

CENTRAL PLATTE NRD

Board Meeting Minutes

June 25, 2020

Governor Pete Ricketts issued an executive order to permit state and local governmental boards, commissions, and other public bodies to meet by videoconference, teleconference, or other electronic means through June 30, 2020 due to COVID-19.

This meeting is being audio recorded in the board room and open to the public for participation.

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Jim Bendfeldt called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. He reported that the NRD abides by the Open Meetings Act in conducting business and said that a copy of the Open Meetings Act was displayed on the south wall of the conference room, that the Board reserves the right to change the order of an item on the agenda, and some items on the agenda are subject to closed session. CPNRD's physical office remains closed to the public due to COVID-19 restrictions, however Hall County will move to a Phase 2, so the board room will be available for public participation in the meeting. Social distancing guidelines will be followed.

ATTENDANCE: Board members present were:

LeRoy Arends
Jim Bendfeldt
Lon Bohn

Ed Kyes
Dwayne Margritz
Charles Maser

Keith Ostermeier
Doug Reeves
Jay Richeson
Jerry Wiese

Board members present via Zoom:

Alicia Haussler
Chris Henry
Brian Keiser

Marvion Reichert
Mick Reynolds

Steve Sheen
Deb VanMatre

Excused Absences: Jerry Milner, Barry Obermiller, Keith Stafford, Ed Stoltenberg

Staff present: Lyndon Vogt – General Manager, Jesse Mintken – Assistant Manager, Kelly Cole – Administrative Assistant, Marcia Lee – Information/Education Specialist, Brody Vonderstrasse – Communications Assistant, Luke Zakrzewski – GIS Image Analyst

Others present: Joe Krolikowski – NRCS Liaison District Conservationist

MEETING NOTICES: Chairman Bendfeldt reported that the notices of the meeting had been published in the Grand Island Independent and the news release was provided to other media outlets in the District.

MEETING MINUTES: Keith Ostermeier made the motion to approve the May board meeting minutes. Jay Richeson seconded the motion. All board members present, voting

by roll call vote, were in favor. Motion carried.

PUBLIC FORUM: Chairman Bendfeldt asked if anyone wanted to address the board on any item not included on the agenda. No one requested time to speak.

ANNOUNCEMENTS & OTHER BUSINESS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS:
Chairman Bendfeldt asked if there were any announcements or suggestions for future meetings. There were none.

EXCUSED ABSENCES: Chairman Bendfeldt reported that Jerry Milner, Barry Obermiller, Keith Stafford and Ed Stoltenberg had requested to be excused from the board meeting.

Marvion Reichert made the motion to approve the absences as requested. Keith Ostermeier seconded the motion. All board members present, voting by roll call vote, were in favor. Motion carried.

NRCS REPORT: Joe Krolikowski, NRCS Liaison District Conservationist, reviewed how the COVID 19 pandemic has affected their operation (see enclosed report). Nicole Olsen, Resources Conservationist was unable to attend, but provided an updated report on the Central City Field Office (see enclosed report).

SPRING GROUNDWATER LEVELS REPORT: Luke Zakrzewski, GIS Image Analyst, reported that the average spring groundwater levels across the district had an accumulated gain of 3.29 feet from spring 1982 to spring 2020. No groundwater management areas in our district will open or close in 2020. Groundwater levels are averaged from 410 observation and irrigation wells that NRD staff reads on an annual basis.

Six of the 24 Groundwater Management areas are currently below the 1982 groundwater levels and subject to the 25% decline regulation that does not allow transfers of irrigated acres into the area or supplemental wells.

A majority of the NRD's 24 Groundwater Management Areas saw increases because of above-average precipitation during 2019 that continued through this spring.

BUDGET COMMITTEE: Chairman Bendfeldt said the Budget Committee met earlier that day to continue their review of the recommended expenditures for Fiscal Year 2020/2021. He said they are recommending a couple of changes from what had been put on drop box for the board's review prior to the board meeting. A copy of the updated work sheet has been put on drop box.

