

Laramie County Conservation District

1923 Whitney Road
Cheyenne, WY 82007

Regular Board Meeting

Tuesday, Nov. 12th, 2024

5:30 p.m.

Attendance

Supervisors Present: Ann Sanchez, Chair; Scott Cherek, Member; Kevin Wells, Treasurer; Casey Epler, Secretary.

District Employees Present: Kathy Cooney, Dale Beranek, Jeff Geyer, Rex Lockman.

NRCS: Jesus Lopez-Vargas, Acting DC

RLR, LLP: Rob Dickerson

1. CALL TO ORDER

At 5:30 p.m. Ann called the board meeting to order.

2. OATH OF OFFICE FOR 3 NEW ELECTED BOARD SUPERVISORS & PICTURES

Kathy had Scott Cherek, Casey Epler & Kevin Wells all sign their Oath of Offices, and she notarized them to be submitted to the County Clerk, WACD & WY Dept. of Ag. Kathy later took a picture of Scott to be used on the LCCD website.

3. AUDIT REPORT – RLR, LLP

Rob Dickerson, RLR, LLP, presented the audit report for FY '23-'24. Rob stated government financial statements tend to be pretty complex. Rob stated LCCD should focus on the Management Discussion and Analysis page that is a little more simply presented. It really talks about what revenues and expenses the District had this year, whether the District was meeting budget.

Rob stated in the very very back of the report the auditors are required to do is take a look at internal control. Rob stated one of the things they always talk about is internal control due to the size of the District. Rob stated one of the reasons he talks about internal control is, for those of you that may have read the newspaper, in the last month or so is that another local water and sewer district got tagged for about \$350,000.00. Rob stated one reason is lack of segregation of duties which is an issue we have here at the Conservation District. Rob stated the difference here is the District is attentive to those matters, focused on those matters and has always taken that responsibility pretty seriously. Rob stated he encourages the Board to continue to do that.

Kevin asked what other small organizations do when in that situation. Rob stated sometimes they encourage bank statements be mailed directly to the treasurer so they can be reviewed unopened. Another idea is to be sure to monitor vendors annually. Rob stated continue to ask questions whether the Board knows the answer or not.

Kathy asked if the District should have a review done since Shaun, former District Manager, just left at the end of October. Rob stated he didn't see anything in the audit that would prompt a review.

Kevin moved to accept the discussions and the FY '23-'24 audit that Rob & Company presented as written;

Casey seconded the motion. MOTION CARRIED.

4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING- Oct. 8, 2024

Casey moved to approve the minutes from the previous meeting;

Kevin seconded the motion. MOTION CARRIED.

5. TREASURER'S REPORT- Profit and Loss Statement (monthly) – Oct. 2024 - Kevin

Kevin presented the Oct. Profit and Loss Statement. Kevin asked about the District Manager salary was \$45,000.00 for Oct. Kathy stated Shaun was paid out for his unused annual leave and sick leave. Kevin also asked about item #7795, Summer Technician, if the District had a Summer Technician in Sept. but didn't pay until Oct. Kathy said they are correct as we were invoiced about two weeks after their time sheets came in. Kevin also asked about the electronic checks voucher for Oct. about the difference in LCCD salary for Oct. 15th and Oct. 31st. Kathy stated the 31st included Shaun's payout for his unused annual & sick leave. Ann asked about item #4520, Misc. Income. Kathy stated the District bought a bracket to hang a tv on this meeting room wall and then ended up purchasing a rolling stand for the TV, so Kathy purchased the wall bracket from the District.

The Board moved to submit it for audit.

6. OLD BUSINESS – review and/or discussion

Ann stated the only old business she could think of was the WACD convention in Jackson, Nov. 20-22. Ann stated she was going.

7. PROGRAM REPORTS –

–Public Outreach (Ann)

Ann stated there have been a lot of Facebook and Instagram posts for the District. Kevin asked Rex if he had gone to Pine to do some presentations. Rex stated yes, he had gone to Pine Bluffs and gave a presentation to three different FFA classes on guzzlers and the District.

-Wildlife & Range (Kevin, Rex)

Ann asked Scott if he knew what a guzzler was, and Scott stated he did. Kevin stated Washakie County is now short three whitetails.

Rex stated since meeting with the Pine Bluffs FFA they are interested in helping with the guzzler repairs hopefully in the next month or so in the Pine Bluffs area.

Kevin asked Rex if he'd met the new FFA advisor at Central High School. Rex stated he had, and she seemed a little overwhelmed. Rex stated he's hoping to get them on board to assist with guzzler repairs in this area as well.

Casey stated to add to last month, his doves are dying also. Casey stated now he has ravens they haven't had before.

