

Laramie County Conservation District

11221 U.S. Hwy. 30
Cheyenne, WY 82009

Regular Board Meeting - Corrected

Thursday, Jan. 20th, 2022

4:00 p.m.

Attendance

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

District Employees Present: Shaun Kirkwood, Kathy Cooney, Jeff Geyer, Rex Lockman.

NRCS Employees Present: Mason Peebles & Thomas Tjepkes

FSA Employee Present: Vacant

Associate Supervisor: Jim Cochran

1. CALL TO ORDER

At 4:01 p.m. Tom called the board meeting to order.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING - Nov. 18, 2021

Casey moved to approve the minutes from the previous meeting;
Ann seconded the motion. MOTION CARRIED.

3. TREASURER'S REPORT- Profit and Loss Statement - (Nov. & Dec. 2021)

Profit and Loss Budget Overview July-Dec. (quarterly) 2021 **Shaun**

Kevin asked about the balances at the bottom of the reports and wanted to know what reflected the balances at WY Bank & Trust. Kathy stated the top three accounts listed were for WY Bank & Trust. Checking being the first total, then Depreciation & then Cash Reserve accounts.

Shaun presented the Treasurer's Report and Kevin moved to submit it for audit.

4. ELECTION OF OFFICERS –

Tom proposed Kevin be Board Chairman, Ann as Vice Chairman, Tom as Treasurer, Jay as Secretary, and Casey remain a member.

Jay moved to accept the proposed Board positions as suggested by Tom. Tom asked if there was any discussion.

Shaun asked if the Board liaison needed to be voted on as well. Tom stated those assignments would just be discussed.

Kathy stated it is a huge process to change the position of Treasurer as that individual must be bonded, insured, and it must be changed with the County Clerk's office. Kevin is insured through his current term of office. Jim Cochran stated the Mill Levy checks would not be received until the new Treasurer was bonded and insured either. Bank signatures would also need to be updated. The Treasurer is also the go to guy for check signatures.

After the discussion, it was decided Board positions would remain as they are. No action needed.

Tom asked about program assignments and for discussion. Tom asked if Ann would be employee liaison. Ann stated she would. That was the only change for program assignments.

5. PROGRAM REPORTS –

–Education (Ann)

Ann did not have anything to report at this time.

-Wildlife & Range (Kevin, Rex)

Kevin stated it was a record year of fund raising for the SE WY Chapter of the Muley Fanatics. Rex stated the local Pheasants Forever Chapter has dissolved. Rex stated it has been the same people running it for 20 years and there was no interest from new people.

Rex stated the last two months have been spent working on small water projects. Finally completing things and getting paperwork submitted. Right now he is working on grant applications for cheat grass and weed control.

Jay asked about the 29% increase in growth. Rex said after figuring the stats, and looking at it, and it was 2 cm increase, he did not realize the increase until he put it into a percentage of an increase in production in the shrubs. Casey asked what this all referred to. Rex stated this information was from the spraying on Curt Gowdy for cheat grass and the competition it was creating in the shrubs. Bitterbrush and Mountain Mahogany which are important for mule deer and moose. One of the measurements Rex did was pre-treatment and measurement after spraying the cheat grass on the ends of the shrubs. Rex stated there are also five plots used for measurement. Four plots are in the treatment area, and one is outside the treatment area as a control plot.

Shaun stated he also wanted Rex and Jeff to document their time in their narratives spent on these small water projects.

- Water (Tom, Jeff)

Jeff stated he had spent probably a week working on small water projects. Jeff stated the biggest thing of late is a Conoco/Phillips grant for stream restoration for \$50,000.00 in addition to some other funding that he will spread throughout Lodgepole Creek. A core meeting was held with the 206 program, which is a stream restoration program out of the Omaha core office. Jeff stated anything that happens from here on out on the Crow Creek Restoration needs to be pushed to the City of Cheyenne because of the contamination that was brought up about a year and a half ago. The District has moved onto some other things on its own.

Jeff has been working on Dry Creek, monitoring the water table, and will be installing a gauge in March to track flows again.

