

**LINCOLN COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT
BOARD MEETING**

**Lincoln County Public Works
Wednesday, February 9, 2022**

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:

Meeting called to order at 8:37 AM by Chairman, Jeff Schibel. Those attending the meeting in person or by telephone were as follows: Jim Baye, Chris Laney, Josh Sherwood (phone), and Braidy Haden (phone) - LCCD Supervisors; Cari Roepke, NRCS; Elsa Bowen, Delaini Disher, and Dean White - LCCD staff.

A. MINUTES: Additions / Corrections:

- *1. Chris moved to approve the January 5, 2022 minutes as presented. Jim seconded. Motion passed.*

B. TREASURER'S REPORT / TRANSACTIONS REPORT:

- *2. Jim moved to pay and approve vouchers #11636 to #11672, along with 81 EFT's, totaling \$66,827.59. Chris seconded. Discussion was held. Some questions and concerns were raised about the relatively high cost of renting the fairgrounds kitchen building for the tree sale this spring. Elsa noted that due to the COVID-19 vaccination clinics continuing to be held by Lincoln County Environmental Health in the main portion of the kitchen building, the District had to rent the auditorium portion of the kitchen building to hold the tree sale for this spring, which is more expensive, and a separate fee is now being charged for the use of the food preparation section the building. In addition, the rental fees charged by the fairgrounds has increased over what was charged in the past. Motion passed.*
- *3. Jim moved to submit voucher #6 for the VSP 4 grant in the amount of \$23,349.17 to the Conservation Commission. Chris seconded. Motion passed.*
- *4. Jim moved to submit voucher #6 for the 22-39-IM grant in the amount of \$5,739.19 to the Conservation Commission. Chris seconded. Motion passed.*
- *5. Jim moved to submit voucher #6 for the 22-39-FR grant in the amount of \$0.00 to the Conservation Commission. Chris seconded. Motion passed.*
- *6. Jim moved to submit voucher #10 for the 20-27-NR grant in the amount of \$130.30 to Adams CD. Chris seconded. Motion passed.*
- *7. Jim moved to submit voucher #6 for the 22-39-HZ grant in the amount of \$580.06 to the Conservation Commission. Chris seconded. Discussion was*

held. Elsa noted that Delaini had just finished facilitating the 2 day Hazard Training session over Zoom from the office this week. The hazard training sessions went well and included 29 participants on Zoom. Motion passed.

- *8. Jim moved to submit voucher #13 for the Direct Seed 2 grant in the amount of \$16,883.79 to DOE. Chris seconded. Motion passed.*
- *9. Jim moved to submit voucher #6 for the 22-39-NR grant in the amount of \$0.00 to the Conservation Commission. Chris seconded. Motion passed.*
- *10. Jim moved to submit voucher #2 for the 22-39-DR grant in the amount of \$225.00 to the Conservation Commission. Chris seconded. Motion passed.*
- *11. Jim moved to submit voucher #14 for the Mielke grant in the amount of \$9,664.58 to DOE. Chris seconded. Motion passed.*
- *12. Jim moved that the Lincoln County Conservation District Visa statement for December 25, 2021 through January 25, 2022 be approved. The total amount owed was \$1,842.10. Chris seconded. Motion passed.*
- *13. Jim moved to approve the Lincoln County Conservation District Cenex credit card statement with a closing date of January 10, 2022. The total amount owed was \$39.49. Chris seconded. Discussion was held. Elsa noted that all of the current District vehicle gas cards recently stopped working. Valley Ag bought out Ag Link last year. The reason why the gas cards stopped working was that these cards were Cenex cards and not Ag Link gas cards. In the meantime, gas was paid for using the District credit cards and an application was made to Valley Ag for replacement gas cards for all of the District vehicles. Motion passed.*

Delaini passed around bank statements for the board members to initial.

The Board reviewed the report of the current annual leave/sick leave balances for District employees.

Elsa noted that the totals for 2021 and 2022 on the Special Assessments page had now been corrected.

Elsa reported that the District's checking account balance in US Bank had now exceeded the \$250,000 FDIC insured limit and asked if the Board wanted to make a motion to approve the transfer of some of these funds to the District's checking account at Key Bank. The general consensus of the Board was to go ahead and transfer sufficient funds from US Bank into Key Bank so that the District's funds were less than the \$250,000 limit in both banks, and that no motion was required.