- Water (Casey, Jeff)

Jeff stated he is just finishing up small water projects and they are due Friday. Jeff thinks six or so this year.

Jeff stated one thing he was doing earlier was collecting seed from a certain flower out there and we had a pretty good yield. Jeff is just collecting data right now to kind of forecast what our seed plots are. Jeff stated this is through the WDA Specialty Crop Grant and Jeff stated it's kind of a research type thing. This year we had a pretty good amount just out here in the detention pond so next year he's hoping for these other plots to kick in, too. Jeff stated he thinks there is some serious money to be made in this.

Jeff stated he been trying to scout some farmers about raising the native plant needle and thread. Jeff stated it's actually worth a lot of money. In a 2024 catalog it ranks at \$85.00 a lb. Jeff stated they are trying to figure out the ins and outs of this stuff. Casey asked if Jeff had ever talked to the guy from Utah. Jeff stated he had, and it was pretty interesting. Ann stated those plants are very drought tolerant and we could really use something that would flourish under drought conditions. Ann asked if we could get some kind of symposium and get some speakers to come in and have some of the farmers come in.

Jeff stated we are actually going to have Jessica Crowder come in and talk about the Dept. of Defense and about Conservation Easements and projects in site specific areas. Rex stated the meeting they are having in Dec. is just to discuss what's going on with the funding, how much funding they are getting and discuss doing some possible seminars in the eastern part of the county probably in Jan. or Feb. or March time frame to discuss easements coming from the Dept. of Defense. They can't have wind turbines around the missile sites, so they are offering easements.

Casey stated his daughter put together an Indian Field Day. Casey stated there were 45 Arapahoe and Shoshone students and some older people that came down from Riverton. They went to the Cat Tail Ranch, they looked at Horse Creek, and then caravanned down to Pole Creek. Casey stated NPR was there. Casey stated he hoped he brought a little awareness about water in Laramie County.

- Trees (Dale)

Dale stated he's been working on the designs for this year. He has 109 windbreak design requests so far and has twenty-six more people to contact. Dale stated he is waiting for call-backs. Dale stated a lot of them you call and leave a message, and they don't call back.

Dale came out to the office yesterday and finished ordering trees. Dales stated he has roughly 41,000 trees ordered for this year 2025. Two nurseries out of Colorado and one out of Nebraska. Ann asked if Dale found some Rocky Mtn. Junipers. Dale stated yes but we had to go with bareroot out of Nebraska again. Dale stated the junipers where the people actually took care of them, watered them, they are looking fantastic. It's the other ones that they kind of neglected their trees, that's where the issue is coming from. The potted trees will be coming out of OneCanopy and CSU is where we will be getting the bareroot shrubs. Ann asked if Dale got any deciduous trees. Dale stated he got honeylocust, hackberry, and bur oak. Dale stated we also got the usual chokecherry, plums, caragana, wild rose, and some apricot this year. Dale stated we also got lodgepole pine. We haven't had them in a while. Ann asked if Dale felt like he filled out his numbers needed and if we could get more trees if needed. Dale stated we could get more trees, but he figured in twenty miles of tree rows. Dales stated he wasn't going over the twenty miles but if he gets people that want more trees for replants, we can definitely get more.

Casey stated he thought his trees were starting to smile a little bit there a few days ago. Casey asked if anyone had ever seen a tree smile.

- Administration (Kathy)

Kathy stated she didn't have anything to add. Kathy stated she is just trying to catch up on some things Shaun kind of wanted us to work on. Kathy stated he really wanted us to get solar put on the building this year. It is in the budget so if we can maybe move on that.

-NRCS (Jesus Lopez)

Jesus stated the newest staff will be starting next week, Monday. Her name is Jennifer Truett, and she is going to be the new Soil Con. She is coming out of Colorado. She has worked for USDA before. Jesus is hoping to bring her to meet the conservation district people on the 18th or any day after. Jesus stated he will try and bring her to the Dec. 10th Board meeting, too.

Jesus stated the deadline for EQIP programs was November 1st for the first batch, but the state con said she wanted to have two batches of applications every year. Applications before March 27 would be in the second batch. They have received about 8 EQIP applications.

Jesus stated for field work they have been doing checkouts, certifications, NAP clipping, and more inventory for new projects. They will keep doing that until the weather doesn't allow it.

For potential projects, Jesus asked where the District is with the Department of Defense and the WY Stockgrowers. Jesus stated the state office is interested. Brian Jensen is the NRCS Big Game Coordinator and they would want representation from the state office on any potential meeting so let him know in advance so he can contact them. Jeff thought it was set up for Dec. 8th. Rex stated he thought NRCS was cc'd in on the emails. Jesus stated he wasn't but maybe Tami was. Rex stated he would make sure NRCS was included in any future communications.

