

January 21, 2015

The Lincoln County Board of Commissioners met for a regular session on January 21, 2015, in the Eureka Annex of the Lincoln County Courthouse. Present were Commissioner Mike Cole, Commissioner Greg Larson, Commissioner Mark Peck, Executive Assistant Bill Bischoff and Clerk and Recorder Robin Benson.

Commissioner Cole **opened the meeting** with the Pledge of Allegiance.

10:30 AM Svea Jorgensen, Extension Agent:

Svea gave an overview of the Extension services and responsibilities. She asked if it would be beneficial to provide monthly reports to the Commission to help summarize what she does in her job and the services she provides to the county. Svea talked about the 4H program and the wide variety of services, projects, classes and other youth activities her department spearheads. She shared her enthusiasm about working alongside the Forest Service & providing education projects such as hunting and forest management classes. The Commission encouraged continued communication.

11:00 AM Eureka Justice of the Peace: Present were Dave Guild, Linda Todd-Guild, Madelon Martin, Krista Nemeroff, Myles Hickman, Robin Haidle, Ginger Beer, John & Bobbie Stoken, Linda Reiner, Charles W. Reiner, Stormy Langston, Richard Avery, Melanie Davis and Mark Yanoski, and Judge Sheffield.

Myles asked Commissioner Peck about his comment to investigate the JP issue and come up with budget numbers. Commissioner Peck shared information he learned from talking with other counties in the state and said from reviewing reports; he determined the county was saving around \$175,000. Robin Haidle expressed his concern about the loss of service to North Lincoln County since the closure of the JP Office. North Lincoln County is growing with the increase of the Canadian presence. Taxing revenue indicate that Eureka provides 39% (majority) of taxpayer revenue for Lincoln County. With growth comes challenges, he said. Robin feels the Commission should take a different approach to provide for those growing needs, and suggested that services should remain in the North because of the growth. The JP issue is still a big concern in the North; people are still upset that after 100 years of having a JP, there is no real person to talk with when a person has a problem or a crisis. Robin said the JP service needs to be real, timely, efficient and effective and feels the present situation is not adequate. His main interest and concern is domestic violence and stressed that people in distress or trauma may need to see a real person for assistance. Robin said that out of 174 cases reported, 69 were in NLC. The people in NLC should have the final word if the new JP system is working or not. Commissioner Cole agrees with Robin that NLC should have some input on this issue, but said it would not be decided today, and maybe the best way to solve this is through the next election cycle. The public expressed waiting 2 years was too long of a time span for solutions.

Commissioner Larson handed out a document by the Forest Service that outlined the drastic cut in federal payments used for schools, roads and forestry work after Congress failed to extend Secure Rural Schools funding. Commissioner Larson said he understands and sympathizes, but this is reality. There will be some very serious budget cuts and it is not going to get easier.

Myles said he understands money is going away but felt it needed to be acknowledged that Eureka provides the majority of tax revenue for the county. He felt the closure of the JP office was not done properly because there were no actual studies put into the decision and he would like to do this properly and move forward on the dialogue. Myles said he has not seen a real plan or guidelines. If there is a plan in place, the public is not aware of it. Myles asked what the criterion is to determine if the system in place is working.

Madelon expressed concerns for victims of domestic abuse. Judge Sheffield clarified the process of reporting domestic abuse and the roles of the deputies, victim advocate counselor and the JP office. Judge Sheffield explained the application for assistance and said the process has not changed. Judge Sheffield said there was only one reported case of domestic abuse in NLC last year. Victim witness service in NLC is also available to domestic abuse victims. Commissioner Larson suggested public education about the services provided by the victim witness advocates.

Myles said there should be criteria in place to evaluate the current system and its effectiveness to the citizens. Commissioner Peck agreed the system will need to be evaluated. Commissioner Cole thought today's discussion was valuable both for public awareness and finding ways to determine if the change is working. Judge Sheffield said he could help by continuing to run some studies. Currently civil cases will continue to be handled in NLC. The Sheriff's Department and JP office will also let the commission know if there are problems on their end as well. Commissioner Peck asked if the Tobacco Valley News could do public interest stories to help educate the public. The county website can also be used as a form of public education and awareness. The group decided to meet again in February to discuss criteria necessary for evaluating the current system. Commissioner Cole thanked everyone for attending.

1:00 PM Lincoln County Resource Council (LCRC): Present were Krista Nemeroff, Stormy Langston, Josh Letcher, Jim Voyles, Scott Matheis, Don Truman, Kurt West, Todd Butts, George Williams, Steve Curtiss, and Tim R. White.

