

June 5, 2019

The Lincoln County Board of Commissioners met for a regular session on June 5, 2019, in the Lincoln County Courthouse, Libby, Montana. Present were Commissioner Bennett, Commissioner Letcher, Commissioner Peck, County Administrator Darren Coldwell, and Clerk and Recorder Robin Benson.

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

10:30 AM **Administrative Issues:** Present were Sheriff Darren Short, Alan Gerstenecker and Ben Kibbey. Also present was Nikki Meyer, Eureka via VisionNet.

- Robin suggested postponing approval of the May 29, 2019 regular meeting minutes since elected officials attended leadership training the past two days, giving more time for review.
- Robin submitted an agreement between the Lincoln County Weed District and William Chalgren as the Contractor/Coordinator for the Tansy Ragwort Program. Robin submitted two agreements between the Lincoln County Weed District and the USDA Forest Service KNF for the control of invasive and noxious weeds on forest lands. All agreements are annual renewals with no changes. **Motion** by Commissioner Bennett to approve all agreements as submitted. Second by Commissioner Letcher, motion carried unanimously.
- Darren submitted a renewal agreement with Glacier Insurance to be the insurance agent for the airports. **Motion** by Commissioner Bennett to approve the agreement as submitted. The policy is for 3 years. Second by Commissioner Letcher, motion carried unanimously.
- Commissioner Bennett commented that he is seeking approval to add Heather Benjamin to be an administrator in the county's Black Mountain software program. The commissioners agreed to add Heather as a Black Mountain Administrator for Lincoln County. Darren Coldwell will follow up with Black Mountain.
- Commissioner Letcher submitted a lease agreement between Lincoln County and Juli Davis for the use of pasture land from May 1 to October 30 of each year for a period of five years ending October 2024. Davis will pay the county \$100.00 per year. Commissioner Letcher said the agreement has not been updated since 2002. **Motion** by Commissioner Letcher to approve the lease agreement as submitted. Second by Commissioner Bennett, motion carried unanimously.

10:45 AM **Public Comment Time:** Present were Sheriff Darren Short, Undersheriff Brian Griffeth, Kimberly Mole, Bill Boss, Alan Gerstenecker and Ben Kibbey. Also present was Nikki Meyer, Eureka via VisionNet.

Kim thanked the commissioners for allowing her to come in to talk with them about the Troy Dispatch. Kim said she is paying taxes not only for Troy dispatch, but also the sheriffs dispatch. Kim explained she is paying twice for the same service, costing time that could be critical. Kim elaborated stating there is a delayed response because the call is received at the Troy dispatch and you have to take time to relay emergency information only to be told that you are being transferred to the sheriff dispatch and then you have to explain the emergency information again. Kim expressed the concern of time that could lead to county's liability due to the added minutes it takes to explain emergency information twice. Kim stated that if the residents in the City of Troy want their dispatch, then they should pay for it, not county residents. Troy dispatch does not benefit county residents and we should not have to pay for it. Sheriff Darren Short verified the 911 call would be transferred from Troy dispatch to the sheriff's dispatch.

Darren Coldwell gave a brief history about the vote approximately 5 years ago, the cooperative agreement between the City of Troy and Lincoln County, saying both entities would have to agree to make changes to that agreement. Coldwell stated Troy Dispatch went up for vote and passed by nearly 70%. Now it is a levied fund and to dismantle it, would need to go back to the voters. The process is in the MCA Code.

Kim questioned the ballot language and felt it was worded in a way that created confusion. Kim said she actually thought she voted against the dispatch, but later found she voted in favor. Kim said the ballot language was misleading for her and others.

Commissioner Peck questioned that it was not a binding vote, it was an opinion vote. Commissioner Peck stated that a citizen waiting on the phone to be transferred in 2019 is completely unacceptable; we must do better than that. We could just have the phone service change their phones coming to the sheriff but that does not solve the tax problem.

Bill said he does not want to pay for redundant service, obviously there is a problem.

Commissioner Peck expressed that he does not feel it is constitutional to be charged twice for the same service.

Commissioner Bennett expressed that Lincoln County has three dispatch services, one in Troy and Eureka and explained the cost of new jail, questioning how do we best help our taxpayer. Commissioner Bennett suggested visiting with Troy resident Hank Lasala who is very knowledgeable and has done a lot of research.

Kim reiterated the concern of the time it takes to explain an emergency situation to two separate dispatch offices.

Commissioner Peck agreed that Troy citizens are county residents, and everyone is paying for the same service twice.

Bill said it is a redundant service that potentially could do him harm and he should not have to pay for that; you can keep the dispatch, but I should not have to pay for it twice and for something that decreases my service. Bill expressed that if it goes back to the voters, there needs to be real clarity to the people.

Commissioner Peck commented that this is an issue and the complication is that the dispatch is a special district, voted by the people at that time with an interlocal agreement involving the City of Troy.

Commissioner Bennett suggested Kim look into the petition process.

