

# North Platte Natural Resources District Board of Directors Meeting

July 8, 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, July 8, 2021, by Roger Eirich, at the North Platte NRD Offices. Notice of the meeting was given to the public by publishing a legal notice in the July 1, 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 Kent Andreas, Gary Darnall, Dave Deines, Roger Eirich, Pete Lapaseotes, and Mark Westphal. Board members absent: Dan Weinreis, Chuck Henkel, and Ryan Reuter. Others present in person: John Berge, Danielle Schafer, Scott Schaneman, Lydia Hendrickson, Craig Uhrig, Ethan Woehrle, and Travis Preston of NPNRD staff; Thad Kuntz, Adaptive Resources, Inc.; Sarah Gray NRCS; Lex Larsen JG Elliot; Steve Smith Simmons Olsen Law Firm.

Chairman Eirich called for a motion to excuse Weinreis, Henkel, and Reuter from the meeting. Motion made by Lapaseotes, seconded by Andreas, to excuse board members Weinreis, Henkel, and Reuter from the meeting. Motion passed.

Ayes: Andreas, Darnall, Deines, Eirich, Lapaseotes, Westphal

Nay: none

Abstain: none

Absent: Weinreis, Henkel, Reuter

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

1. Agenda

2. Minutes, North Platte Natural Resources District, Board of Directors Meeting, May 13, 2021.
3. Treasurer's Report
4. Manager's Report
5. Scottsbluff United Chamber of Commerce Agribusiness Water Tour Brochure.
6. News Release: "Nebraska Water Center Conference hits the Road this August for Scottsbluff."
7. Map of the 2021 Water Tour
8. Agenda on the 2021 Water Tour
9. Annual Report of 2020 Water Use Activities in the North Platte NRD to meet the Requirements of the Integrated Management Plan for the 2020 Basin-Wide Meeting.
10. DRAFT, 2021 Upper Platte River Basin-Wide IMP Report Covering 2020 Activities.
11. Agenda of the Upper Platte River Basin-Wide Plan Annual Meeting on July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021.
12. 2021 Static Water Levels Report.
13. Minutes, North Platte Natural Resources District, Budget & Personnel Committee, dated July 1, 2021.

### **3. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The Board reviewed the minutes of the June 10, 2021, regular Board meeting.

*Motion made by Deines, seconded by Darnall, to approve the minutes of the June 10, 2021, regular Board meeting. Motion passed.*

Ayes: Andreas, Darnall, Deines, Eirich, Lapaseotes, Westphal

Nay: none

Abstain: none

Absent: Weinreis, Henkel, Reuter

#### **4. Treasurer's Report and Accounts Payable**

John Berge reviewed the Treasurer's report with the Board. Motion made by Andreas, seconded by Deines, to accept the Treasurer's report and pay the bills as listed.  
Motion passed.

Ayes: Andreas, Darnall, Deines, Eirich, Lapaseotes, Westphal

Nay: none

Abstain: none

Absent: Weinreis, Henkel, Reuter

#### **5. Comments from the Public**

No comments from the public.

#### **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:

- Status of Water Technician Position – We have hired Keelie Williamson to backfill the position vacated by Carolyn Hudson when she retired. Keelie will be starting in the next couple of weeks.

Projects and Programs:

- Hazard Mitigation Planning – Round two meetings of the Hazard Mitigation Planning group will occur on July 14 and 15 via zoom.

- Schaneman Recharge Project – While we were planning on taking the staff and Board on a tour of the Schaneman Recharge Facility on Spring Creek Road, we have forgone this for July and are hoping to do it in August once it is operating. We are anticipating approval of the permits for the project in the coming weeks.
- Conservation Easements – I have been working with the Nebraska Conservation Roundtable to develop talking points and other materials to combat the arguments against conservation easements. These have been an important tool for conservation districts in Nebraska.
- Robust Review – Scott, Thad and I met with the POAC group to discuss the lack of a scope of work for the Robust Review which is to start later this year. We have been very frustrated at the hold up on the scope of work by the Twin Platte NRD, and I expressed my frustration with the Twin Platte Manager, Kent Miller and their consultant, Jim Schneider – demanding that they offer comments on the scope so that we may vote on it by the end of the month. We anticipate voting on the scope on August 31.

