

October 18, 2017

The Lincoln County Board of Commissioners met for a regular session on October 18, 2017, in the Lincoln County Annex, Eureka, Montana. Present were Commissioner Cole, Commissioner Bennett, Commissioner Peck, and Deputy Clerk and Recorder Chris Nelson.

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

10:00 AM **Brian Donner USFS:** Present were Brian Donner, Nikki Meyer, Scott Matise, and John Blodgett.

Updates from the Rexford/Fortine Ranger Districts:

- 1) Summer Season activities are winding down
 - a. A few temporary seasonal employees and volunteers are still with us but most have returned to school or were laid off for lack of funds or work
- 2) Wildland Fire update
 - a. Caribou, Gibraltar Ridge, and Weasel are still technically not contained
 - b. Caribou showed some activity yesterday during the winds and are being looked at today
 - c. The KNF sent a crew of 20 to California, including several from Eureka
 - d. Burned Area Emergency Response team has completed work this week with reports submitted to the Regional Office next week
- 3) Current large planning projects:
 - a. Ten Lakes Travel Management EIS progressing – delayed due to fires
 - b. Proposed Action for Pinkham Meadow project received 40+ responses
 - i. Project probably will be on hold if Caribou and/or Gibraltar Ridge salvage efforts are approved
 - c. Blowdown Salvage
 - i. Trego Triangle – Regional Strike Team delayed due to fire
 - ii. Sutton Salvage 17 – decision signed in September with sale prep
 - iii. Yesterday's winds may have changed forest conditions: 70 MPH gusts recorded at one RAWS
 - d. Gateway Restoration Project – delayed due to fires
- 4) Green Box Sites
 - a. Pinkham/Othorp Green Box Site – County has begun construction?
 - b. West Kootenai relocation – delayed until spring or summer
- 5) West Kootenai main county road cattle guard installation formal agreement recently completed
- 6) Lake Koocanusa Scenic By-Way update – delayed until spring or summer
- 7) Timber Sales Update
 - a. Three to four large sales are currently active to some degree.
 - b. Bid opening on Highway Dickey sale yesterday, awarded to Stoken Logging with 5 bidders participating

They are seeing how the fire affected the Ten Lakes Project as many resources were diverted to deal with the fires. Commissioner Peck asked if they would have an opportunity to discuss the county's comments on the project in a more public way. Brian said that they would be more than happy to schedule that where they can bring up the county's concerns and questions.

The Pinkham Meadow Project received over 40 comments on the project. Brian said the project will be put on hold as they tend to the salvage efforts on the fires. Brian said they had some blowdown salvage decision signed in September and with yesterday's winds possibly changing conditions.

Commissioner Cole said the county had begun work on the Pinkham/Othorp green box site. They just started laying gravel and were going to burn the slash piles yesterday but due to wind started it this morning. Brian said the USFS is responsible for dealing with the disposal of the slash and not the county. He agreed to go check on that after the meeting. Commissioner Cole asked if the Lake Koocanusa Scenic By-Way project could be a good neighbor project. Brian said it really depends on where the cutting is done and how much is cut.

10:30 AM **Administrative Issues:** Present were Nikki Meyer, John Blodgett and Scott Mateis.

MOTION by Commissioner Bennett to approve the commissioner minutes of October 4th and 11th, 2017 as presented. Second by Commissioner Peck. Motion carried unanimously.

Chris presented to the board a vacancy on the McCormick Fire Board due to the resignation of Owen Openo. The vacancy was advertised and two applications were received from John Chott and Christopher Koehn. The McCormick board voted 4-0 to recommend John Chott to fill the vacancy. **MOTION** by Commissioner Peck to appoint John Chott to the McCormick Fire Board. Second by Commissioner Bennett. Motion carried unanimously.

10:45 AM **Public Comment Time:** Present were Scott Mateise, Nikki Meyere and John Blodgett.