Jeff stated the Local Work Group is this weekend, and Jeff will be giving a presentation about Buffalo Grass conversions at the Habitat Hero's Workshop.

Jeff stated him and Shaun will be meeting with the City of Cheyenne regarding the Natural Area about things the District wants to get done, and some of their ideas, and come to some agreements. The City is wanting to push the water detention area on the north of the railroad tracks onto the Natural Area. Tom asked about the stream erosion that would create. Jeff said the District does not know all the information the City has planned. Jeff's idea is to use some funds available from a business for a project in the Natural Area as a preemptive strike so the City would have to adapt to what the District already has.

Jay asked about the implications in a major storm if it floods. Jeff said legally you cannot flood your neighbor out. Shaun stated the City is also battling the railroad as the railroad has a say in how much water can be stored in that area. Jeff stated he thinks the City is trying to alleviate burdens that flood areas for developers upstream.

Kevin asked where the source of this is from and if it is from all along Dry Creek. Jeff stated with the development of East Park, it is going to cause more run off. Jeff just wanted the Board to know the District could look bad in the paper if we do not go along with the City. Shaun stated it could take years working with the railroad as well. Jeff would like to enlarge a pond in the Natural Area for a fishery and that would be the preemptive measure the District could take to then have the City have to work around that existing pond.

- Trees (Casey)

Casey stated trees are surviving.

Shaun stated most of bulk ordered trees have sold out. There are currently eighty-one plantings, eighteen miles of tree row. 170 designs have been completed.

Casey asked about tree planting labor. Shaun stated it has been difficult to get workers for the new building, so does not see the labor issue getting any better. Kevin asked about a minimum age or qualifications. Shaun stated a valid driver's license and the age is 18 to work around equipment. Shaun stated two crews were budgeted this year.

Shaun stated Dale is dealing with the living snow fence program. It was defunded, but now funds may be available.

Casey asked about the increase in the price of the trees and labor. Shaun stated only the price of the trees were increased. The increase was to offset the fees for credit card transactions. Shaun said a tree order form was found from 1998, and the planting prices are still the same. The fabric installation prices have increased.

- Administration (Jay, Shaun, & Kathy)

Kathy stated she had just sent Jay an email today regarding an update for administration, and apologized for it being late as she forgot. Kathy stated she had been busy buying furniture for the new office. Shaun had budgeted \$50,000.00, and the District has found that furniture is very expensive. After some orders placed today, the budget is down to about \$10,000.00. The District still needs to find desks and chairs for the classroom area.

Kathy stated Bobbie Frank had been contacted today as she designs websites and has agreed to help the District design a new website. Bobbie also has an online shopping mart, and we are on the right path in finding her to help the District put the tree order form online next year.

Shaun stated the District had talked about using Lorie Chesnut, the volunteer, as her husband works on websites for the state. Shaun stated Bobbie's fees were very inexpensive, and she knows conservation districts. It would take a lot of oversight to have the volunteer design a website. Shaun stated \$5,000.00 was budgeted for a new website design.

Kevin suggested "Public Surplus for the State of WY" to look for office furniture items. It is an auction site and the physical store is on Westland Road.

Shaun reminded everyone about the Local Work Group Meeting being held Saturday. Shaun stated the District is not judging City Science Fair this year as it is the same day as the Local Work Group Meeting. Shaun will go down Friday evening to review science projects, and Saturday he will leave the meeting to go present binoculars for Natural Resource Science Awards. Shaun stated after reviewing the project lists, it looked like there was one or maybe two more projects that fit the criteria for an award. Tom asked Ann if she would like to present awards. Ann stated she will also be attending the Local Work Group Meeting. Shaun stated awards will be given out at 11:30 am and the Local Work Group Meeting is scheduled to last until noon. Shaun stated if the work group meeting gets done and Ann wanted to go present that would be fine. Shaun stated he would leave the meeting at 11 am. Ann stated she would assist. They will wait and see how Saturday's meeting goes, and then make a decision.

