

April 12, 2017

The Lincoln County Board of Commissioners met for a regular session on April 12, 2017, in the Lincoln County Courthouse, Libby, Montana. Present were Commissioner Cole, Commissioner Bennett, Commissioner Peck, County Administrator Darren Coldwell and Deputy Clerk of the Board Chris Nelson.

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

9:15 AM **BLRFD Annexation**: Present were Alan Gerstenecker. There is a single person requesting their property be annexed into Bull Lake Rural Fire. Commissioner Cole read the resolution out loud and stated the public hearing is scheduled for April 19, 2017 at the Eureka Annex during regularly scheduled meetings.

9:30 AM **Health Department update**: Present were Reilly Black, Kathi Hooper, Nick Raines, Jake Mertes and Nikki Meyer via VisionNet.

Nick Raines from the Asbestos Resource Program (ARP) said the ARP grant has hit a few roadblocks. The EPA would like to see the county have final financial policies and procedures in place before they award the grant. Currently the EPA has the full grant application and continues to review it. Raines said the cooperative agreement between the county and the EPA has been extended until June but added it would be unlikely for the EPA to grant another. As they work on reimbursement funding from EPA, Raines said they have had to use excess funds, which they luckily had, to stay in the black. Raines finished his update by noting that Senate Bill 315, a bill outlining use and appropriation of funds used for Operation and Maintenance in Libby, passed its first two readings in the senate and is now in the House.

Lincoln County Health Nurse Reilly Black presented the commissioners with health statistics from the last quarter. She informed the board that public health was awarded a \$25,000 grant to fund a project coordinator and it will be given to current employee Amy Fantozzi allowing an additional five hours to her current work week. After reading over the statistics, Commissioner Cole wondered if people are healthier this year as the numbers seemed low. Black said they are seeing increased number of people taking advantage of immunization. Reilly said that she's had a lot of people tell her they didn't know the Health Nurse was back in Libby and she used the health fair to get that information out to the public as well as informational handouts. She said they are looking at the services in Eureka and how they can build a better client base. Currently, Eureka Health does not take appointments leading to people not getting immunizations or even blood pressure checks as they can wait 1 to 2 hours to be seen.

Health Department Director Kathi Hooper said they have tried to make the burn permit process as easy as possible and added they can be mailed or even emailed out. There have been many permits issued already and Kathi said that anyone in her office can and does issue permits.

10:00 AM **letter of Support Lincoln County Economic Survival Strategy**. Present were Alan Gerstenecker and Nikki Meyer.

Commissioner Bennett said they should meet with Jerry Okonski, the author of County Economic Survival Strategy, to get a fuller understanding of the document as it is a bigger idea than just here in our county. Commissioner Peck said there are other counties looking at this document but he thinks the letter of support should be for the idea only as there are issues with the wildland fires proponent and views that part as a non-starter. It will have to be a more pragmatic document that includes the forested counties otherwise it will not get the traction needed to move forward. If SRS and PILT are gotten rid of and people put back to work but there needs to be more education of east coast politicians concerning using our natural resources. Commissioner Peck finished by saying it's a very complex document that could lead to economic upturn and job market improvement but still must address forest health.

10:15 AM **Discussion on event sponsored by County for trip to DC**: Present were Nikki Meyer and Alan Gerstenecker.

Darren contacted other counties concerning the Capital Christmas tree from the Kootenai National Forest and what plans they have. There will be representatives going to Washington DC for the event, made up of juniors and seniors who will be selected. Also, as the tree travels from Montana to DC there has been discussion of having an informational video that would show at all of the stops the tree will make, highlighting where the tree comes from. Darren said he will talk with the school administrators about how the kids can get involved and how they could win a trip to Washington DC as representatives of the Kootenai National Forest.

10:30 AM **Administrative Issues**: Present were Elka Woods, Nikki Meyer and Alan Gerstenecker.

- Darren Coldwell said they are getting the surveys out and they will be available in the courthouse. The survey is one page, front and back that is seeing what the public values in county services and how they feel the county is delivering them. Coldwell said the survey could also be put on the county website and possibly on a website like survey monkey.
- Commissioners reviewed the minutes of April 4 & 5, 2017. **Motion** by Commissioner Peck to approve the minutes as corrected. Second by Commissioner Bennett; motion carried unanimously.

10:45 AM **Appointment of Salary Committee members**. Present were Elka Woods, Alan Gerstenecker, and Vic White. HR Director Vic White said it is time again to organize the salary study. The board briefly discussed appointing new members but due to time constraints is request commissioner approval to reappoint last year's members. White said that currently they don't have enough time to seek and appoint new members. He said the group last year was very good and feels they will continue to do a good job this year. White said next year they will start organizing earlier so they can solicit new members. The commissioners approved the reappointment of last year's committee members.

