

August 4, 2021

The Lincoln County Board of Commissioners met for a regular session on August 4, 2021 in the Lincoln County Courthouse, Libby, Montana. Present were Commissioner Bennett, Commissioner Letcher, Commissioner Teske, County Administrator Patrick McFadden and Clerk and Recorder Robin Benson.

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

10:00 AM **USFS Update:** Present were Forest Supervisor Chad Benson, Representing Great Basin Team 6 were Lisa Klinger, Tracy Dunford, Mack McFarland and Bret Fossum, County Forester Jennifer Nelson, Derrick Perkins, and Ray Stout.

Chad said right now we are busy working fires, but we continue working on other projects. Still moving forward with the whole year plan except for Black Ram, strategically put on hold until 2022, gearing around the calendar year and congressional obligations.

Chad gave a brief update on projects and commented he will need to have further conversation with the County about the swinging bridge area, acknowledging safety to accommodate approximately 1,000 people a day.

Chad talked about strategy and thoughts on closures; currently very spotty, but there is potential into full closure. The two main criteria are the amount of fire on the landscape overlapping and human cause starts. Nobody wants full closure and we are trying not to go there. Chad commented that he appreciates the County's support and cohesiveness as a group.

Tracy Dunford, Incident Commander with Great Basin gave an update on the South Yaak Fire. Safety for firefighters and the public is our first priority. There are areas in full evacuation and some in pre-evacuation status. Working closely with Sheriff Short on moving families back in and to help homeowners check their homes and vehicles. Tracy commented that he works closely with the Sheriff regarding closures to ensure safety, decreasing citizen traffic in order to facilitate fire traffic. Private property and timberlands are both impacted. The challenges are the conditions, being prolonged drought and temperatures. Currently we are under super dry conditions and are vulnerable to any ignition source. The other major challenge is the amount of business going on nationally and regionally. There are 30 large incidents in the Northern Rockies with 21,000 people assigned nationally. Tracy commented the work crews have been successful in constructing lines and having contained some of the fire and protection of values. Tracy introduced the team members present and commended the local cooperation has been excellent with Sheriff Short and now Commissioner Teske as Emergency manager have been super helpful, as well as the fire chief in Troy. Very appreciated.

Commissioner Teske commented that we cannot stress those two points enough; conditions and lack of resources.

Mack provided a more detailed and strategic analysis of local fires and said they are watching predicted forecasts and moisture. Mack commended the support from the local district office in Troy and county citizens working in the forest is a major contributor to the success, emphasizing there are many towns that do not have that level of planning and knowledge.

Burnt Peak fire has the most amount of containment. The north side of that fire is uncontained. Mack talked about some of the old logging roads that have been opened up providing opportunity to access the fire if it grows to that area. We do not have access to the 20-man teams we normally do as they are all out to other communities.

Mack talked about aviation and air attack not used due to smoke and not being able to see even the treetops, but we will get them up as soon as we can. There are 3 helicopters assigned to the incident and 3 additional aircraft with tanks or buckets available.

Commissioner Bennett talked about the 17-mile bridge which is a suspension bridge, not supported underneath.

Commissioner Bennett expressed concern with moving the weight of heavy equipment but stated it would be well worth it to get equipment up there, and if needed, we can use our road crew to gain access by another route.

10:30 AM **Administrative Issues / Resolution to Request Road and Bridge Funds:** Present were Derrick Perkins and Ray Stout.

- Commissioner Letcher read Resolution 2021-26, a resolution requesting distribution of bridge and road safety and accountability program funds. The Bridge and Road Safety and Accountability Account created by HB 473 requires the MDOT to allocate accrued funds to cities, towns, counties, and consolidated city-county governments for construction, reconstruction, maintenance, and repair of rural roads, city or town streets and alleys, bridges, or roads and streets that the city, town, county, or consolidated city-county government has the responsibility to maintain. Patrick commented the resolution is the first step required to apply for funds. Patrick said there are designated projects and other paperwork to be completed. **Motion** by Commissioner Teske to approve Resolution 2021-26 as submitted. Second by Commissioner Letcher, motion passed unanimously.
- Robin submitted the minutes for July 28, 2021 regular meeting for approval. **Motion** by Commissioner Teske to approve minutes as submitted. Second by Commissioner Letcher, motion carried.
- Robin thanked the commissioners for supporting the Land Specialist position. Robin commented the position will greatly benefit multiple county departments and significantly improve public service.
- The commissioners signed a letter of support for the Community Action Partnership of NW Montana, endorsing the Work Plan and Budget as written for the Community Services Block Grant Program.