Shaun stated he has been dealing with the building and Century Link. Shaun stated he has some pictures if anyone wanted to see them, and the move in date might be April. The contractors are waiting on a fire box. Windows and garage doors are still being waited for. The interior is drywalled and being textured. Labor workers are an issue for contractors. Shaun stated he meets with Plan One and Five R Construction on Monday's at 3 pm to view progress.

Shaun stated Rooted in Cheyenne's progress report and Christmas card was on the main table for the Board to see.

-NRCS (Mason Peebles)

Mason introduced Thomas. Thomas stated he is taking over Justin's position as Soil Conservationist. He stated he was glad to be here and working with everyone. Mason stated Thomas has been here almost 3 months.

Mason stated he is in the process of ranking all of the new projects. Mason stated he should know in the next month or so what projects will get funded and what will not. Mason stated there was still talk of more money coming from an infrastructure bill that never passed. There has been some interest in easements up by Curt Gowdy. A working easement to continue grazing. Mason expects CRP signup to begin in the next month or so.

Mason also mentioned the Local Work Group Meeting scheduled for Saturday. Mason mailed out some personalized letters and about 4,000 emails and is not expecting a lot of people, but is hoping for about 20 which would be more than have attended in the past.

Mason stated in staffing Justin did get a job with the forest service in Alaska, so his official last day is Jan. 28th. Thomas is filling Justin's position, and Tyler will return from his maternity leave in January.

Mason stated after the water discussion and the Natural Area, he said it made him think of Allison Draw. NRCS was pretty involved in that, and NRCS has a watershed program for big projects. Mason stated he wasn't sure if the natural area fit, but it isn't that different than the Allison Draw project. It was discussed if the area had to be in the county or if it included city as well.

Jay asked about the meeting on Saturday and how it was going to be approached. Mason stated he had put together an agenda. Mason said he would give an introduction and explain the purpose of the meeting. Mason stated Don Day would give a talk and wanted people to feel free to give input without singling them out. Mason stated there will be worksheets and people can circle issues they feel are important to them. Mason stated if people are afraid to talk it will be hard to get information. Jay stated Justin had drawn up a plan for him and Jay said it was frightening as the weather has been a hindrance.

Jay stated a gap that he sees is that Weed & Pest is so willing to cost share for chemical, but there is a lack of ways for application. Jay would like to know what the short fall is. Mason stated Weed & Pest has a program that anyone is eligible for the cost share on the chemical itself. Mason stated the NRCS program, which can be in conjunction with Weed & Pest, pays a flat rate that is supposed to help pay both the chemical and application cost. Mason stated it is likely to get funded in this priority in the EQIP Federal Program.

Discussion Items:

6. Archive Social – need for archiving social media documents for public records requests.

Shaun stated as with public requests for financial information, the new thing is that all social media accounts need to be archived. Posts on social media like Twitter, Facebook, or Instagram need to be archived so if someone makes a public request for social media, it can be provided. Shaun stated he and Kathy had sat through two sessions with Archive Social to learn about it. The proposed cost is between \$3,000.00 - \$6,000.00 annually for this service. Shaun stated another phone conference call will be held on Friday. Shaun stated this is more an information topic that needs to be addressed and the District will need in the future. For the fee, Archive Social will back up four social media accounts which would be the District's website, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube sites. The service is to comply if there are public requests.

Jay asked if this was because the District is a public entity. Shaun stated yes as we are funded with public funds. Shaun stated the meeting Friday would discuss the fee and that the fee would be prorated out for our fiscal year.

Shaun asked if there was any inputs, questions, or thoughts. Tom asked if this was something the District really needed to do. Kevin stated Kathy had talked about it recently when she met him to get checks signed. Kevin stated he had not heard of it, so he contacted DEQ's PR person, and he stated Archive Social was the #1 company in the country and the state was also using them. Kevin stated because there are so many platforms in social media, people have found ways to sue companies. Kevin thought it was a farce, but it is legitimate.

Shaun stated that even if the District has a post saved on a file, it could be doctored or altered inhouse. By having it archived by an outside source, Archive Social can provide the original post. Shaun stated we had contacted the ombudsman here in Cheyenne regarding public information, and she also said social media is considered public information.

