

April 6, 2022

The Lincoln County Board of Commissioners met for a regular session on April 6, 2022 in the Lincoln County Courthouse, Libby, Montana. Present were Commissioner Bennett, Commissioner Teske, Commissioner Letcher, County Administrator Jim Hammons and Deputy Clerk and Recorder Corrina Brown.

Meeting allows for teleconferencing and VisionNet availability.

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

9:45 AM **County Forester Update, Jennifer Nelson:** Present were Mitch Doherty, John McLaughlin, Rebecca Nelson and Ray Stout.

Jennifer submitted the following update:

County Forester Update to the Commissioners 4/6/22

J. Neils Park – Work in J. Neils is winding up this week. FEC treated the powerline ROW. DNRC has accomplished a lot of work again this year, working the northeast side and westside near the Haul Road and little arenas, thinning and chipping. Removed hazard trees on the southside and in the parking lots. Use of the park is very high. The road crew helped deck logs. One load of Doug-fir, LPP, and PP. Plan to send it out with the landfill sale. Need a ½ day or a day from the road department to pick up remaining logs, mostly blued pine. Many compliments and a few complaints in terms of “inconvenience”. Beetle activity appears to have slowed, but adjacent properties that are untreated are infested.

Concerns about Ponderosa Heights, River Road, etc.

Beetle grant work in the west end will not start until fall to reduce risk of beetle infestation.

Landfill – Cell 2 Timber sale – Sale was awarded to Tony Anderson Logging at \$37/ton delivered to Moyie. IFG gave a price of \$74/ton DF, LLP, WL and \$52 for PP. Expected stumpage after logging approx. \$20,000. Work will begin soon.

City fuel reduction work – working with the City of Libby to treat approx. 30 ac along County Shop Road, KPFL and River Road. Work expected to start this month.

County Burn Permits – Permitting process is going smoothly for the most part. Dustin has mitigated the few problems that have occurred and approx. 550 permits have been issued through the site.

Joint Chiefs –FS request for county GNA work is on Unit 16 is currently back with the state after talking with Greg Archie, GNA state program coordinator. There is no commitment yet, and Nate Gassmann is asking for an answer by June 1st. The county is still interested in becoming involved with GNA and Greg is helping us. FS will focus some of the JC funds in the WUI along Farm-to-Market Road and the airport. Some of the areas are stands that were dropped from the project due to lack of financial return. This is a welcomed use of the funding. NRCS is working with landowners and expect to treat 500-600 acres in 2022-2023 with 500 ac adjacent to the Ripley project in line with cross-boundary treatment.

Cost-share grants - Interest in cost-share grants is picking up again. Western States grant which is targeted to Farm-to-Market area has begun and will tie in with FS and NRCS work in that area. A lot of interest in the Troy area and Eureka/Rexford.

Other - Era of Mega Fires – April 14, Dome Theater, Kootenai Climate Group and L.C. FireSafe Council

Forest Counties Annual meeting – April 14, AFRC meeting April 19-21, Arbor Day – April 29

10:00 AM **USFS:** Present were Chad Benson, Mitch Doherty, Jennifer Nelson, Rebecca Nelson, John McLaughlin and Ray Stout.

Mitch is the Conservation Director with Vital Ground Foundation and is here to brief the Commissioners on the proposed Savage Lake Project. The KNF, Three Rivers Ranger District and the Vital Ground Foundation are working with a private landowner on the proposed conveyance of approximately 200 acres adjacent to Savage Lake and the Cabinet Mountain Wilderness area. The proposed project will create new, permanent recreational opportunities for Lincoln County residents and visitors on Savage Lake and to adjacent public lands. The property owners goal has been to ensure that the eastern shore of Savage Lake was free from intensive development and the viewshed was preserved for recreationalists and residents in addition to providing public access.

Commissioner Bennett expressed concern that there is only 8% private land in Lincoln County and questioned to eliminate several hundred acres, what does that do for our tax base and affordable housing, putting more land outside a reachable option for individuals. Commissioner Bennett commented on a section of road that is very narrow and a plume in that area. Commissioner Bennett conveyed that there are several different issues to be considered.