11:00 AM **Public Comment Time**: Present were Elka Woods, Alan Gerstenecker and Dan Williams. No public comment was given.

11:15 AM **Dan Williams: weed grants.** Present were Elka Woods, Alan Gerstenecker and Dan Williams.

Weed Department Director Dan Williams presented the commissioners with acceptance letter for grants for tanzany ragwort, Lincoln county high school bio grant and rush skeletonweed for their approval and signature. Commissioners signed the grants and congratulated Williams continued work in getting them.

1:15 PM **MT FWP:** Present were Mike Hensler, Wayne Kassworm, Tammie Laverdure, Kim Annis, and Tonya Chilton-Radandt.

Fisheries biologist Mike Hensler briefed the commissioners about the drawdown of the reservoir and said the flows out of the Kooocanusa and into the Kootenai will remain high into the summer. With all the snow fall received this winter and the rain the region has received, the Corps of Engineers is trying to stay ahead of the water before the melt starts in the mountains, at which point they won't be able to release as much water as is coming in. Commissioner Cole asked if there would be any testing of the water because of the high runoff and issue with selenium in the past. Hensler said they are gathering information on selenium levels now and are trying to contract with someone able to create a food-web-diagram to chart the flow of selenium through the aquatic ecosystem.

Grizzly bear biologist Wayne Kassworm said he did a flight last week and detected that one of the monitored bears was out of its den. He isn't sure when the rest will come out of hibernation as the snow levels are still fairly high where the bears den. Kassworm also said they will be augmenting one or two more bears and is hoping for a female. He said there is a proposal in the Cascades to start augmenting bears into that area as the population of bear there is very few if any. FWP is putting a decision out concerning the possible delisting of the grizzly in the Yellowstone sometime this summer. He said he will be taking some flights to check where snow mobiles have been in respect to where the bears den. The issue is late season riding that may chase cubs out of the dens before they are ready. Kassworm said he needs to see if snowmobilers are even close to the dens, see if it's an issue and if it is at a point where a management plan needs to be drafted. Commissioner Peck asked if there is any data showing it's an issue. Kassworm said he thinks its common sense a spooked cub will run and may not be ready to out of the den yet. Commissioner Peck said what he really wonders is how much flexibility a plan to protect denned bears would have as, year-to-year, the time bears are in or out of there dens can change.

Game Warden Tammie Laverdure said that on the enforcement side of things they have been busy. Troy just had a new warden start and she believes he will be a great resource. There are currently 23 open cases that are being worked on and she feels with the new warden in place in Troy, she can now focus more on the investigation side. They ran several decoy operations that were successfully deployed that will hopefully decrease poaching and waste. Laverdure said there have been issues at the Libby fishing pond including waste, litter and multiple instances of vandalism. Last weekend, many of the bigger fish were caught and then left on shore to die. Previously they have had issues of vandalism including fires and destruction to structures. They are hoping to do some stakeouts to deter any future issues or at least curtail them. They will also be increasing the amount of patrols to that area with a law enforcement presence hopefully also helping to decrease issues. She has also talked to local media about getting the information out to the public that there have been issues and contact information if they see anything suspicious.

Wildlife Biologist Tonya Chilton-Radandt said that data is showing that hunter numbers are slowly going back up since they bottomed out in 2009 but said harvest rates are high. Moose harvest numbers are very low; usually 3-4 a year, but there is uncertainty to what may be causing these low numbers.

Wildlife Specialist Kim Annis said the one bear out of its den that Kassworm mentioned is her bear. Examining the data collected from its collar showed that during hunting season, the bear basically followed all the gut piles coming down from Canada and eventually getting into the Libby area. Annis said she hopes to have a spring press release letting the public know bears are out and things they can do to decrease any negative interactions between bears and humans. The dumping of carcasses is an issue in certain areas in Lincoln County and can draw bears into an area they wouldn't normally be. She is hoping that public education will help decrease this.

2:00 PM **Callahan Creek:** Present were Mike Fraser and Alan Gerstenecker.

Engineer Mike Fraser said he flood plain permit was approved at the end of March. Removal began at the beginning of April utilizing three crews with about 800 loads or 7 to 8,000 cubic yards removed the first week and, due to longer haul times, about 6,000 cubic yards removed the second week. He said there are still issues with one property owner who will not grant access to fix that area. Fraser said the property owner had proposed an agreement the terms of which were unacceptable to the county. Fraser said there is still fill that they are required to remove but are unable to do. Fraser said they are trying to find a solution short of trespassing or hoping that the EPA intercedes and gets access.

Meeting adjourned at 2:55 PM.

LINCOLN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Mike Cole, Chairman

ATTEST: _____
Chris Nelson, Deputy Clerk of the Board