- **14. Jim moved to approve the Treasurer's report and Grant's report as presented. Chris seconded. Motion passed.**

C. AGENDA

Legislative Session Update

A teleconference was held with Ryan Baye, WACD Legislative and Membership Lead, for an update on the current legislative session. WACD monitors the progress and status of legislative bills that would have significant impact on conservation districts across the state. The cutoff for bills with a fiscal requirement to make it out of committee already passed on Monday. Other legislative bills without a fiscal requirement can still proceed forward if they are passed out of their respective committee.

Several bills that did not make it out of committee include HB1631, which would have created 15 new CD staff positions primarily for the Sustainable Farms and Fields program, and HB 1838, which contained the Governor's requested proposal for mandating riparian buffer zones around salmon bearing streams. Ryan noted that there appears to be more support in the legislature for voluntary riparian buffers. There has also been some criticism from legislators that has been directed towards Ecology for not seeking more stakeholder input from the beginning with regards to the proposed changes in implementing Water Resources Policy 1025 that would require all livestock producers to have a water right to divert any water from a stream, lake or pond to water livestock. Ryan noted that there appears to be a good chance that the Legislature will choose to get involved with the Policy 1025 issue in the near future.

Over the next week, a bill to allow counties that originally opted out of the VSP program to now opt in will be debated. WACD and Conservation Commission support the opportunity for other counties to become involved with the Voluntary Stewardship Program, but have also raised concerns that the Legislature provide additional funding for VSP and not take away funding from the other counties who have already opted in to the VSP program. Another bill for debate would renew the 15-year time out legislation that expires this year and has allowed center pivot irrigators to retain the water rights on the 4 corners around the irrigation circle that are typically not watered.

Several bills addressing elections reforms for conservation districts have also been debated. One bill that would have required all CD's to place their supervisor elections on the county general ballot failed to pass out of committee. The second bill more in line with the recommendations from WACD and the Conservation Commission, HB 1652, passed out of committee but with 2 amendments made. If a CD chooses to have its supervisor elections placed on the county general ballot, then the supervisor candidates would be required to complete the full financial disclosure form, including finances and property. If a CD chooses not to have its supervisor elections placed on the county general ballot, then the board supervisor candidates would only have to complete the less involved disclosure form from the Conservation Commission. Ryan announced that WACD is seeking feedback from conservation districts on whether or not they support the elections reform bill as amended

Valley Ag Gas Cards

15. Jim moved to approve the application to Valley Ag for new gas cards for all District vehicles to replace the current Cenex gas cards that no longer work. Chris seconded. Motion passed.

Feedback on Legislative Amendment to Conservation District Elections Reform

Elsa requested feedback from board members on the amendments to the CD Board Supervisor elections reform bill to give to Ryan and forward on to WACD. Do board members agree with and support the amendments as described in the legislative session update?

The consensus of the board members was to give conditional approval from Lincoln County CD to the pending elections reform bill as amended **IF** the following 3 questions and concerns from the Board were addressed:

1. What is the time period/number of years from receiving any grant funding from their conservation district that Board Supervisor candidates must report on the disclosure form?
2. Board Supervisors request that check box answers be made available for the property disclosure section so that full property descriptions do not have to be entered.
3. Will there be any penalty if a Board Supervisor candidate doesn't complete and submit the disclosure form due to extenuating circumstances? CD Board Supervisors volunteering their time and effort to support and guide their local conservation district should not have to pay any such penalty or fine.

The Board also agreed by general consensus that the conditional approval from Lincoln County CD for the pending elections reform bill as amended should be forwarded to the District's current State Legislators: Senator Judy Warnick, Representative Tom Dent and Representative Alex Ybarra

Tree Sale Update

Delaini reported that the District has received 70 tree sale orders so far and that some species are already sold out. Elsa noted that staff had worked hard to fill a recently received and large CSP planting order for this spring and are now working on how operate the tree sale in the Auditorium section of the Fairgrounds kitchen building complex for the first time. Dean noted that a forestry consultant working in Lincoln and surrounding counties had purchased all of the remaining stock of ponderosa pine seedlings from Spokane County CD last summer for reforestation and fire recovery plantings, which has made it more difficult for the District to find ponderosa pine for orders being sent to the office now. Dean also noted that another good reason for large planting project orders to be made earlier in the summer and early fall before the desired planting in spring is that the WACD PMC nursery only takes orders for deciduous shrub size sorting for tops between 1 to 2 feet tall that are received by December 1. Orders sent by the District to the PMC after December 1 will receive the regular deciduous shrub stock available, which may include some stems up to 3 foot tall or larger that are harder to handle for everybody involved.

