

Laramie County Conservation District

1923 Whitney Road
Cheyenne, WY 82007

Regular Board Meeting

Tuesday, Feb. 13th, 2024

5:30 p.m.

Attendance

Supervisors Present: Ann Sanchez, Chair; Tom Farrell, Vice Chair; Kevin Wells, Treasurer; Jay Berry, Member; Casey Epler, Secretary.

District Employees Present: Shaun Kirkwood, Kathy Cooney.

1. CALL TO ORDER

At 5:37 p.m. Ann called the board meeting to order.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING- Jan. 9, 2024

Kathy stated Ann had pointed out one correction in the minutes. On page 1 under Old Business, instead of Granby River, it should state Grand Encampment River.

Tom moved to approve the minutes from the previous meeting with the above correction;
Jay seconded the motion. MOTION CARRIED.

3. TREASURER'S REPORT- Profit and Loss Statement (monthly) – Jan. 2024 - Shaun

Kathy stated we got to the end of January, and we were over the District's insured limit, so she contacted WY Bank & Trust, and they issued another security bond to cover an additional \$400,000.00, which brings the insured limit up to \$2.8 million. The January Mill Levy check just came in and it was for \$59,000.00. Kevin asked if we needed to spend some money. Shaun stated the Mill Levy is down this year, but we have ordered a tractor, the possibility of a drill, and we have to make the final payment on the security system. Kathy stated we did sell the '02 F350 pickup and tree sales made up a large portion of the income along with Jeff's grant of \$250,000.00 for the Mariah Project was deposited in January, too. Shaun stated there is \$450,000.00 sitting in checking and soon as the pond out back is dug, that will be paid for.

Jay asked if we were going to have a conversation with somebody about what this Mill Levy is projected at or what the consistency will be. Kathy stated she did go and talk to Todd Ernst, the County Assessor. Kathy passed around a graph of the poster that is outside of the assessor's office. Kathy stated he was very courteous and answered her questions. Kathy stated he will also be attending the Legislative Luncheon so hopefully we can get some feedback from him then as well.

Kathy stated the big bump in Mill Levy last year was due to mineral rights, and we didn't realize the District got a piece of that pie. Kathy stated the mineral revenues are about two years behind for the State of WY. Kathy stated she was told he doesn't see the mineral revenues to be increasing, that they will remain flat, so not to count on those funds. Shaun stated for budgeting he usually figures in a 3% increase from the previous year. Shaun stated for FY '24-'25, he will probably go off of two years ago budget to calculate the income.

Tom asked about the bills in the legislature about reducing property taxes. Kathy stated she was told there are actually 8 bills in the legislature regarding the reduction of property taxes. Shaun stated he hopes Holly Kennedy, WACD, will discuss that next week at the Supervisor Training. Shaun stated the conversation is they cannot do this legally. The bills may pass, but there will be opposition to say it is not constitutional. Shaun stated the bills did pass on the floor yesterday. Jay stated we have some overzealous, misinformed conservatives.

Jay moved to submit for audit.

4. OLD BUSINESS – review and/or discussion

There was no old business.

5. PROGRAM REPORTS –

–Public Outreach (Ann)

Ann asked how the Science Fair judging went. Shaun stated there were only 60 total projects. Shaun stated there used to be 60 per grade. We did find two Natural Resource projects and awarded each a pair of binoculars. Tom asked who they were. Shaun stated they were sisters, Ada Cox, and Felicity Cox. Shaun stated Ada's was on carbon release from earth worms, and Felicity was on compost or not. She grew plants in soil that was 50/50 and just regular soil. Shaun stated his daughter got second in the 5th grade level.

Ann stated she attended the Albin Farm Show and lots of people attended and a lot of sponsors. Rex and Clark did a very nice job at the District display. Ann stated there have been lots of social media posts on Facebook and Instagram.

Ann stated the Sportsman's Expo is coming. Shaun stated it is a good show, we will see a lot of people and will give away a pair of binoculars each day. Tom asked what the date was on it. Ann stated March 15, 16, & 17 at Archer. Tom asked about the Game & Fish Expo this year. Shaun stated he hadn't heard anything this year, but that they are going to regional, or area events and they are not going to do a statewide one. Shaun stated the last time he had talked to them, they had two stream trailers so they would be traveling around the state.

-Wildlife & Range (Kevin)

Kevin stated he knew Rex has had some coordination meetings with Tommy Cress in regard to guzzlers and that Rex is supposed to be buying supplies this week to get this project going.