Shaun then stated this leads into our District emails are not backed up. The District has contacted the provider, JubJub, and that will be an additional fee. Shaun stated the District is doing its part to be compliant. Kevin stated the provider the state uses to back up their emails looks them up. Kevin asked if JubJub would look up the email if requested. Kathy stated that JubJub stated they would back up the emails for 10 years. Proposed options are:

Option #1 - On Server Archiving: This option archives all messages on the server for 24 months (longer retention times are available) and is priced at a flat rate of \$10/month. Admins are able to search the archive using a web browser at <https://mail2.jubjub.net>

Option #2 - Off Server Archiving and Email Security: This option archives all messages for 10 years and is priced on a per user basis at \$8/month. This option also provides advanced spam/virus filtering and email phishing protection. Archives are searchable using a web browser for eDiscovery purposes.

Jay moved to pursue hiring Archive Social and having that become a line item.
Kevin Seconded. MOTION CARRIED.

7. Education Specialist position – conversation about position vacancy.

Ann stated that from information from the last board meeting, that the staff was doing o.k. without a designated person. Ann asked how it is going now, and mentioned the volunteer was helping. Shaun stated the District has had a few requests for classroom presentations, and Rex & Jeff had both filled in. There have been some requests for science fair judges, but those requests are down hugely. Shaun stated there have been no other requests. Shaun stated that the staff is managing the newsletter as a group, social media is being taken care of by Kathy & himself, Kathy is managing the website, Rex helps with Facebook, and staff is working as a group, and Shaun did not think anyone was overwhelmed. Shaun stated he did not know why there were not requests. The website states under the Education program to contact the District for assistance. Shaun stated we are doing good as a staff.

Ann asked if Shaun knew why there were not as many requests for judges for science fairs. Shaun stated he was not sure what the reason is. The District usually judges City Science fair and this year there are only forty-five projects. Tom stated the School District really went through a change, and that he would usually do 3-4 presentations at the library. Tom stated he thinks science fair has just been put on a back burner with virtual learning.

Shaun stated from looking through past narratives, this is a slow time of year. Staff managed the September/October time period. Tom stated he used to assist Mark McIlvain with day programs at Veaudawoo and that could be a request in the spring. Shaun stated if there is a request, and current staff cannot manage it, B.O.P.U. has an education person, NRCS does, so does Botanic Gardens, and Game & Fish. Shaun stated he feels current staff can manage it, and if not, the District would pass it off by referring them to another entity.

Shaun stated he put this item on the agenda to see if the District is looking to fill this position, or hold off. Tom asked about thinking about the new facility, the new office, and just sitting on this for now.

Shaun stated the newsletter is cake as staff writes their own articles, then hands it off to Kiesa Geyer to do the layout for a fee of \$150.00. Kevin stated he thought the District should hold off and look for a natural area specialist. Kevin wants to take that salary and feels it is time to re-write job descriptions as everyone is doing "different", take some of that money and give staff additional pay, and feels it's the only fair thing to do. Kevin stated he agreed with current staff taking their experience and knowledge, Mason's folks, or whomever instead of having someone specified because he thinks they get burned out because there is not enough to keep them busy. Kevin stated the District has changed and there are also so many more outreach opportunities available. Kevin stated he thought the District was a banner for education at one time but doesn't think the District is up to snuff right now and thinks the District should have a say in curriculum for a volunteer, but the District doesn't have enough for a 40 hour employee. Shaun stated the staff had sat down and discussed what the District needed that person to do. Between marketing, public relations, and the classroom, there is still not enough to do. That position may be busy September and October, and May. Shaun said there is only so much social media that can be posted, or folks will turn it off. Shaun stated down the road, a position could be utilized in the natural area.

Shaun asked if the education position isn't filled, does the District sell the four-door pickup. Shaun stated staff is rotating and using it, but it is not needed. If the District does hire someone this next summer, there will be some vehicle sharing. The District currently has eight vehicles and six employees. It has 103,000 miles and worth possibly \$14,000.00. Tom asked if that vehicle was used for meetings. Shaun stated we have not traveled as a group that large in some time, and the District has the big four door diesel, which is roomier.