NRCS Report

Cari reported that the West Palouse Team working primarily on the EQIP program now, with 42 applications in Adams County and 31 applications in Lincoln County that need to be ranked by February 24. Thirty out of the forty total applications in the state have also been received by the WPT for the new EQIP-CIC program, which is described as a steppingstone between the classic EQIP and CSP signups and requires producers to address at least one priority resource concern identified within a watershed or other defined area. Two priorities identified within the WPT are groundwater and wind erosion concerns.

FSA is taking new CRP applications up through March 11. Elsa and Cari have been working on a new CRP task order in Lincoln and Adams counties to write up to 500 CRP contracts by June 30. FSA will then need to obtain all signatures on the new CRP contracts by July 15. Cari and Elsa have also been reviewing and providing comments on new proposed plans for office space from NRCS, and the future floor plans don't look very good for office employees. The current space allowance for employees of 120 square feet is being reduced to 60 square feet, and more open office space is being proposed, which can be more noisy and distracting. In addition, requests for more meeting rooms to meet with producers is not being addressed.

Due to the resurgence again of the COVID-19 pandemic, the numbers of staff allowed to work in the office space had been dropped down to 25% again. This means that staff need to telework more often from home again, but this can be a problem for NRCS employees especially because much of the work involves working with producer folders, and the producer folders are kept in the office.

PNDSA Direct Seed Conference

Delaini noted that most of the interaction that she and Connor had at the District booth were with producers who were already direct seeding. Delaini was impressed by the direct seed cloth banners that the Spokane County CD booth had displayed and commented that it would be worthwhile for the District to obtain similar banners for future presentations on the new Direct Seed 3 grant. Connor and Delaini have been attending recent grower meetings and giving presentations on the Direct Seed 3 grant. Connor is giving another Direct Seed grant presentation at the Highline Grain Growers meeting in Davenport today.

Josh found the carbon credit sessions interesting but also noted that long time direct seeders and innovators are not eligible for new carbon sequestration contracts in general because these programs are targeted for new carbon sequestrations and not existing carbon sequestration. Chris noted that promising new biological treatments for nitrogen fixation and grassy weed control are becoming available. Jeff noted that presentations on growing hemp for seed harvest and for textile products were given and that seed production can be very profitable with favorable growing conditions in some years. Dean reminded board members that there was an issue with a hemp crop in a circle southwest of Odessa several years ago when the residue was too tough to remove with mowing or discing. The hemp residue had to be removed with an ag burn permit issued by the District, but only after Kary Peterson with the Ecology ERO office in Spokane had the hemp residue tested to confirm that the total THC content was below 0.3% so that it could be legally burned with an ag burn permit.

Cost Share Approval

Hardcopies of the Cost Share Action spreadsheet were distributed. There were 5 applications submitted for District grant funding, 1 application for VSP funding, and 2 applications for NRI funding. Elsa noted if these 8 cost share grant applications were approved, this would reduce the waiting list for cost share funding down to 5 applicants. Elsa also noted that a brief update to the list with the kind of project proposed for each application would be made available at the March board meeting.

16. Chris moved to approve the Cost Share Action spreadsheet as presented. Jim seconded. Motion passed.

Wildlife Proviso Grant Update

Elsa has been serving on committees and participating in a lot of long webinars for the WDFW Proviso grant. Applications for land holders adversely affected by the Whitney Fire in Lincoln County, Pearl Hill Fire in Douglas County, and Cold Springs Fire in Okanogan County will now be able to apply for Proviso grant funding starting on February 14. Producers will be able to apply for 4 types of projects:

1. Deferred grazing
2. Habitat restoration
3. Wildlife friendly fencing (smooth wire, top & bottom, barbed wire for wires 2 & 3)
4. Virtual fencing (shock collars used; 500 or more livestock need to be pooled together from 1 or more livestock producers in order for the tower contractor to come to the pastures and install the tower(s) for \$12,000 apiece; the contractor is requiring that the pasture area have cell phone service)

Producers can build their own wildlife friendly fences and be reimbursed at a rate of \$5 per foot. Many producers have already rebuilt their fire damaged fences with fire recovery funding from FSA.

