

**November 8, 2017**

The Lincoln County Board of Commissioners met for a regular session on November 8, 2017, 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 Cole opened the meeting with the **Pledge of Allegiance**.

**10:00 AM Health Department Update:** Present were Kathi Hooper, Jennifer McCully, Nick Raines, John Blodgett, Alan Gerstenecker and Nikki Meyer, Eureka via VisionNet.

Jennifer submitted a Public Health Snapshot of immunizations and communicable disease in Lincoln County for commissioner review; 442 flu shots were administered during the month of October.

Jennifer said the IAP grant has been by calendar year, but is moving to fiscal year. Jennifer is requesting a 6-month extension to be approved. **Motion** by Commissioner Peck to approve the 6-month extension for the IAP Grant. Second by Commissioner Bennett, motion carried unanimously. The purpose of the extension is to shift the grant cycle from calendar year to fiscal year.

Nick said the EPA grant was approved October 5 for the Asbestos Resource Program, stating it has been very helpful having the Finance Department involved to answer questions about the accounting process.

Kathi discussed the junk trailer program and submitted a draft ordinance to prevent junk trailers to come into the county, but noted the ordinance would not affect trailers already in the county. Commissioner Peck said there are some older mobile homes that have been well taken care of and are used as homes. Commissioner Bennett agreed and suggested language that the trailer/mobile home would be inspected first before it is considered as a junk trailer.

Kathi discussed adding fees for plan reviews based on the size of establishment. The fees are similar to Sanders and Lake Counties. Kathi said she is not asking for any decisions today, but wanted to apprise the commissioners for their consideration. Kathi discussed other potential fee increases.

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

Gene Auge said he has served on the Council on Aging Area VI Board since 1998, but due to personal issues, can no longer serve on the board. Commissioner Cole requested Gene to submit an official letter of resignation. The Commissioners thanked Gene for his many years of service.

Robin submitted the minutes for November 1, 2017 for commission approval. The commissioners reviewed the minutes as submitted. **Motion** by Commissioner Peck to approve the minutes as presented. Second by Commissioner Bennett, motion carried unanimously.

Robin informed the commission that she received a notice from the Department of Revenue requesting a tax abatement for Thomas Kaechele. The parcel was taxed for a pole building for the past 14 years that is not actually on this property. The total tax amount that should be refunded for the past 3 years is \$626.27. **Motion** by Commissioner Peck to approve the tax abatement request in the amount of \$626.27 to be paid out of PILT. Second by Commissioner Bennett, motion carried unanimously. The commission did express frustration for the system that allows this to happen.

**10:45 AM Public Comment Time:** George Mercer, Alan Gerstenecker, John Blodgett and Nikki Meyer, Eureka via VisionNet.

George Mercer came to discuss permitting for Special Mule Deer in Region 1- Area 103. Currently Lincoln County does not allow for a Special Mule Deer permit. George submitted a Region 1- Area 103 proposal for Mule Deer Special Permit for commissioner review. George said he is also requesting a letter of support. The commissioners took the proposal under advisement.

**11:00 AM Approval of Closed Meeting Minutes:** Present were Steve Lauer, Ed Levert, John Blodgett, Alan Gerstenecker, and Nikki Meyer, Eureka via VisionNet.

Robin submitted the minutes for a closed meeting dated September 27, 2017 for approval. Commissioner Cole explained the meeting was a Litigation Strategy Meeting regarding a suicide claim in the detention facility.

**Motion** by Commissioner Peck to approve the minutes for September 27, 2017 as submitted. Second by Commissioner Cole, motion carried. Commissioner Bennett was absent.

**11:15 AM Title III Budget:** Present were Ed Levert, Steve Lauer, John Blodgett, Alan Gerstenecker, and Nikki Meyer, Eureka via VisionNet.

Ed submitted a proposed budget for the 2018 Proposed FireWise(Title III) Program; budget reduced \$23,500.

Steve said that more people are catching on to the firewise program especially after the wildfire season and expressed the importance of keeping this program. The firewise program educates and aids people on how to take steps for fuels reduction around personal properties. Commissioner Peck commented that there needs to be a lot stronger planning in the urban interface with the forest service so we have a good plan laid out with tracking.