Jay asked what the District's responsibility is to provide water to the Pole Mountain deal. Jay stated he has never fully understood our relationship with that, and Jay stated he was probably speaking as a private landowner. Jay asked why we are looking for water for them. Jay asked if there wasn't enough stream water. Jay stated Casey was probably a lot more familiar with the water on Pole Mountain. Casey stated it is to keep the livestock away from the Crow Creek's & Pole Creek's. Casey stated it is to move the cattle out of the big riparian areas and develop springs elsewhere. Shaun stated he thinks it fell into Rex's lap because it's wildlife, its more cows. Back in the days when they came to us asking us to do more projects was when Matt was here, and he was spending all of his time doing water sampling for water quality and also because it's part of our watershed. Then Matt left and Rex took over. Shaun stated it's out of our boundary, it's out of Laramie County, but it's part of our watershed. Jay stated Rex's narrative states they were looking for a location for a well. Casey stated there is not a cased well on the 87 sections on Pole Mountain, none. Casey stated he thinks the forest service is short of people and they don't have anything for equipment, at least in this district. Shaun stated he would find out about the well. Jay stated he's trying to wrap his mind around what their goal is and what the District's goal is. Kevin stated he's had the same conversations with Rex. Kevin stated he doesn't have a problem with us collaborating with the Forest Service as long they aren't holding us hostage on something, that they are waiting for our final recommendation because it's not our gig. Kevin stated he can see from the boundary line, but it's a small piece compared to what's in Albany County. Kevin said he can see it from a wildlife perspective, but when it comes to the cattle grazing, it frustrates him. Kevin stated he's tired of the cattle in the creek. Kevin stated there has not been much in the way of water development outside of springs.

Kevin stated the Mule Fanatics wanted to do all kinds of maintenance up there but there is no enforcement against vandalism up there. You build all the buck and rail fences you want, they just cut them down. Kevin stated the forest service doesn't have the people to enforce anything, so they look for other people to try and help. Kevin stated he doesn't mind us having input, but he doesn't think we should spend four days a week up on the mountain because it's nice. Kevin wonders where Laramie Rivers is in this conversation. Shaun stated he just thinks they don't go or have the manpower.

- Water (Casey)

Casey stated Lodgepole Creek is running again north of Hillsdale. It started about two weeks ago. Casey stated the Rabou/King/Romsa well application was protested. Casey stated they are wanting to go 400 and some feet and pierce the aquifer.

Ann stated the legislature changed the rule that the proof has shifted to the people that want to drill the well.

Tom asked about the wells that were retired in Albin and now they want to drill more. Casey stated they did not retire many up there. Casey stated the Carpenter area benefited, and Shaun stated he thought they did more well capping in the Carpenter/Pine Bluffs area. Tom asked if there was a difference between capping vs. retiring. It was stated it is the same. Landowners were paid through a program financed by the federal government (AWEP-Agricultural Water Enhancement Program) to relinquish use of their well.

Ann stated what scares her is if these wells are approved, everyone's going to be applying.

Ann stated she hoped everyone read Jeff Geyer's report because he has so many things going on. Ann asked about the High Plains Environmental Center "training." Shaun stated it is in Loveland that grows specialty seed. Jeff went down there because he wants to start growing seeds here.

Ann asked Shaun to give an update on the pond in the Natural Area. Shaun stated they didn't dig because they wanted the cold. We had that cold snap for two weeks, but they weren't here. They started digging on Monday of last week and they buried those rock trucks multiple times. They brought in these tank track trucks, and they spin right in the middle. Shaun stated they have the bottom half done and now they are digging the depth of the pond. Jay asked how it was going to work. Jay asked whose water it is in the pond. Shaun stated Game & Fish agreed to stock the pond, the water is from everywhere above us, so it is the city's water. Shaun stated they are wanting to put multiple culverts under the railroad tracks and Shaun was at a meeting today and he told them he doesn't want their water. Shaun stated the maintenance is part of the agreement the District has with LEADS. Shaun said technically once we spend \$440,000.00 on the Natural Area, we could walk away but we won't.

Tom asked if there are plans for dog waste stations. Shaun stated they are still out there, but once the pond is done, we will start figuring out trails and more pet waste stations and what the approach is. Shaun stated he would personally like to kick the dogs out. Tom stated there are just too many fools out there that don't follow rules or take care of the waste properly. Shaun stated this is really LEADS property and we don't have to answer to anybody so we get to do that enforcement which is very hard. Shaun stated signs will be put up that say this is private property, respect it or you will be asked to leave. What dogs have destroyed up by Prairie Wind on State Lands is unbelievably gross. Shaun stated it will hard for us as staff to walk down and ask someone to put their dog on a leash, but Shaun stated we also have to tread lightly because we need public support. Kevin asked if they couldn't put an enforcement on it. A \$500.00 fine if you're caught with your dog out here and have the animal control come out and make a loop. We just have to take down someone's license plate in the parking lot. Shaun said they do that in Ft. Collins. Shaun said he'd talked to Eagle Claw, across the way, and they said if they needed to get involved, they would do that. Shaun stated they are talking of having a COA out here, similar to an HOA, where we would all have to pay in as businesses and there could be enforcement. Jay asked if there would be cameras. Shaun stated we just have game cameras out there right now.

