to \$4 per 1,000 gallons. The proposed rate change would take effect in January 2024.

MOTION #4 was made by Doug Stokebrand, seconded by Chad Weichel, to approve the addition of a \$12.75 meter maintenance fee for water users and a water rate of \$4 per 1,000 gallons.

YEA: Barta, Birkett, Katz, Kelley, Lorenz, Parde, Pohlmann, Rains, Roehr, Skleba, Stokebrand, Weichel **NAY:** None **ABSTAIN:** None **NOT PRESENT:** Sand.

Adam reviewed proposed changes to the project rules and regulations. A definition for Minimum Monthly Charge and Water Use Fee has been added. Other changes include the updating of fees charged for meter reading and disconnection, the addition of billing provisions for AMI meters, and a stipulation that past due accounts may request a payment arrangement. Provisions were also added providing for a feasibility study if there is a question whether the project can support added users.

MOTION #5 was made by Larry Barta, seconded by Duane Parde, to approve the changes to the project rules and regulations.

YEA: Barta, Birkett, Katz, Kelley, Lorenz, Parde, Rains, Roehr, Skleba, Stokebrand, Weichel **NAY:** Pohlmann **ABSTAIN:** None **NOT PRESENT:** Sand.

BUILDING COMMITTEE REPORT

Scott reviewed progress on the building renovations from June 2022 storm damage. A suitable replacement awning has been selected, the back shop has been painted and the new tin on the main building is almost complete. Staff plans to schedule a committee meeting with Fakler architects in December to review progress on the new building.

LITTLE INDIAN WFPO AND NEW WFPO APPLICATIONS

Scott stated that the Little Indian project has been submitted to NRCS and is nearing the end of the wetlands investigation.

LOWER BIG BLUE AND LITTLE BLUE NRD NINE-COUNTY ALL HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN

Scott stated a Request for Proposals will be developed within the next month. It is the Lower Big Blue NRD's turn to provide administration this year so all funds will come through the Lower Big Blue. Scott also stated that the Governor's task force prioritized funding for the plan update.

NRD ACTIVITIES

Scott told the Board that the annual GMDA conference will be held in Nashville, TN January 23-25th. Anyone interested in attending should let Scott know.

Scott mentioned that staff are continuing to work with NRCS for a possible source water protection employee partnership.

NDEE has funding available to convert diesel pivot systems to electric.

AGENCY REPORTS

NRCS

Brandy reported that NRCS staff are still busy designing and staking fall jobs. She also stated that more EQIP and CSP applications are due Friday November 17th.

EXTENSION OFFICE

No Report

NRC

Steve reported that the next NRC meeting will be November 27th and 28th in Grand Island.

NARD

Steve reported that the NARD board voted to liquidate underperforming retirement funds and adopt new funds. He also reported that the Board has discussed increasing the percentage of retirement match in the 414 plan. Employees currently contribute 5.5% and districts contribute 6%. Any changes to the 414 contributions would need to be approved by all 23 districts to be adopted.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

- Nov. 10th - Veterans Day – Office Closed
- Nov. 23th - Thanksgiving Holiday – Office Closed
- Nov. 24th - NRD Office Closed
- Dec. 14th - NRD Board Meeting

Being no further business, Chairperson Ryan Birkett adjourned the meeting at 3:28 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 9, 2023, 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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