Jesus stated for Resource Issues, looking at the back of his report to the map of the whole state of Wyoming. There is plenty of red for extreme drought and a portion of Laramie County has been

changed from a D2 to the D3, extreme drought. Jesus also stated Laramie County is 55% below average for the annual NAP clipping. Jesus stated he is planning to do one or two more clippings.

-FSA-Lori Meier by Ann

Farm Plan(s): discussion and/or approval

None for October

Ann read the FSA report from Lori Meier noting their office will be closed for Thanksgiving, the deadline to report fall crops is Nov. 15th, and they are taking applications for Livestock Feed Disaster (LFP) program until Jan. 30, 2025. Dec. 2nd is the deadline to purchase 2025 non-insured crop disaster assistance (NAP) for perennial crops.

Ballots have been mailed to eligible voters in Local Administrative Area 1 for their county committee election. Dec. 2nd is the last day they will accept ballots, and ballots will be counted on Dec. 5th at 10 am at the county office.

FSA recently sent out a second payment for the 2022 ELRP program. This was an additional payment if producers had applied for the 2022 Livestock Feed Disaster Program. Ann stated she always closes with they are still waiting for the new farm bill.

Kevin stated he had read in the Conservation Clips that Laramie County was awarded \$1,000,000.00 for fire relief.

Consent:

Discussion Items:

8. Applicants for two open positions – update.

Ann stated the two open positions are the Tree Specialist and the LCCD Technician. Ann stated Kathy gave her a listing of the names of the applicants. Ann stated what the Board is hoping to do next week is to get on these to hone through the applications, pick out the ones that they think need to be interviewed and interview them. Kevin stated one question he has is if we are doing a tree technician, why is Dale not part of the interview. Kevin stated he's hoping that if they set up interviews, some of you guys would want to partake in it as well. Kevin stated staff will be the ones working with them.

Kevin asked if there was anything in the employee handbook that says staff cannot participate in interviews. Kathy stated she didn't believe so, and Rex stated they used to. Kevin asked if all the applicants could be shared with the Board. Kathy will email them to all the Board members tomorrow.

9. LCCD Rule Book Updates: Board & Water – review, discuss approve.

Kevin stated Jeff had mentioned WWDC a lot and Kevin stated we should spell it out once because not everybody knows what WWDC is. Jeff stated it is the WY Water Development Commission. Kevin asked if Jim Cochran was still on the committee. Kevin stated he had seen him at the meetings. Kevin asked who votes on the projects. Jeff stated the commission.

Ann asked if this was all new information and Jeff stated no, he had been doing this for a year or so and they had to work up something in case of priority was necessary. Jeff stated he and Rex had decided they could only handle 10 projects a year, so they had to create a prioritization methodology. Jeff stated NRCS has had previous concerns on smaller acreages, so for example putting in a stock well and what is the public benefit. Jeff stated they set the minimum acreage at 320 **IF** the pasture is used with immediately adjacent pastures for improved distribution. Ann stated so Jeff just spelled out and got very specific about what these water projects are going to entail. Jeff stated it protects him and Rex. Kevin asked if the SEO (State Engineer's Office) have any say in use of the well or anything. Jeff stated yes, they have some rules. Jeff stated we are trying to enhance utilization.

**Casey moved to accept the changes to this draft for the water plan, small water projects;
Kevin seconded the motion. MOTION CARRIED.**

Ann stated the second rule that needs addressed is for those not taking the Supervisor Training class. Kevin stated it is state statute. Ann stated we should accept this into our Rules Book. Kevin stated he had talked to Kathy and the District should establish its own criteria of checks and balances on the Board Supervisors. Little things like if you miss two meetings in a row, that Board member is not signing off on things for six months or something to hold the Board member accountable and Kevin stated that is another discussion.

Kathy stated she had one question. Shaun had put the Board member had 8 months from taking the oath of office to complete the training. Kathy stated the state statute says one year. Kathy stated the Board needs to decide what the time limit is. Kevin stated he was fine with the 8 months. Rex stated you can do it online, but usually in March, WACD & WY Dept. of Ag hosts a training.

**Kevin moved to approve the revisions to the Board Supervisors Handbook as written to include the 8-month window;
Casey seconded the motion. MOTION CARRIED.**

Kevin asked who the two were that had not completed the training and Kathy stated Tom and Jay, but since Tom didn't run for Board Supervisor, he kind of fell off the requirement. Kevin stated he thought Jay had said he was going to take it and Kathy stated he hadn't as of the end of September when she called the WY State Auditor's Office.