**Motion** by Commissioner Peck to approve the 2018 FireWise (Title III) Program budget as submitted total \$55,500. Second by Commissioner Cole, motion carried.

Steve expressed the window of time to be able to burn the fuels reduction piles outside of April. Steve said he is aware there are burning timelines and he does not completely understand the air quality issues, but stated that we need to allow for burning on appropriate fuels piles in a properly managed environment. Commissioner Peck said it's not just DEQ, but also EPA. Commissioner Peck explained that if we get hits above the threshold, it could have a negative impact on the use of wood stoves and possible fines. Commissioner Peck said he does feel there are things that can be done to work around it, but it will take further discussion and looking at state and federal law to fix this on a permanent basis. Commissioner Peck clarified the county does have authority to change the window for burning, but we run a lot of risk if we exceed the air quality threshold. Steve said he would like to have a process that will allow for a permit to burn the fuels piles. Commissioner Peck said he is having this conversation and has met with the governor's office and DEQ. Commissioner Cole asked if the problem is mainly in the Libby air shed; Ed confirmed yes.

1:30 PM **Planning Department:** Canceled

2:00 PM **Stimson Conservation Easement:** Present were Chris Deming, Barry Dexter, Ray Jones, Jessie Grossman, Alan Wood, Bruce Rowland, Ed Levert, Russ Gautreaux, Brent Teske, Alan Gerstenecker, John Blodgett and Nikki Meyer, Eureka via VisionNet.

Chris from Trust for Public Land, MTFWP gave a brief overview of the efforts on the Kootenai Forestlands Conservation Project; landowner Stimson approximately 22,275 acres. The location of the subject property consists of various parcels stretching from the northeast side of the Cabinet Mountains Wilderness Area, north through the Flower and Parmenter Creek drainages to the city of Libby, and then north along the Pipe Creek and Hwy 37 corridors in the Purcell Mountains. The objective is to purchase a conservation easement, permanently prohibiting subdivision and development while allowing for continued sustainable forest management, wildlife habitat protection, and public access.

Chris submitted an outline of the project. Some benefits are: maintains Stimson's ability to own and manage lands long-term. Providing local forest-based jobs, maintains the local tax base, complements Lincoln county Growth Policy, which calls for maintaining the rural character of the County, preserves important fish and wildlife habitat for a wide range of signature wildlife species, secures public access for fishing, hunting, biking, wildlife viewing, and other non-commercial outdoor recreation.

The basic easement terms are for continued use of the property for commercial timber and resource management in a manner that is compatible with the scenic, water quality, fish and wildlife habitat, recreation, and other conservation values that the easement is designed to protect. No residential, industrial, or commercial building. Guarantees permanent, non-motorized public access for outdoor recreation. A Multi-Resource Management Plan will guide actions by Stimson to conserve environmentally important wildlife habitat, including retaining vegetative cover, managing roads, restricting seasonal use, and preserving special habitat features – all while allowing for continued timber and other resource management activities. The project will largely mirror the Troy Conservation Easement which was completed in 2012 on roughly 28,000 acres.

Easement Holder is Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

The potential funding sources are the Forest Service forest Legacy Program, Habitat Conservation Polan Land Acquisition Grant Program, and Stimson Lumber Company (below market sale).

Chris said a public meeting is planned tonight at the Venture Inn. Chris said the intent is to provide appropriate public access.

Commissioner Peck commented that there is a lot of positives, but some concerns are about public access and non-motorized areas that may affect a local snow mobile club.

Chris said public access is important; the project is starting with non-motorized, but the team is requesting input to ensure public recreations are acknowledged. Public meetings are planned.

Commissioner Cole said any involvement in timber management is good, but there is always a fear and sensitivity to access. Commissioner Peck said some of the lands (Parmenter face) have been on the wildland urban interface and he has talked with the state; there may be money available to help with some type of fuels reduction in that area.

Commissioner Peck said this is not only for timber but also for reducing fuel load on that base. Barry said he would be very supportive and willing to work with the county on fuels reduction.

3:00 PM **Meeting Adjourned**

## **LINCOLN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

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Mike Cole, Chairman

**ATTEST:** \_\_\_\_\_

Robin A. Benson, Clerk of the Board