Initial discussion centered on the final KNF Forest Plan ROD. It was noted that since we are past the comment and objection phase, the County could write and ask for clarification on questions we have on the ROD. The LCRC said they would be happy to assist the County with questions in areas everyone felt there was need for clarification. They stated the County could then prioritize these areas (objections) for potential litigation if resolution could not be reached any other method. For example, the resource council questioned why the Roderick area in the ROD is being recommended for

wilderness when it clearly does not meet the criteria. If it doesn't meet wilderness definition, then it needs to go. Josh said some of the roads are not considered roads today but skid trails because there are no longer road numbers but if compared to a historic forest service map, the road issue could not be denied. Josh felt this should be corrected now and the history needs to be written correctly. Commissioner Cole mentioned that the wilderness criterion is developed by congress. The resource council raised the question that there has not been a site specific analysis done, how do you know the conditions? There are lands that have been evaluated as wilderness that never should have been. The resource council expressed their concerns that the forest service has failed the community and the forest and the new recommended wilderness plan is extremely flawed. The group discussed Congress' role in designating wilderness. Commissioner Peck felt the biggest concern is the inventory road concept without any representation or congressional oversight and correct road research needs to be included.

The LCRC stated they would help the county as requested throughout the process since we all shared the mutual goal of protecting the county's resources and the county position as a local unit of government. LCRC said they would send their comments and questions as soon as possible.

The County Resource Plan was discussed next. The County is working on completing the plan, followed by the public hearing process and will be adopted as part of the growth policy. Discussion centered on the County then requesting coordination status and being at the table in the future for travel plan and other upcoming discussions.

Commissioner Peck talked about the collaborative process and explained how the county is participating in the stakeholders group, but clarified the county is not part of the group, but its own entity. Commissioner Larson expressed the county could use the LCRC expertise to help put a defense together and realizes the county's resource plan needs work to reflect the Lincoln County accurately.

The Grizzly Bear issue was discussed next with concern about the 100 bear USFS goal for the Cabinet –Yaak ecosystem the most important issue. All agreed that the number was too high and not attainable without efforts to create more food production areas. Connectivity was discussed as well as the need to prove that the C-Y Ecosystem is not isolated and that bears are constantly moving through from other areas. Proving these issues will help move the bear toward its eventual delisting. Alliance for the wild Rockies is suing the USFS to move the bear from threatened to endangered. Lincoln County will side with the USFS in contending the bear population is healthy and does not justify endangered status. The County stated that it is working with USGS Scientist Kate Kendall toward proving the 100 bear goal is too high and that connectivity exists between the C-Y ecosystem and areas adjoining outside. Commissioner Peck said the discussion should be scientifically opposed to being held hostage to a number impossible to reach. Steve said we need likeminded people to start this process and get it back on the right track. Commissioner Peck said there has been a lack of coordination by the county and the intent is to engage at a completely different level.

2:40 PM **Bob Cuffe, County Load Limits:** Present were Keith Hanson, Duane N. Hostetler, Bob Cuffe, George Williams, Don Truman, and Kurt West.

Bob discussed Resolution 479 Road Restriction Ordinance with the Commission. The 1999 Ordinance was implemented for the preservation of county roads during certain times of the year when damage or deterioration exist thereby risking the safety of users of the road and allows Lincoln County to prohibit the operation of or impose restrictions on the weight and speed of any vehicle using roadways.

Bob feels the ordinance should be amended due to the negative economic impact it has on the construction business especially during the months of March and April. He submitted recommendations to the Commission for review. Bob said one in four jobs in Lincoln County is construction related, and he estimates there could be up to half million in revenue lost during road closures because contractors are shut down. There are only so many construction months in a year and starting sooner would allow for taking on one or two more jobs per year. There is a need to capitalize on work when it's available even if it is in March. Bob asked the Commission to take a proactive approach and open county roads for commerce. Helping our economy starts with the small steps of opening up the roads. He only knows of one county in the state who completely closes roads and Lincoln County is it, he said. The Commission will take the information under advisement and come back for further discussion in February. Commissioner Peck said he would like to review the recommendation and visit with the road foremen. The Commission agreed that nobody wants to restrict anyone from working, but a better understanding leads to better solutions.

3:15 **Administrative Issues:**

- Motion by Commissioner Larson to re-appoint Leslie Graves, Betty Mack and Sara Sherwood to serve on the Lincoln County Fair Board. Second by Commissioner Peck, **MOTION** passed unanimously.
- Motion by Commissioner Larson to authorize assistance from the Attorney General's Office in the prosecution of Case CR 2140006487 to act as special counsel. Second by Commissioner Peck, **MOTION** passed unanimously.
- Motion by Commissioner Peck to approve January 14, 2015 Regular Commissioner Meeting Minutes. Second by Commissioner Cole, **MOTION** passed unanimously.

3:30 PM The **meeting was adjourned.**

LINCOLN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Mike Cole, Chairman

ATTEST: _____
Robin A. Benson, Clerk of the Board