Ann asked if it were sold if the money could be put in the budget for a new tractor. Shaun suggested purchasing a side by side or a 4-wheeler to be used at the Natural Area. Kevin asked how the District would sell it. Shaun stated it could be sat out by the highway with a 4-sale sign in it or taken to auction, as we have done most recently. Shaun would prefer the auction. Staff talked about Carvana. Big R was discussed. Jim Cochran stated Big R just takes pictures of it and it stays at the District and sells. It was decided to sell the pickup. Shaun will decide how to sell it.

8. WACD Supervisor/Employee training – February 22, 23, 24, 2022, Plains Hotel, Cheyenne, WY.

Shaun stated WACD is hosting this training and feels it is very informative. Several staff members have attended once if not more times. There have been staff changes at WACD, and Cathy Rosenthal is the Interim Director. Austin Burkett has just resigned. If anyone is interested in attending the training, let Shaun know. Ann asked for the hours. Shaun will pass on more information when he gets it.

9. Mileage Reimbursement Rates 2022 – \$0.585 per mile

Shaun stated this is the new rate for 2022. Kathy stated this is the Federal Rate which the District uses. It was \$.56 last year, so it did go up a little this year. Kathy stated the governor usually issues a letter for the state of Wyoming, but she has not seen that letter yet. This is the Federal reimbursement rate.

10. Board mileage reimbursement – electronically and annually or semi-annually.

Shaun stated the District issues checks quarterly to the Board for milage reimbursement. Shaun asked if the board would first decide if they would like reimbursed electronically. Kathy stated she had printed off the form that would need to be completed with banking information.

Jay stated if checks were issued electronically, it would help keeps books up to date.

Kevin moved to approve Board Mileage reimbursement to be issued electronically on a semi-annual basis.

Ann seconded the motion. MOTION CARRIED.

11. Other Business

Local Work Group meeting January 22, 2022. 8 a.m. to noon

Shaun stated the NACD closing for early bird registration is tomorrow. Shaun stated he didn't know if anyone was thinking of going. Shaun stated attendees must have proof of vaccination and a negative test result before arrival. Shaun stated none of the staff are attending.

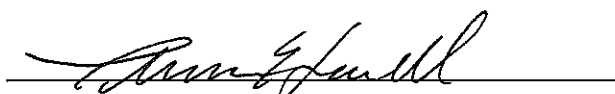
Shaun asked Kevin if he wished to discuss the no-till drill. This will be discussed at a future meeting.

Tom asked about preference for board meeting time and dates. This was discussed and it was decided the second Tuesday of each month at 5:30 pm. There will be no February meeting, so the next meeting will be Tuesday, March 8, 2022, at 5:30 pm.

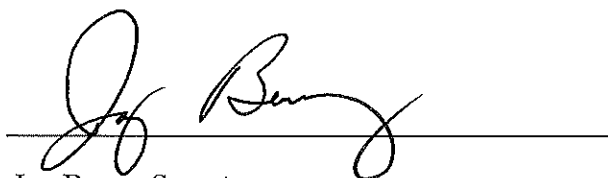
Kevin asked Shaun about staff attending meetings. Policy states if staff leaves and has to return for a meeting, a minimum of two hours of compensation time will be given. It was decided staff does not need to attend board meeting except the District Manager and the Financial Coordinator to take minutes.

12. Adjournment-Tom

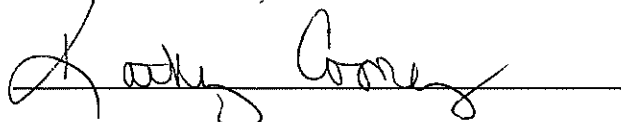
Tom adjourned the meeting at 5:47 p.m.



Thomas E. Farrell, Chairman



Jay Berry, Secretary



Transcribed by Kathy Cooney, Financial Coordinator