

October 5, 2022

The Lincoln County Board of Commissioners met for a regular session on October 5, 2022 in the Lincoln County Courthouse, Libby, Montana. Present were Commissioner Teske, Commissioner Letcher, Commissioner Bennett, County Administrator Jim Hammons, and Clerk & Recorder Robin Benson.

Meeting allows for teleconferencing and VisionNet availability.

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

10:00 AM **USFS**: Present were Forest Deputy Jason Brey and Troy District Ranger Kirsten Kaiser KNF, Shawn Beers, Dianne Hansen, Kerry Finley, Michelle Bianco, Jennifer Nelsen, Rebecca Nelson, Veronica Bovee-Anderson, Solomon Alcaín, Scott Shindledecker, and Ray Stout.

Kirsten said about 50 positions will be opening or are open, mostly for fuels reduction, timber harvest and engineering. Housing is a big factor in Lincoln County and that has created some difficulty filling those positions, although there is a lot of interest in these jobs. Kirsten said the forest service has visited schools to help with applications for temporary hiring summer college/high school positions. Kids coming out of Troy and Libby schools are hard-working kids, and we are extremely lucky and proud of our local kids. The YCC Program may provide opportunity for full time positions and the program makes for great employees. This is something to be very proud of in our county.

Kirsten spoke briefly about Three Rivers Ranger District, Troy Projects:

Dorr Skeels Project, Bull Lake.

Ross Creek Cedars Parking Project, allowing for more parking spots.

Boardwalk through Ross Creek Cedars is not going to happen due to funds, cost of supplies, and supply unavailability.

The primary goal was ADA accessibility, similar to the path at Kootenai Falls.

Yaak, completed four new small trails. Kirsten said talking with local folks, the intent is to help spread out the people that are coming in.

Less fire activity this year, very good.

Have two Bear Rangers based out of Troy that also work in Libby and Trout Creek as well, mainly for bear education.

This has been a successful program.

Starry Goat Flow Bicycle Trail, a 7-mile flow trail, and will add to it in the future. Located south of Troy.

Knotty Pine Project is currently under litigation due to grizzly bear and the Black Ram Project also is under litigation.

There are no timelines associated at this time for either project.

Salvage Sales from previous fires, 500 acres or 5 mbf.

Vegetation Project in the Yaak, 35 acres, the WUI area will increase.

Thanks to Lincoln County for Schedule A Roads Agreement, and the relationship with the county.

Significant increase in vandalism in the Yaak, mainly graffiti. Have had local residents help clean up.

Falls Creek is a priority project to provide public access to Savage Lake and Falls Creek Falls; ongoing.

Prescribed burning to begin work this week.

Ripley Project is still in litigation, waiting for the judge final ruling.

10:30 AM **Administrative Issues/Old Business / Library Board Appointment**: Present were Shawn Beers, Dianne Hansen, Kerry Finley, Michelle Bianco, Jennifer Nelsen, Rebecca Nelson, Veronica Bovee-Anderson, Solomon Alcaín, Scott Shindledecker, John K. Beebe, Teddye Beebe, and Ray Stout.

- Robin submitted the minutes for September 21, 2022 regular meeting for approval. **Motion** by Commissioner Teske to approve minutes as submitted. Second by Commissioner Letcher, motion carried unanimously.
- Robin said the Library Board Vacancy was placed in the Tobacco Valley News and Western News as well as the county website under Public Notices, courthouse public bulletin boards, and the N. Annex public bulletin board. Robin commented that the vacancy was also announced on the Library Facebook page. Thirteen applications were received and the Library Board reviewed applications and chose 5 applicants for the commissioners to consider for appointment. The five applications for consideration were: Michelle Bianco, Rita Billow, Lisa Flynn, Dawn Peterson, and Christopher Wilson.
Commissioner Bennett commented that it is great to see so many applications.
Commissioner Teske commented that all 5 applicants are great candidates and would serve well on the board.
Commissioner Letcher expressed that it is good to see people get involved again.
Commissioner Bennett said he initially picked 3, and then narrowed it down to one. Michelle Bianco, being a former school librarian would be beneficial to the library.
Commissioner Teske added there were several letters of support from the community for Michelle Bianco.
Motion by Commissioner Letcher to appoint Michelle Bianco to fill the unexpired term on the library board. Second by Commissioner Teske, motion carried unanimously.
Michelle thanked the commissioners for their decision, commenting she is looking forward to participating and commented about her experience in writing grants that could be very beneficial to the county libraries.
- Commissioner Bennett provided the FAA Closeout for the Eureka Airport. There is \$7,163 left to be paid and then the project would be closed. **Motion** by Commissioner Letcher to pay the final payment of \$7,163 as submitted. Second by Commissioner Teske, motion carried unanimously.
- The Commissioners signed a letter of support for the Libby Exploration Project as proposed by Montanore Minerals Corporation (MMC). Libby Exploration Project does not permit the Montanore Mine but is needed to collect, provide, and analyze additional geotechnical, hydrological, and other information that is key in allowing MMC and state and federal regulatory agencies to decide whether and how to proceed with the Montanore Mine Project.

County interest is in having economically viable, environmentally sensitive resource management in Lincoln County. The letter of support is to Chad Benson, Forest Supervisor, Libby MT.