11:00 AM **Wildland Fire Agency Update:** Present were Cheryl Probert, Greg Poncin, Doug Turman, Dan Rose, Gary Kedish, Kirsten Kaiser, Jennifer Nelson, Bryan Donner, Sara Alberts, Mike Burow, Sheriff Darren Short, Alan Gerstenecker, and Ben Kibbey. Also present was Nikki Meyer, Eureka via VisionNet.

Commissioner Peck thanked everyone for their attendance and that today is a preseason gathering to talk about predictions, where we are at with OU3, team dynamics, communications, and how we are all working together. Dan said the 2019 season prediction in the Northern Rockies and Kootenai is potentially above normal fire activity. We are right where we have been the last several years. There is a lot of experience coming back and we are conducting additional basic fire training for new people coming in. Dan said there has been a couple fires already from the recent lightening in the Libby district. The time is about right, and we usually get something over memorial weekend. June average is 7 fires per year, the biggest has been 3 acres in June over the past 10 years, but in July the game changes. Doug commented that the McCormick fire district is coming in this year, they have some extra equipment and have had extra training. All local fire departments are on board.

Greg commented the Plains Dispatch Center is closed officially and now dispatch is out of Kalispell and Missoula. Greg said he has signed this year's restriction plan. Commissioner Peck commented on coordination of waivers for during restrictions for activities.

Sheriff Darren Short said the fire reporting will be going through the sheriff's department. The fire response with DNRC, FS, and private entities is working well and looks good from his perspective.

Cheryl asked if we need discussions about objective and incorporating county concerns with state objectives; are we getting the county involved in decisions soon enough, are we having those real conversations. Commissioner Peck said that operationally yes and the county is tying in with the teams, so those conversations are taking place. The county has been included in decisions.

Dan said we have one Type 3 team going well, but if we end up with multiple Type 3 situations, we will be strapped; support positions will be important.

Commissioner Bennett commended rangers for keeping him in the loop, appreciates receiving information. Dan commended Brent Teske, saying there were team meetings in Eureka, Yaak and Libby during the 2017 fires and he never missed a meeting.

Commissioner Bennett said that from a constituent's perspective, residents appreciated being well informed and how the messaging relieves a lot of stress. Cheryl said the forest service is trying to hire a public affairs position, full time year round, giving fire information, working at the forest level, communicating restrictions, and working with fire adapted communities.

Dan commended the commissioners, saying that in terms of what is needed from the county and state is what we have been getting. Dan said he has learned a lot already about highway 37, the county and state were there, messaging was unified, and he feels good from that standpoint. Operationally, a contractor is coming in on the 15th with a 15 person crew ready to respond to fires in that area. We need to focus on what we are good at; successful in single attack, logistics, working with fire departments, we have other options instead of just our own expertise. We still have availability of aircraft, with a ramped up plan for OU3, the contractors are still available and helicopter on standby.

Cheryl commented that she made the decision that respirators are mandatory for forest service employees, but it is up to the county and public health for everyone else when necessary.

Bryan Donner commented that we all need to keep the communication going, sharing information.

Cheryl said this has been a good discussion and asked everyone to collectively think of this as the new normal.

Commissioner Bennett said the discussion helps toward pretreatment and looking at our history to prioritize what is necessary as government agencies.

Commissioner Peck said that as a community protection focus, the key priority is dealing and responding to a fire in OU3 first.

Kirsten commented that fire restrictions and messaging to the public to be consistent with coordinated efforts, especially stage I and stage II restrictions.

1:30 PM Planning Update: There were no planning agenda items.

2:00 PM Finance Meeting: Present were Finance Director Wendy Drake, Libby Road Supervisor Marc McCully, Troy Road Supervisor Dave Kyriss, Ben Kibbey and Alan Gerstenecker. Also present was Eureka Road Supervisor Ray Price, Eureka via VisionNet.

Darren talked about the proposed road budgets for FY 19/20. Dave and Ray turned in their proposed budgets for the Troy and Eureka road departments. Marc said he wants to visit with Darren to finalize District 1 road budget.

Darren said the state is paying the county \$60,000 for maintaining the Yaak highway and expressed that we need to review the agreement as costs increase. Dave said he keeps a log of the amount of sand and employee hours spent on the highway; hours are dependent on the snow season. Commissioner Bennett said he will sit down with Dave to look at the numbers to determine if we are breaking even and ensure costs are covered.

Marc asked if we are trying to keep the fund base the same for each district. Darren said he does not think that's fair, it is based more on the projects each district has for that fiscal year, but we want to keep the total close to 3 million. Dollars can be moved according to district projects and associated costs.

Wendy talked about a budget amendment resolution for the sheriff's department to correct an error in the budget prep software regarding the allocated cost transfer. Darren said the correct amount was budgeted and is shown on the levy spreadsheet but was not entered in the budget prep system; a data entry error. Robin suggested calling the county auditor to ensure the correct accounting process is followed.

Wendy said she will add a line item in PILT for disaster emergency purposes.

2:30 PM Meeting Adjourned

LINCOLN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Mark Peck, Chairman

ATTEST: _____
Robin A. Benson