Scott Mateise's concern is the proximity to private property and structures to the fires. He would like to see full suppression on every fire and a discussion with relevant government agencies on that. The Caribou Fire could have been a lot less damaging if they had gone to full suppression on it. Commissioner Peck said it is well worth looking into and also added that just because an area is not in a full suppression area doesn't necessarily mean they don't do a full attack on it. Commissioner Cole agrees there should be a discussion. Commissioner Peck said we need to focus on projects around the communities in Lincoln County and they need to have those discussions with the USFS. Although it won't get rid of fires it will provide more protection for the community and he believes they could still meet their timber target by focusing there. Commissioner Peck said there is no doubt that this fire season really taxed the system and highlighted the issues.

11:00 AM **Port Authority Update to OU5:** Present were John Blodgett, Tina Oliphant, Brett McCully and Nikki Meyer. Tina gave a brief update on the Port Authority and what is going on. They have been working with EPA and DEQ over the last year and a half. First, they have been working on an operations and maintenance plan but feels it still has too much ambiguity and wants it to be clearer. They have let the EPA know this and as it is a draft, they will continue to work on it. Second, on the IC Plan the deed restrictions were not defined and the language didn't seem applicable to this area. They also feel it is more aggressive than it needs to be.

They are requiring a ban on wells on the property to support a remedy that is not completed on the mill site. They received a letter from the EPA attorney that if they want to continue moving forward, the Port Authority is not the responsible party for the groundwater issue.

Commissioner Peck asked where things are with concerning the letter. Tina said they are not sure. They've had a discussion with the DEQ and EPA attorneys and they are looking at changing the language as Lincoln County is not the responsible party. Commissioner Peck said after seeing the letter from the attorney he contacted and he said there is plenty of time to work through the issue. Commissioner Peck also told Brett if he needed any help with the levy at the rear of the port property he would be happy to do what he could.

Commissioner Bennett asked how the DEQ sees the groundwater not being at risk if they combine the two cleanup sites. Tina said that is the issue and what they will be working to clear up.

11:30 AM **Snow Removal Policy-Troy Employee Status:** Present were Mark McCully, Dave Kyriss, John Blodgett and Nikki Meyer.

Commissioners were presented with a draft snow removal policy. Commissioner Cole said the conversation last week with the public concerning the county plowing schedule A roads was informative for the public. Commissioner Bennett said one of the questions that came up was if the road departments have a line item for plowing. McCully said there is not because it is too much of an unknown on how much it would cost. Commissioner Peck asked if there was a way to figure out approximately what one snow plow pass cost figuring in manpower, fuel and use of equipment. McCully said he has that information it would just be a matter of sitting down to figure it out. Commissioner Bennett said as they continue with the discussion the question of cost and what can be saved will come up continually. McCully said he could probably come up with a 40 year average with all the information they have. Commissioner Cole said they will continue with the conversation as more information becomes available.

Dave said they need a guy to replace an employee. With only five guys, if one is sick or on vacation it makes it difficult to get projects done. Commissioner Bennett said there is a bigger discussion with lack of revenue for the road budgets.

Commissioner Peck said possibly hiring a seasonal employee would give them time to work through and look at all the options. He said they need to look at all their options and have more, specific conversations. Dave said they can struggle through until January to give the commissioners time to look at the issue before being down a guy will affect them.

11:45 AM **Lincoln County Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) by laws approval:** Present were John Blodgett, Nikki Meyer and Brent Teske.

The commissioners were presented with the proposed LEPC by laws. Brent said this committee had been defunct previously and he was getting it back to a functioning committee. They had to make changes to the bylaws to accomplish this and went through the previous by laws and made the necessary changes. He also sent the changes to the county attorney who gave it her OK. **MOTION** by Commissioner Peck to approve the LEPC by laws. Second by Commissioner Bennett. Motion carried unanimously.

LINCOLN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Mike Cole, Chairman

ATTEST: _____
Chris Nelson, Deputy Clerk of the Board