

**North Platte Natural Resources District
Board of Directors Meeting**

March 11, 2021

The regular meeting of the North Platte Natural Resources District (NRD) Board of Directors was called to order in person at 3:00 p.m. MST, March 11, 2021, by Roger Eirich, at the North Platte NRD Offices (Agenda item #1). A zoom or phone conference call option was available to the public. Notice of the meeting was given to the public by publishing a legal notice in the March 4, 2021, Scottsbluff *Star-Herald*. Eirich informed meeting attendees that this meeting would be conducted in accordance with the Open Meetings Act, a copy of which is posted on the NPNRD website for public inspection (Agenda item #2).

Board members present in person: Kent Andreas, Gary Darnall, Roger Eirich, Chuck Henkel, Pete Lapaseotes, Ryan Reuter, Dan Weinreis and Mark Westphal. Board member absent: David Deines.

Chairman Eirich called for a motion to excuse Deines from the meeting. Motion made by Reuter, seconded by Darnall, to excuse board member Deines from the meeting. Motion passed.

Ayes: Andreas, Darnall, Eirich, Henkel, Lapaseotes, Reuter, Weinreis, Westphal

Nay: none

Abstain: none

Absent: Deines

Others present in person: John Berge, Barb Hoehn, Danielle Schafer, Scott Schaneman, Lydia Hendrickson, Craig Uhrig, Jody Fiscus of NPNRD staff; Lex Larson, J.G. Elliot; Megan Dockery and Steve Smith, Simmons Olson Law Firm; Dave Fisher, public. Those present by zoom: Kyle Ann Hopkins, NPNRD staff; Thad Kuntz, Adaptive Resources, Inc.; Sarah Gray, NRCS District Conservationist.

The following items of informational material were made available to the Directors electronically prior the Board Meeting:

1. Zoom Meeting Instructions
2. Final Agenda
3. Minutes, North Platte Natural Resources District, February 11, 2021
4. Final Treasurers Report
5. Manager's Report
6. NARD Update
7. NARD Bill Summary
8. WRC Minutes, January 27, 2021
9. Current Flow Meter Maintenance Policy
10. Special Flow Meter Replacement Cost Share

The following items were provided to the Directors at the Board Meeting:

The same items as listed above were provided to board members in person.

3. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Board reviewed the minutes of the February 11, 2021 regular Board meeting.

Motion made by Darnall, seconded by Henkel, to approve the minutes of the February 11, 2021 regular Board meeting. Motion passed.

Ayes: Darnall, Eirich, Henkel, Lapaseotes, Reuter, Weinreis, Westphal

Nay: none

Abstain: Andreas

Absent: Deines

4. Treasurer's Report and Accounts Payable

Ryan Reuter reviewed the Treasurer's report with the Board. Motion made by Weinreis, seconded by Henkel, to accept the Treasurer's report and pay the bills as listed.
Motion passed.

Ayes: Andreas, Darnall, Eirich, Henkel, Lapaseotes, Reuter, Weinreis, Westphal

Nay: none

Abstain: none

Absent: Deines

5. Comments from the Public

None

6. Manager's Report

General Manager John Berge indicated that the written report was sent to the board and was available on the NPNRD website. He highlighted the following items:

Administrative:

- Internships – We have recently added Ethan Woehrle to our staff as an intern to aid the Water Department after Carolyn Hudson's retirement. Ethan is a current student at Chadron State College studying range management. Additionally, we have interviewed a promising candidate that is currently a student at the University of Wyoming studying range ecology to work for the summer for the Tree Department.
- Budget Process – Staff are beginning discussions about the budget for FY 2021. These discussions will culminate in the first draft of our budget request for the budget committee to consider later in the spring. For your information, I have

added a copy of the budget timeline document to this report. The end of the FY is in June.

- Risk Pool/NARD Representatives to our April Board Meeting? – Ryan Reuter, Chairman of the Budget and Personnel Committee and Treasurer has had recent conversations with the NARD Board and Risk Pool representatives that suggest a visit, or at least a zoom with Dean Edson, ED of NARD, Jim Eschliman, President of NARD and Larry Reynolds, Past President of NARD to discuss our ongoing concerns with the Risk Pool program. You will be considering whether to have Roger Eirich sign a letter to invite them to our April meeting.

Projects and Programs:

- NSWCP Cost-Share – We recently scored and approved cost share applications, and letters with the parameters of the NSWCP program and reimbursement protocols went out to producers.
- EPIC Program Update – Given current commodity prices, interest in the EPIC program was a bit lower than it has been in years past, and we extended our sign-up period from ten days to three weeks and did additional outreach to ensure maximum sign-ups. We will be evaluating applications and performing title searches on applications in the coming days in the hopes that we can execute contracts in the coming weeks. We received \$140,000.00 in applications.
- Hazard Mitigation Planning - On March 24 and 25 at 2 p.m. and 6 p.m. respectively, we will be holding our kick-off meeting for the Hazard Mitigation Effort. As you know, we are the sponsoring agency of this planning effort, and this is a renewal that occurs every five years. The meetings will be held via zoom and include agencies from all five counties that we represent.