- Trees (Jay)

Jay stated he's pretty much at the mercy of what Dale & Clark tell him from their narrative. Trees are selling like wildfire.

Shaun stated they are finishing designs, we are sitting with 82 plantings which is 18 miles which is a lot of small plantings. Shaun stated they are trying to decide if they will run two crews or one crew for planting. Shaun stated within the next month they will be preparing for spring to happen.

Ann asked about customers that had a design done but haven't ordered trees. Shaun stated it happens every year. Shaun stated Clark did 114 designs and 80 have ordered.

- Administration (Tom, Shaun, & Kathy)

Kathy stated the Legislative Lunch is coming up and we have 15 that have RSVP'd so far. Tom asked about the mayors from Pine Bluffs and Albin. Kathy stated none of the mayors have RSVP'd yet. Tom asked if it would help if we gave them personal invitations. Kathy stated she mailed them each one. Ann stated she would be out of town. Shaun asked Tom if he would give the welcome and he stated yes.

Jay asked what would happen if they don't make the Supervisor Training. Shaun stated you have to have taken the class by June 30, 2024. If the Board members do not take the class, WDA can withhold their funding, but the Dept. of Audit can also hold our Mill Levy. The training is Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday of next week, or you can take it online like Kevin did. Tom asked if he could take it in segments. Shaun stated he thought you could get online and take the modules at your own pace. Shaun stated he would talk to Sydney with WACD to find out if that is available.

Shaun stated the Local Work Group is here on Friday at the office from 9 am – 3 pm. Shaun stated they thought they would try an all day and people could come and go rather than a set time.

Shaun stated the ENR competition is April 10. Shaun asked if anyone is interested in judging shoot him an email. Ann stated she was interested, and Kevin said if he was here, he would be interested.

Shaun stated they finished the security on the building, kind of. We have been waiting forever. Now we have a passcode to come into the building. When you come in there is an alarm, so if anybody ever needs to come in, Shaun will get you a card. They would then have to come in and enter a code. Tom stated the Board Chair should have access. Shaun stated he had asked Ann if she wanted a key or any Board member that wants a card, Shaun will assign you a card. Ann stated she couldn't think of a reason she would need it. Shaun stated if they enter the building, they will have to enter a code to disarm the building, or they will call Shaun. Which he said gets into him having to now wear his watch 24/7 because they have to have a response person. If they can't reach Shaun, Rex is the next contact then down through the employees. Jay stated he didn't get it as to why the security people aren't coming that they would have to call Shaun. Shaun stated you can set it up however you want. If the alarms go off, they expect Shaun to pull up the cameras and see if there's a mouse running down the hallway or whatever. We get charged if the police show up if it's a false alarm. Shaun stated the fire alarm is a monitor system. Tom asked if the District paid for his watch. Shaun stated no. Tom stated the District should have. Shaun stated they could pay him in July. Shaun stated he has it programmed so it only rings at night if it's from someone important like his wife, kids, the security or fire alarm. Shaun stated it turns on at 9 pm and off at 6 am. We chose to do that rather than last one out, first one in. On the weekends, it's on 24/7. Shaun stated he has gotten away from keys because keys disappear.

Shaun also stated he has been selected to jury duty from April until September. Shaun stated it took six days to receive his notice. He asked the Board how long it took to get their board packets. Tom stated he got his by Friday. Ann stated as elected officials, they are exempt from jury duty.

Consent:

- 6. WDA Educational Function for Elected Officials**-verification and discussion of event.
- 7. WDA Bonding**-verification the District has bond coverage on the Treasurer.

8. WDA Risk Management Practices-verification the District is following protocol and practices.

Kevin moved to approve Consent Items 6, 7, & 8;
Tom seconded the motion. MOTION CARRIED.

Discussion Items:

Shaun stated he has an updated contact list on the table in front of everyone, so take one home for your records or Shaun stated he could email it if they wanted to save on their desktops. Shaun stated staff direct phone lines are on there, but he reminded them after 4 pm, the phones go directly to voicemail.

Kevin stated he has been forwarding the Conservation Clips from NACD to three FFA advisors because they use some of the topics for ag issues. Tom stated they have ag in the jr. high now, too.

OTHER BUSINESS - WACD Supervisor/Employee training February 20-22,2024/LCCD DQ Legislative Event February 27, 2024/noon to 1 p.m./Epic Egg

9. – Next Board of Supervisor meeting March 12, 2024 @ 5:30 pm

10. ADJOURNMENT-Ann

Ann adjourned the meeting at 7:03 p.m.

Ann Sanchez, Chair

Casey Epler, Secretary

Transcribed by Kathy Cooney, Financial Coordinator