10:45 AM **Public Comment Time:** Present were Derrick Perkins and Ray Stout.

There were no public comments.

11:00 AM **Community Action Partnership (CAPNM)-Service Block Grant / COVID Workplan Update-Cassidy:**

Present were Cassidy Kipp, Tracy Diaz, Jennifer McCully and Derrick Perkins.

Cassidy gave a brief history of CAPNM that has been covering Lincoln County since 1976. Allocation of funds is based on a community needs assessment. Cassidy said the issues seem to always rest on affordable housing and adequate jobs. CAPNM identifies a number of goals from the needs assessment and evaluates planning and meeting goals established. CAPNM served over 8,000 people last year and those are reportable outcomes such as a new job or decreased energy burden as examples.

Tracy talked about a new program for water/sewer assistance through the American Rescue Plan. CAPNW office is located on Farm to Market Road in Libby and there is an office located in Eureka.

Commissioner Bennett asked about low-income housing and if that is open to Lincoln County residents first.

Cassidy said it comes down to the landlord and would be open to any qualifying resident.

The Community Needs Assessment and services provided are posted on the CAPNW website at: www.capnm.com

The commissioners presented a signed letter of support for CAPNW for their Community Services Block Grant.

11:15 AM **PHEP Personnel / Zero to 5:** Present were Jennifer McCully, Mike Bradeen, Derrick Perkins and Ray Stout. Jennifer talked about the Congregate Living Coordinator position that was discussed two weeks ago, explaining the health department received additional funding for 2 years for this position and a job description was provided to the commissioners for review. The position's focus is to assist long-term assisted living facilities, schools, and group homes; anywhere there is congregate living. The position will also be an expert in CDC guidelines, so Lincoln County is compliant as changes to guidelines occur.

Commissioner Letcher expressed concern regarding having another agency telling facilities what they can and cannot do. Jennifer clarified they do not tell facilities what they can or cannot do but is just another person who is an expert in the subject matter to assist those facilities. Jennifer further clarified that nothing changes, except having another person to help and expressed the importance of having a person who can provide expert knowledge as changes occur with CDC guidelines.

Motion by Commissioner Teske to approve the Congregate Living Coordinator position funded 100% through the PHEP Grant. Second by Commissioner Letcher, motion carried unanimously.

Jennifer is requesting a pay grade increase from Grade 12 to a Grade 14 for Dory's position and explained structure changes in the department. The pay increase is because the position has moved into more of a supervisory role. Jennifer clarified that PHEP funds go to every part of the public health department and the position is 100% grant funded. Commissioner Teske commented about outreach efforts and how it has grown into a bigger program. **Motion** by Commissioner Teske to approve increase of position as requested from a grade 12 to grade 14. Second by Commissioner Letcher, motion carried unanimously.

11:30 AM **Ventenata Funding:** Present were County Weed Director Mike Bradeen, Derrick and Ray. Mike said he has been mapping a new noxious grass, Ventenata and has found that there is infestation in the south end of Lincoln County. Ventenata is from the Idaho line to the Flathead line, and it runs up and down our county roads. Cost is \$8.15 per ounce for the chemical treatment. There are approximately 250 lane miles that need to be driven and treated for an estimated cost of \$10,442 just to start the Ventenata project. Mike said Ventenata is widespread, and drought brought it in faster. Mike explained the mitigation process and stated that it is residual and kills from the root up and does not affect other grasses and plants.

Mike talked about a RAC grant of \$12,000 awarded to help treat private lands.

There was a brief discussion regarding how to fit this cost into the budget. Commissioner Bennett suggested that for this year to take the cost initially out of PILT and then take a look at where we are at before creating a new line item in the weed budget. **Motion** by Commissioner Teske to pay \$10,442 for Ventenata treatment to be paid out of PILT for FY 21/22. Second by Commissioner Letcher, motion carried unanimously.

11:30 PM **Adjourned**

LINCOLN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Jerry Bennett, Chairman

ATTEST: _____
Robin Benson, Clerk of the Board