Outreach:

- Water for Ag – Yont Water Conference – The University of Nebraska and the Water for Ag Group are sponsoring the 2021 Yonts Water Conference on April 9 from 9-1 at the Gering Civic Center. Topics of this conference will include drought and water outlook, Gering Ft. Laramie, and Crop Management. There will be a meal if allowed by the university.
- Nebraska Water Center Conference and Water Tour – We are fast approaching settling on a date and logistics to re-up the Scottsbluff Gering United Chamber of Commerce Water Tour. We are planning to shoulder this event with the Nebraska Water Center Annual Conference which will be held in Scottsbluff. Soft date is August 16th – 18th. The first day is the Nebraska Water Center Conference. More details will be coming.

7. Legislative Update

Berge reported on upcoming hearings and current bills in the legislature. The board packet included a table that shows bills. Some are related to Natural Resources and some to Political Subdivisions. Berge highlighted the following:

- LR 22 CA – Constitutional amendment to limit the total amount of property tax revenue that may be raided by political subdivisions. Sponsored by Linehan at the request of the Governor.
- LR 23 – Interim study to examine the progress of natural resources districts in fulfilling their originally intended purpose. Sponsored by Erdman and Briese.

Berge indicated that the legislature is going through the process to limit NPNRD's ability

to raise property taxes by 3%. If there were a large, unexpected expense (i.e., a dam breaking), it could cost a lot of money and we would have no ability to exceed the 3% levy limit. The association is neutral on this bill.

8. Discussion of Redistricting

Berge informed the board that Tyson Larson, a former State Senator, is now with G-Gov. Mr. Larson provided a presentation at the Managers Meeting on the potential need to redistrict after the results of the 2020 census. There is a threshold for an NRD to require redistricting. Because the NPNRD board is elected “at-large” we will not be required to redistrict. Berge’s concern was with the anticipated 5% increase in population in Banner County. Steve Smith, our attorney, has researched this issue and NPNRD will not be forced to redistrict.

9. Presentation from Scott Yakel of Seametrics

At the February board meeting, the board approved cost-share to replace Seametrics meters because the batteries do not last. Scott Yakel is the regional representative for Seametrics. He has spent 30 years in the water industry on the manufacturing side. He stated that millions of vehicles are recalled each year, and this is the same thing in this industry. “The company has failed this NRD, but I can change the future of our metrics with Seametrics” he stated. Their proposal will save this NRD money. Any meter that is 5 years old or less, the producer will receive a new meter. If the meter is 5 to 10 years old, they will replace it for \$500.00. Meters over 10 years old will be replaced for \$750.00. The new Ag 3000 meter is light years ahead of the Ag 2000. It is much better technology. The battery life is 3 – 4 times better. If the battery dies within the first 5 years, they will replace it for free. Beginning February 1st, they have a meter trade in program so if producers wanted to update with a new meter, they can trade it into the dealer and get a 10% discount off a new meter.

Seametrics wants the chance to make things right with NPNRD. They have a new General Manager and a new Product Operations Manager. The changes within the organization, as far as quality, have been rectified immediately. They are asking for another chance to be placed on our approved meter list. The policy for time of project development is 2 years here. Yakel wondered if the board would consider changing the length of time that the meters performance is on probation. He stated that other NRD's use 1 year.

The question was raised on whether NPNRD would cost share on a meter that is in a pilot program.

Motion made by Reuter, seconded by Westphal, to table this matter and refer it back to the Water Resources Committee for board recommendation. Motion passed.

Ayes: Andreas, Darnall, Eirich, Henkel, Lapaseotes, Reuter, Weinreis, Westphal

Nay: none

Abstain: none

Absent: Deines

10. Consideration of Invitation Letter to NARD Representatives to the April Board

Meeting in Reference to the Risk Pool Association.

Berge asked the Board if they wanted to invite NARD representatives to a Board meeting to discuss concerns this NRD has about the costs associated with the Risk Pool.

. Motion made by Lapaseotes, seconded by Weinreis, to invite NARD representatives to an in-person board meeting in April to discuss the Risk Pool. Motion passed.

Ayes: Andreas, Darnall, Eirich, Henkel, Lapaseotes, Reuter, Weinreis, Westphal

Nay: none

Abstain: none

Absent: Deines

11. Adjourn

There being no further business, the Chairman called for a motion to adjourn. Motion made by Reuter, seconded by Westphal, to adjourn at 4:15 p.m., MST. Motion passed.

Ayes: Andreas, Darnall, Eirich, Henkel, Lapaseotes, Reuter, Weinreis, Westphal

Nay: none

Abstain: none

Absent: Deines