Mitch talked about the easement to be widened if the project moves forward and the plume in that area would not be impacted, will need to keep an eye on it. There is lake frontage property left out of the project to ensure there will be development available.

Commissioner Bennett asked if that area would become wilderness.

Chad said that is not the intent, and that his points are well taken.

Commissioner Letcher commented on the tax petition and this will have a big effect on that depending how it goes.

Chad gave brief updates regarding current, upcoming and potential projects on the KNF.

Ripley Project is moving, hopefully will know more soon and will keep the commissioners posted on any developments.

Black Ram Project is not dead, there was good movement this week, mainly untangling truth and not truth. Hopefully the project is closer than in the past.

Knotty Pine Project was signed last week. The project is fully in the WUI and falls into the newly created fire shed. Pinkham Meadows Project continues, did not get litigated.

Commissioner Bennett commented it has been the desire all along to create the road map for the rest of the state and we will see how it all unfolds.

South Yaak Salvage Project is moving but we need to consider timing and negotiate bear closures, but the forest service is preparing for it. Finding support is going well.

The forest service has received a new proposal regarding HECLA and Montanore and they are currently reviewing it. Commissioner Teske asked if there is something we can do collectively regarding the Historic Snowshoe Trail project and wanted to ensure the project stays in conversation.

Chad said he will do a review of the project and provide an update.

Commissioners talked about wanting to see fuels mitigation work done in the OU3 area, expressing concern for Em-Kayan Village exposure and other areas withing OU3.

Chad commented the forest service is well aligned with WR Grace, it's a matter of logistics and scheduling.

Commissioner Letcher commented that in the Columbia River Treaty, Canada has the legal right to divert about 25% of the water from the Kootenai River into the Columbia River at Canal Flats. Just because Canada has not exercised their right to divert the water yet, doesn't mean they won't. Loosing 25% of the water coming into lake Koocanusa would create dust storms year-round in North Lincoln County. Because the Treaty is currently in negotiations this information needs to be passed up the USFS chain of command and taken seriously.

10:30 AM **Administrative Issues:** Present were John McLaughlin, Rebecca Nelson and Ray Stout.

- Robin submitted the minutes for March 30, 2022 regular meeting for approval. **Motion** by Commissioner Teske to approve minutes as submitted. Second by Commissioner Letcher, motion carried unanimously.

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

11:00 AM **Planning / Laude Subdivision-Subsequent Minor Subdivision-Preliminary Plat Application. Rocky Mountain Way-Preliminary Plat Approval Extension:** Present were County Planner Nick Raines, John McLaughlin, Rebecca Nelson, and Ray Stout.

- Rocky Mountain Way Subdivision: Nick said preliminary plat was approved April 2019. The property owner resides in Canada and due to pandemic related travel restrictions and financial impacts, they have not completed all conditions of the preliminary plat approval and are requesting a 1-year extension. Planning Staff recommends approval of a 1-year extension until April 6, 2023. **Motion** by Commissioner Letcher to approve extension request for 1 year until April 6, 2023 subject to conditions and planning staff recommendation. Second by Commissioner Teske, motion carried unanimously.
- Laude Subdivision Preliminary Approval: The proposed minor subdivision of Lot 4A is located in the Island Lake area and the developer intends to create 2 single-family residential lots from the existing 31.51 acre parcel. Nick explained that due to the proximity to the lake and the wildlife habitat it supports, some provisions affecting building location have been recommended in the conditions of approval. Planning staff recommends granting preliminary approval to Laude Subdivision subject to conditions and based on the finding in the staff report. **Motion** by Commissioner Teske to approve Preliminary Plat for Laude Subdivision subject to 10 conditions and planning staff recommendation. Second by Commissioner Letcher, motion carried unanimously.

11:15 PM **Meeting Adjourned**

LINCOLN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Jerry Bennett, Chairman

ATTEST: _____
Robin Benson, Clerk of the Board