Outreach:

- Water Expo – The Semi-Annual Water Tour will be held on August 14, 2021, from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. Similar activities will be held, to include free lunch, water games for the kids, seminars for adults and an exhibit hall. There will also be Greenhouse Tours and the Conservation Ranger Program will be active as well.
- The North Platte NRD will be hosting dinner for the Nebraska Water Center staff at the NRD office on August 15.

- The Nebraska Water Center “The Shape of Water in Western Nebraska” Conference will be held on August 16 at the Panhandle Research and Extension Center. The North Platte NRD will have a prominent role in that meeting.
- Water Tour – The Scottsbluff-Gering Chamber of Commerce Water Tour will be held on August 17-18 and will be an eastern trip – touring both the north side and the south side of the river, and the Pumpkin Creek Basin. Please see your Board packet for additional details. 6a.
- Water Leaders Academy – We will be hosting the Nebraska Water Leaders Academy on July 15 for dinner with our staff.

## **7. Discussion of Packet for LR23 Request from the Nebraska Legislature Natural Resources Committee**

Berge provided the Board background into the legislative review, reminding that the bill was sponsored by Senator Steve Erdman. The review will be made available to the legislature and will focus on NRD’s and if they are meeting their responsibilities. This District asked for an extension, which was granted by Cyndi Lamm, Natural Resources Committee Counsel. That deadline was extended to July 9<sup>th</sup>, 2021. The report will include information regarding flood control, flow meters, Harrisburg water system, cost share, plus much more. Berge mentioned other NRD’s were sending one-page reports while others were sending multi page documents. After discussion the Board agreed to provide the report to the Committee as Berge outlined.

## **8. Staff Presentation on Static Water Levels Data**

Lynn Okicki provided a power point presentation on data gathered from water levels taken in March of this year. Okicki also showed in her presentation, water level data comparisons from 1-, 5-, 10-, and 15-year static water levels. Once the presentation ended Okicki provided an opportunity for the Board to ask questions. Darnall asked about the static water level declines in the southwest part of Banner County close to Albin Wyoming and if that area of the district should be allocated on pumping. Berge said the declines in that area could be influenced by the pumping occurring just over the State line in Wyoming. He also mentioned the number of irrigated acres is substantial in Wyoming in comparison to the number of certified irrigated acres in the far southwest part of Banner County. Darnall followed up with a question regarding the diversion of surface water in Pumpkin Creek. Darnall asked the members of the Staff and the Board if they knew of any producers diverting water from Pumpkin Creek. The Board and the Staff could not confirm that there was surface water being diverted.

## **9. Report from Budget and Personnel Committee**

Berge reported that our budget timeline was in very good shape and that the budget was very sound. The Committee directed the Staff to increase the budget by 3-4% due to rising inflation. The proposed fiscal year 2021-22 budget ended up increasing a little over 4%. Berge also mentioned that the OA/FA contingency fund would remain, and that the Gering Valley Flood Control Project line item would see an increase to \$500,000.00 on the expense side of the budget as well as a \$500,000.00 increase on the revenue side as well. This project will be part of a water shed rehabilitation program that is grant funded by NRCS. Berge

finished up the report by mentioning that a hearing date for budget approval would need to be set and that the hearing would need to separate from the regular Board meeting.

Motion made by Lapaseotes, seconded by Westphal, to set the fiscal year 2021-2022 budget hearing for September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Motion passed.

Ayes: Andreas, Darnall, Deines, Eirich, Lapaseotes, Westphal

Nay: none

Abstain: none

Absent: Weinreis, Henkel, Reuter

## **12. Adjourn**

There being no further business, the Chairman called for a motion to adjourn. Motion made by Andreas, seconded by Westphal, to adjourn at 3:48 p.m., MST. Motion passed.

Ayes: Andreas, Darnall, Deines, Eirich, Lapaseotes, Reuter,

Nay: none

Abstain: none

Absent: Weinreis, Henkel, Westphal