

**August 7, 2019**

The Lincoln County Board of Commissioners met for a regular session on August 7, 2019, in the Lincoln County Courthouse, Libby, Montana. Present were Commissioner Bennett, Commissioner Letcher, County Administrator Darren Caldwell and Clerk and Recorder Robin Benson. Commissioner Peck was absent.

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

**9:30 AM Forest Supervisor's Update:** Present were Chad Benson and Jennifer Nelson. Also present was Nikki Meyer, Eureka via phone.

Chad talked about ongoing forest projects for 2019/2020. Chad said everything is going well, and he has been getting around visiting with local groups. The forest service is still struggling with hiring, but its not a local issue; the process is cumbersome.

Chad said he met with the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho and is impressed with how much tribes overall are involved.

Chad mentioned that he would like to set up a meeting with the commissioners to discuss Stewardship Projects and Good Neighbor Authority Projects, saying there are a lot of opportunities for local projects.

The swinging bridge project went well and is complete. Commissioner Bennett said he did not receive any public complaints.

Commissioner Bennett said the collaborative is struggling; there needs to be a rebuilding process and rightfully so. Chad said its tough to come to the table and not push your own agenda. Commissioner Bennett agreed and said people need to walk away if they are bringing in their agenda. Jennifer mentioned that Commissioner Peck is making efforts to get the collaborative back on track.

Chad said Ten Lakes is put on hold for now; not sure for how long, but it is what's best for now. Commissioner Letcher said putting it on hold maintains its current use. Chad said the forest service is moving on to projects that are a better use of its time for now.

Commissioner Bennett asked Chad, in his capacity, how does he see districts coming together for a common goal. Chad said he is trying to navigate conversations where districts help other districts on projects instead of working solely on its own district.

Jennifer asked why Black Ram Project is an Environmental Assessment (EA) and is not an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Chad said a lot has to do with grizzly bear, roads going in, and landowners' comments. There is a balance that is difficult regarding the whole area ecologically for the treatment. Jennifer talked about design features and mitigation.

Jennifer said she toured areas in the West Kootenai with Commissioner Letcher that have western pine beetle infestation and asked about avenues on how to take trees out not only to salvage the wood, but to keep the surrounding ponderosa pines from becoming infected. Chad said it's based on scale and moving people from one project to another can be difficult, but there are authorities/avenues in place. Chad said to visit with Eureka District Bryan Donner as well.

Commissioner Bennett said the commissioners have been talking with Donner about a clearing project on HWY 37 for two years and wondered what authority the state DOT has to move forward with some treatment. Chad said he would have to read the easements between the forest service and state and is willing to look into it.

**10:30 AM Administrative Issues:** Present were Alvin Benitz. Also present was Nikki Meyer, Eureka via phone.

- Robin presented the minutes for July 31, 2019 regular meeting and August 5 Public Service Commission meeting for Commissioner approval. **Motion** by Commissioner Letcher to approve minutes as presented. Second by Commissioner Bennett, motion carried.
- Darren presented the Interlocal Agreement between Lincoln County and the City of Libby to provide city court facilities and services. Darren said County Attorney Marcia Boris created the agreement and the City of Libby did approve it. **Motion** by Commissioner Letcher to approve the Interlocal Agreement as submitted. Second by Commissioner Bennett, motion carried.
- Commissioner Letcher commented about a new lease agreement with Job Service at the North Lincoln County Annex. The lease went from \$65 to \$95 a month. Tabled until next week.
- Commissioner Bennett said he received a call from Niles Nelson who is temporarily acting funeral director while Steve Schnackenburg is away. The funeral home has an indigent body not claimed. The program that used to take care of it no longer is in effect. Commissioner Bennett commented that we can take the cost out of the coroner budget and cover at year end if necessary.

**10:45 AM Public Comment Time:** Present were Sheriff Darren Short, Undersheriff Brian Griffeth, and Alvin Benitz. Also present was Nikki Meyer, Eureka via phone.

Alvin Benitz lives on Libby Creek Road and talked about putting in a public turnout and a right-hand turn/lane going to Kalispell. Alvin offered to provide an easement to the county to widen the road. There is a lot of traffic now with no place to pull over. Alvin said it's an issue that can be solved and it would be easier for emergency services. Alvin expressed that it needs to be upgraded. Alvin commended the commission on the job they are doing for the county.

**11:00 AM Drug Dog Discussion:** Present were Sheriff Darren Short, Undersheriff Brian Griffeth, and Ray Stout. Also present was Nikki Meyer, Eureka via phone.

Sheriff Short said the sheriff's department is looking to purchase 2 drug dogs through fundraising efforts. Unite for Youth is the fundraising arm for the sheriff's office. Total cost is \$32,385. Dogs are trained for cocaine, meth and heroine. Sheriff Short is asking for a loan from PILT to secure the dogs now for training with plans to pay it back with fundraising efforts.

Darren Coldwell commended Sheriff Short for thinking outside the box and said we could create a one-year promissory note and see how it goes with the fundraising.

Commissioner Bennett said he supports the effort and has visited with Commissioner Peck and he supports this effort as well. Commissioner Letcher expressed support. **Motion** by Commissioner Letcher to loan the sheriff's department \$32,385 from PILT for the drug canine program as presented. Loan will be through June 30, 2020. Second by Commissioner Bennett, motion carried.

11:15 AM **County Fishing Pond Discussion:** Present was Ray Stout. Also present was Nikki Meyer, Eureka via phone. Commissioner Letcher talked about the history of the fishing pond in Eureka on county property. Commissioner Letcher said he has been conducting research and is working with Mike Fraser for cost and design to upgrade the existing fishing pond. Commissioner Letcher commented there are grants through Fish, Wildlife and Parks that potentially are available. Commissioner Letcher said the fishing pond is the one thing he receives the most public calls about. The fill material from fixing the pond will be used to create a flat area near the existing fishing pond and pavilion. The Lions Club of Eureka has asked, if they purchase the playground equipment, if they can install it near the pavilion and pond. Commissioner Bennett commented there should be a maintenance agreement with the Lion's Club to maintain the playground equipment.

11:30 AM **Eureka Sport's Complex Decision:** Present were Ray Stout. Also present was Nikki Meyer, Eureka via phone.

Commissioner Letcher said Lancaster's specifically asked about potential funding help from the county for the Eureka Sports Complex during last week's meeting. Commissioner Letcher and Commissioner Bennett agreed to help and will confirm a contribution from Commissioner Peck. No dollar amount was determined at this time.

11:45 AM **Planning/Final Plat for Wilderness Club Phase 5:** Present were Jake Mertes, Kristin Smith, Tamara Tanberg, Marc Liechti and Ray Stout. Also present was Nikki Meyer, Eureka via phone.

Jake said developers are proposing a Subdivision Improvement Agreement (SIA) and are requesting commissioner approval. **Motion** by Commissioner Letcher to approve the bond check for \$47,500.21 for the SIA Wilderness Club Phase 5. Second by Commissioner Bennett, motion carried.

Jake explained all the requirements and conditions to the commissioners and said everything has been met and planning staff recommends commissioner approval. **Motion** by Commissioner Letcher to approve final plat for Wilderness Club Phase 5 Planned Unit and Development (PUD), subject to planning staff conditions and recommendation. Second by Commissioner Bennett, motion carried.

12:00 PM **Meeting Adjourned**

## **LINCOLN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

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Mark Peck, Chairman

**ATTEST:** \_\_\_\_\_  
Robin A. Benson, Clerk of the Board