Direct Seed 3 Grant Update

Delaini noted that most of the 15 cost share projects reserved in Lincoln and Adams counties for the Direct Seed 3 grant have been tentatively filled with only several more projects available. The grant projects are for a maximum of 250 acres and \$28 per acre for 3 crop rotations for each producer. Delaini also noted that the Direct Seed 2 and Mielke grants from Ecology will be ending this spring.

Jim asked if there are new grants opportunities for new types of projects that the District should start exploring, such as for cover crops, regenerative agriculture with livestock, new biological products, carbon sequestration, and carbon credits. With the District starting its third direct seed grant and more producers already adopting direct seeding practices, applicants for future direct seeding grants may be harder to find.

Conservation Commission Report

It was noted that Chris Pettit has been selected as the new Executive Director for the Commission, who will start work on March 1, and will officially take over for Interim Director Kirk Robinson on March 16. Chris has served as Director of the Office of Agricultural Water Policy for the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

County Commissioner Report

Commissioner Stedman sent his report by email after he was unable to call into the board meeting on the teleconference line. Mark noted that the 6 year negotiation process with the Teamsters Union is finally coming to a close with the approval of a new 3 year contract.

The county has agreed to support WSU Extension in 2022, including 4-H activities but will also be monitoring WSU on their commitment to meet Lincoln County expectations. There will be a 2022 4-H kick off meeting at the Fairgrounds on February 16 at 6 PM.

Lincoln County has now received \$10 million in funding to help provide high speed fiber optic cable service to the cities and to rural locations across Lincoln County.

FSA Report

There was no report from FSA.

Miscellaneous

Dean distributed hardcopies of the 2021 Calendar Year precip spreadsheets and maps. The 2021 calendar year precip totals are very similar to the 2020 – 2021 crop year totals, with the 2021 calendar year being one of the driest and hottest years in recent and recorded history. The 2021 calendar year precip totals ranged from about 3” to 6+” less than the 2020 calendar year totals for the precip stations across the county. Chris asked if a comparison was available for the 2021 calendar year versus the long term precip averages for the stations. Dean noted that he would work on updating the long term cumulative crop year and calendar year precip spreadsheets totals when he has a chance and will work to create long term average precip totals versus yearly precip totals in the future. Dean also announced that he will email out the 2021 calendar year precip spreadsheets and maps to all board members and that there will be extra hard copies available at the office.

Jeff noted the Lincoln County Water Conservancy Board of which he is a member is seriously considering starting a water bank in Lincoln County in order to buy and sell water rights in the county and keep Lincoln County water rights in Lincoln County. The current selling price for irrigated water rights in the Odessa area is running between \$5,000 to \$7,000 per acre and is based on the water rights and water usage on record for the land.

20 Year Service Awards for District Staff

Jeff presented 20-year service pins to Elsa and Dean for their 20+ years of service as employees for the District that started back in December 2001.

Public Comment


There was no public comment.

Chairman Jeff Schibel adjourned the meeting at 11:07 AM. The next board meeting is scheduled as an in-person meeting on Wednesday, March 9, 2022 starting at 8:30 AM at Lincoln County Public Works in Davenport. A telephone call in number will be available for those people wishing to participate by phone. Mike Baden is scheduled to attend the

March meeting in person and assist with CAP assessment, Schedule 22 completion and the annual Internal Audit after the regular board meeting is finished at Public Works.

Respectfully submitted,


Josh Sherwood, Secretary


Dean White, Minute Taker

SUMMARY:

All 16 motions were reviewed:

- 1. M/S/P to approve the January 5 minutes as presented.
- 2. M/S/P to pay and approve vouchers #11636 to #11672, along with 81 EFT's, totaling \$66,827.59.
- 3. M/S/P to submit voucher #6 for the VSP 4 grant in the amount of \$23,349.17 to the Conservation Commission.
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