- Commissioner Bennett spoke briefly about federal monies the county will be receiving through the Local Assistance and Tribal Consistency Fund (LATCF). The commissioners will be discussing where that money will go within the county.
- Commissioner Teske read a portion of a draft resolution and spoke about Operation Green Light supporting veterans. Commissioner Teske expressed support and is requesting commissioners to put the resolution on the agenda to move forward. Commissioner Bennett and Commissioner Letcher agreed to move forward with the resolution Operation Green Light in support of veterans and will bring it forward on their agenda.

10:45 AM **Public Comment Time:** Present were Shawn Beers, Dianne Hansen, Kerry Finley, Michelle Bianco, Jennifer Nelsen, Rebecca Nelson, Veronica Bovee-Anderson, Solomon Alcain, Scott Shindledecker, John K. Beebe, Teddye Beebe, and Ray Stout.

Dianne Hansen asked the Commissioners if they had any comments regarding an email, they received from the Republican Central Committee about how they feel regarding statewide elections being fair in Montana. Commissioner Bennett commented that he has no doubts about elections in Lincoln County being fair and he is completely confident in our election staff and is very impressed with people in our election department, including prior staff no longer working for the county, but feels Election Administrator Paula and Mandy have really stepped it up. Commissioner Bennett noted that he can only speak for elections in Lincoln County. Commissioner Teske said there is no way he can testify to elections outside Lincoln County or with other states. We do know that what Lincoln County does here is fair and just. Commissioner Bennett said he was intimately involved in the Primary Election hand count and was very impressed with that process by Lincoln County election staff. Commissioner Bennett added that there are some things the legislature put into place that are on hold right now, if that legislation passes, it will be great for elections across the state.

John Beebe commented that he was involved with a small logging project up Silver Butte and pulled onto a bridge with a sign about a 31-ton load limit. John said he called road foreman Jerry Regh who conducted some research, the bridge is only appropriate for a dump or cement truck, rather than a logging truck where the weight is spread out more. Jerry Regh talked about the state inspection rules and provided copies of the information, saying there are no restrictions on combination vehicles. It's the axle, spacing and tonnage is where there are issues, combination axle is spread out. Bridge was built in 1938.

John Beebe said he took garbage to dumpsters and asked if that could that be cleaned up a little. Commissioner Bennett said the county has been unable to get contractors, although there has been advertising for those positions, but not receiving applicants. Commissioner Bennett suggested giving a call to Kathi Hooper; she is very attentive to those type of calls. The dumpster sites are supposed to be household garbage only. The alternative is to close the site, but we don't want to do that. The group talked about different solutions.

Dianne said she was picking up rocks on Hwy 37 between Eureka and Libby and that someone is dumping a white powder on the east side of the road. The white powder is in a ditch, runs downhill, and is in three different places. Commissioners asked Dianne to let them know the mile marker area.

11:00 AM **Public Hearing Budget Amendment for FY 21/22, Resolution No. 2022-23:** Present were Finance Officer Wendy Drake, Veronica Bovee-Anderson, Scott Shindledecker, Ray Stout, and Rebecca Nelson. Commissioner Bennett read a portion of Resolution 2022-23 for FY 21/22. The original revenues and expenditures did not include funds that have been received from sources not known at the time of the budget approval and/or expenses not known at the time of budget approval. This is an annual resolution for end of fiscal year closing. **Motion** by Commissioner Teske to approve Resolution 2022/2023 as submitted. Second by Commissioner Letcher, motion carried unanimously.

12:00 PM **Break**

1:30 PM **Planning / Final Plat Velvet Grove / Extension Request Modification, Wilderness Club Phase 6:** Present were County Planner Jesse Haag, Planning Consultant Kristin Smith, and Chrissy Griffin. Commissioner Bennett was excused.

1. Jesse said Velvet Grove Phase 6 is located on Airport Drive, Eureka. All conditions have been met and planning staff recommends approval. **Motion** by Commissioner Letcher to approve final plat to Velvet Grove Phase 6 based on planning staff recommendation. Second by Commissioner Teske, motion carried.
2. Kristin said the phasing plan for Wilderness Club has been modified several times, but for large projects with phasing plans, there is time allowed for working with DEQ. Due to a backlog at the DEQ, the phasing plan for Phase 6 has yet to receive approval in order to meet the November 14th deadline. The developer also intends to add 2 lots back at this time. Kristin explained there will need to be two motions: 1. Approve Wilderness Club Phase 6 plat extension to conform with that requested on September 16, 2022, and 2. Approve the modification to 18 lots for Phase 6. **Motion** by Commissioner Teske to approve extension and phasing plan modification as stated above, subject to conditions and based on planning staff recommendation. Second by Commissioner Letcher, motion carried.

Kristin spoke briefly about upcoming projects and explained violations that have occurred from not contacting the Planning Department, but that she is currently working on a course of action to move forward. Jesse said development is not slowing down and is actually picking up. Kristin agreed that planning is overwhelming at this time.

2:00 PM **Adjourned**

LINCOLN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Jerry Bennett, Chairman

ATTEST: _____
Robin Benson, Clerk of the Board