

March 14, 2018

The Lincoln County Board of Commissioners met for a regular session on March 14, 2018, in the Lincoln County Courthouse, Libby, Montana. Present were Commissioner Cole, Commissioner Bennett, Commissioner Peck, County Administrator Darren Coldwell, and Clerk and Recorder Robin Benson.

Commissioner Peck is attending an American Forest Council Meeting and will be in attendance for afternoon meetings.

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

9:45 AM District Board Appointments: Present were Election Administrator Leigh Riggelman, Chris Nelson, Jeff Koskela, Jada Smook, John Blodgett and Alan Gerstenecker.

Leigh informed the commission that the number of filed candidates is less than or equals the number of positions open for the Special Fire Districts. The Fire District Election to be held on May 8, 2018 is cancelled and the following candidates are duly elected by acclamation.

- Bull Lake Fire District Board (2 positions open): D. Mike Casey and Gerald Wallace
- McCormick Fire District Board (3 positions open): John L. Chott and John Driebusch
- Troy Rural Fire District Board (3 positions open): No candidate filed
- Lincoln County Rurla Fire District Board (2 positions open): Jay Dinning and Kirby Kulbeck
- Libby Park District (1 position open): No Candidate filed

Motion by Commissioner Bennett to approve the Notice of Cancellation and Notice of Trustee Election by Acclamation as presented. Second by Commissioner Cole, motion carried.

Robin presented the Fire Service Area Board Vacancies as follows:

- Eureka Fire Service Area (2 vacancies open): Application received from Tom Hall. Commissioner Cole said Tom Hall has served on the Eureka Fire Board for many years and totally supports appointment.
- Trego/Fortine/Stryker Fire Service Area (3 vacancies open): No applications received
- Upper Yaak Fire Service Area (2 vacancies open): Applications were received from Charles Leidigh, George Lacy and Robert Goodwin. Robin said she received letters from the Upper Yaak FSA Board recommending appointments of George Lacy and Robert Goodwin. Commissioner Bennett said he would like to receive a call from the board chairman to discuss the recommendations; Commissioner Cole agreed. Robin said she would contact Board Chairman William Sullivan to call both Commissioner Bennett and Commissioner Cole for further discussion.

Motion by Commissioner Bennett to appoint Tom Hall to the Eureka Fire Service Area Board. Second by Commissioner Cole, motion carried.

10:00 AM Health Department Update: Present were Jennifer McCully, Noah Pyle, Jake Mertes, Jeff Koskela, John Blodgett, Alan Gerstenecker, and Nikki Meyer, Eureka via VisionNet.

Jennifer submitted a 2017 Annual Report for the Lincoln County Health Department. Jennifer, Jake and Noah went through the report explaining and clarifying information regarding the Board of Health, Fiscal Year 2016-2017 Budget, Health Department Outreach Activities, Animal Care and Control, Wildfire Evacuation Sheltering, Asbestos Resource Program, Environmental Health, Sanitation, Licensed Establishments, Litter Complaints and Violations and other programs, Planning Department, Public Health, Solid Waste and Recycling. *The 2017 Annual Report for the Lincoln County Health Department Report can be obtained in its entirety from the Lincoln County Health Department and can be viewed on the county website www.lincolncountymt.us*

10:30 AM Administrative Issues: Present were Jeff Koskela, John Blodgett, Alan Gerstenecker, and Nikki Meyer, Eureka via VisionNet.

Robin presented the minutes for special sessions March 2 & 6 and regular meeting March 7, 2018. **Motion** by Commissioner Bennett to approve minutes for March 2, 6, & 7, 2018 as presented. Second by Commissioner Cole, motion carried. Commissioner Cole commended Commissioner Bennett for his diligence reviewing draft minutes. Robin agreed and expressed her appreciation.

10:45 AM Public Comment Time: There were no public comments.

11:00 AM Port Authority Update: Cancelled

11:15 AM Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) Update: Present were Shane Stack, Ben Nunnallee and Ed Toavs from MDT, Alan Gerstenecker, and Nikki Meyer, Eureka via VisionNet.

Ed said the MDOT will be doing a big project replacing a bridge and working on 5.3 miles of road on Swamp Creek. Bids will go out in May and the project will begin this summer. Preconstruction conference will be in late July or August to discuss construction schedule and get information out to the public; there will be anticipated construction delays. Ed said this is one of the oldest projects on the books and he is excited to get it completed. Ben shared a map showing other projects in the state. Information on road projects can be obtained from the MDOT Road Report.

Commissioner Cole commented about an area on Hwy 93 that he feels is becoming a safety issue due to increased driving activity from residential growth and Canadian traffic; the commission did issue a speed study for the area. Commissioner Cole talked about the tree growth on Hwy 37 and there is no longer a view of the reservoir in much of the area although it's called a scenic byway. Ed explained MDOT would have to get an agreement with the forest service to conduct any kind of clearing. Ed explained the land is forest service with an MDOT easement. It would be beneficial to have a meeting with MDOT, the forest service and the county in attendance for further discussion. Commissioner Cole said he would help coordinate a conference to bring everyone together for further conversation.

1:30 PM Planning Department Update: Cancelled

2:00 PM DNRC Discussion/Forestry Assistant Phone Conference: Present were Ed Levert, Alan Gerstenecker, and Nikki Meyer, Eureka via VisionNet. Present via phone conference were Matt Arno and Eric Warrington with DNRC. Commissioner Peck said we are gathered here to visit about the county forester position. Commissioner Peck said he has drafted a new expanded job description; Ed Levert is retiring May 1, 2018. Commissioner Peck said we are looking for a full time county forester to take on Ed's work, NEPA responses, resource extraction, and coordinated efforts with stakeholder groups, potentially Good Neighbor Authority work, consideration to the county timber grounds, grant management, involvement with the forest service, writing letters of support and opinion.

Matt said he thinks there will be opportunities with the Good Neighbor Authority Program and reaching out to private landowners that are adjacent to Good Neighbor Authority fuels reduction projects.

Commissioner Peck said we need a person that has the time to go to all the meetings and tying everything together on the issues of major timber sales, bring collaboration and be a representative to the commissioners.

Commissioner Cole commented that things are starting to align in our favor, now is the time to expand on this position. Commissioner Peck said there is a definite change in the winds on the Kootenai Forest, not only on resource, but there is more focus on timber. Commissioner Peck expressed the importance of the county to come in as an asset and support those efforts in a positive measure; our number one issue is lack of revenue from the forest. Commissioner Peck said we are looking for a forester with the right personality to deal with these types of issues and develop good relationships, as well as somebody that enjoys dealing with grants, fire and timber.

Commissioner Peck said the justification of this position is the benefit and potential to bring in revenue from grants and forest projects.

Eric said the forward outlook is to be determined according to the forest service budget and how they allocate those funds. Another consideration is the ability to write grants and successfully compete for grant funding.

3:00 PM Meeting Adjourned

LINCOLN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Mike Cole, Chairman

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