10. Board Supervisor Brochure – review.

Ann stated this was a brochure that Paul started when he was here. Kathy stated it's never been finalized, and Kathy just injected the wording that the Board just approved for the Rules Book. Kathy stated we are just trying to put something together to give newly elected Board members or anyone that is interested in running for the Board. Kathy stated its some information on what their duties would be.

Casey stated the only one he had trouble with was to attend local and state conservation functions. Casey stated it's hard to be out of town. Ann asked if that was a requirement and Kathy stated it just says they "should" attend.

Ann asked Scott if it would have been helpful to have a brochure that might have told you some of the basic things that you could have done if you followed through. Scott stated yes, for sure.

Kevin asked if we sent this out and Kathy stated no, this is just a draft. Kathy stated she had actually sent out an email to all the other Districts asking if they had a template with the new requirements and she got no responses, so nobody else has done this either.

Kathy stated it may need further updates. Kathy stated let's leave this as a draft for now and table it until the Dec. Board meeting.

11. Signers at WY Bank & Trust – Remove Kirkwood, Robert Shaun & Farrell, Tom; add new LCCD Manager & new Board Member. *(From LCCD Rule Book-The signers for the LCCD's checking account are all Board of Supervisors and LCCD Manager; current signers for cash and depreciation accounts are Board Treasurer, Board Chair, and LCCD Manager. Sunset June 2025.)*

Kathy stated when she went to update this at the bank, she was told it has to be stated in the Board minutes and Kathy has to have a copy of the minutes, so the bank knows it was approved by the Board.

Kevin asked so we are removing Tom and Shaun and adding the new signers. Kathy stated that is correct. Kathy stated we will be adding Scott, and she knows the bank will have a signature card for new signers to update. Kathy stated she didn't know if it was easier to just go pick up the card and have it at the Dec. Board meeting. Casey stated it would be for him because he was there two or three times last time.

Casey moved to remove Shaun Kirkwood, Tom Farrell and add new manager and new Board member, Scott Cherek, as signers at WY Bank & Trust on the accounts;

Kevin seconded the motion. MOTION CARRIED.

12. Agreement for Conveyance of Real Estate from LEADS – review, discuss, approve.

Ann stated we are not going to vote on this, but we do need to look it over. Ann stated right now it's at the lawyers for review. Jeff stated Dan Frank is going to review it. Jeff stated Dan has something big on the 18th and then he will start reviewing it. Jeff stated he told Dan that if receiving that land, we really don't want any strings attached that would hinder decision making for us.

Kevin stated his concern with this is in reading through it is that it sounds like LEADS is going to be the ones doing the evaluations of it. Kevin wants to know what that evaluation looks like. Kevin wants to know what this criteria is. Jeff stated we had written a white paper before with Randy Bruns when he was with LEADS, and Randy wanted that as a guideline as to what we were up to, what our vision was, and it was in line with their board for that area.

Ann asked about having a committee to make sure that report gets to LEADS. Kathy stated it's been done. Shaun was doing it. We do it calendar year. Jeff stated and it has a financial report that says this is how much we spent. Kathy stated yes.

Kevin stated it was confusing where it states the "property consists of open space which exists for the benefit of the Cheyenne Business Parkway and the businesses and employees of the businesses that

are residents of the Cheyenne Business Parkway”. Kevin stated it doesn’t sound like anybody from Cheyenne can come out here and partake in it. Jeff stated that is actually accurate right now, that’s why it is closed. Kevin stated it seems we would be handcuffed or it’s vague. Kevin stated they want us to take ownership of it, but they want to dictate what we are going to do with it in some form or fashion.

This will be tabled until we hear from the attorney, so it will be on the Dec. agenda.

OTHER BUSINESS -

Ann – Ann stated Kathy had printed off the unofficial election results for 2024 and how the Conservation District did in general. Ann stated we may be in the market for a new rural Board Supervisor, and we were wondering if we could get the write-ins cast for that position. Kathy stated she hadn’t called the elections office to see if we could get those names. Ann asked if anybody else has a name or people that you know that might be suitable for this job. We would certainly like to have those names.

Kevin also reminded Casey and Scott that the newly elected Board members have 15 or 10 days to report their election expenses. Kathy stated the oath of office was within 10 days.

Ann stated she would like to announce the new District Manager for the Laramie County Conservation District. It is Kevin Wells.

Casey stated he thinks the District should have a permanent mill. Kathy stated the Board in the past has always felt we need to be accountable to the public. Casey stated it needs to be addressed in the future.

13. Next Board of Supervisors meeting Dec. 10, 2024 @ 5:30 pm.

14. ADJOURNMENT-Ann

Ann adjourned the meeting at 7:24 p.m.

Ann Sanchez, Chair

Casey Epler, Secretary

Transcribed by Kathy Cooney, Financial Coordinator