Action on Budget of Expenditures for Budget Hearing & Set Public Hearing – Keith Ostermeier made the motion to approve the proposed budget of expenditures for the purpose of holding the public budget hearing. Charles Maser seconded the motion.

Prior to voting on the motion General Manager Vogt said the estimated property tax request will decrease by approximately \$100,000.00 - \$110,000.00.

All board members present, voting by roll call vote, were in favor. Motion carried.

Set Public Budget Hearing – General Manager Vogt reported that due to a law change we cannot hold the budget hearing during the board meeting. We are allowed to hold the budget hearing the same day as the board meeting but must be kept separate.

Doug Reeves made the motion to set the Public Budget Hearing at 1:45 pm on July 23rd. Jay Richeson seconded the motion. All board members present, voting by roll call vote, were in favor. Motion carried.

EASTERN PROJECTS COMMITTEE: Chairman Jerry Wiese, reported on their meeting held earlier in the day.

Bids for the Berm & Access Road Construction on the Upper Prairie/Silver/Moores Flood Risk Reduction Project were reviewed. The lowest bid was from Blessing Construction LLC at \$138,575.00.

Jerry Wiese made the motion to accept the bid from Blessing Construction LLC in the amount of \$138,575.00 for the Berm & Access Road Construction project on the Upper Prairie/Silver/Moores Flood Risk Reduction Project. Keith Ostermeier seconded the motion. All board members present, voting by roll call vote, were in favor. Motion carried.

MANAGER'S REPORT: General Manager Vogt, reported that as of today we have 9 producers out of compliance with the Groundwater Quality Rules and Regulations from the original 94 back in May. Five of those producers are repeat violators. Staff is keeping an eye on their fields on a regular basis, if they are caught irrigating this year, we will turn them over to our legal counsel. A list of the 9 producers are available on drop box.

COST SHARE PROGRAMS: Transfer & Applications – Kelly Cole, Administrative Assistant, requested a transfer of \$750.00 from Prescribed Fire Cost Share to Well Decommissioning Cost Share and reported that we have received cost share applications for the following programs: Flow Meter, Capacitance Probe, Soil Moisture Sensor and Well Decommissioning (see enclosed). She said the applicants are in compliance with the District's rules and regulations, funds are available, and she recommended they be approved.

Jay Richeson made the motion to approve the cost share transfer and applications as reported. Charles Maser seconded the motion. All board members present, voting by roll call vote, were in favor. Motion carried.

NEBRASKA NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION: General Manager Vogt reported that applications are being taken from July 16 – July 31 for the Water Sustainability Grant. At this time, they are unsure of what kind of appropriations will be available due to the financial condition of the State. Next meeting is August 12th in Kearney.

NEBRASKA ASSOCIATION OF RESOURCES DISTRICT: Chairman Bendfeldt reported that NARD lost their office in Lincoln due to the riots. The NARD executive committee and a few NRD managers are working together to find a new location for the NARD office.

NARD Fiscal budget was set at this time but could change depending on what NARD finds out from their insurance company.

The National Envirothon was moved from 2020 to 2021, the Papio Missouri Basin tour was cancelled but Husker Harvest Days and the Annual Conference are still planning to take place. The board also approved a 7.5% increase in the health insurance premiums.

FINANCIAL REPORT: Marvion Reichert made a motion to approve the June financial report as presented. Keith Ostermeier seconded the motion. All board members present, voting by roll call vote, were in favor. Motion carried.

NEW STAFF INTRODUCITON: Brody Voderstrasse introduced himself. He has taken the position of Communications Assistant. This position is a shared position with NRCS and the Rainwater Basin Joint Venture.

UPCOMING EVENTS: Next Board Meeting – Scheduled for the afternoon of Thursday, July 23. Details to follow.

UPCOMING EVENTS: Chairman Bendfeldt reviewed the upcoming events.

OTHER BUSINESS: There was none.

ADJOURN: Chairman Bendfeldt adjourned the board meeting at 2:58 p.m.



Natural Resources Conservation Service
Grand Island Field Office
703 South Webb Rd., Suite B
Grand Island, NE 68803
Phone (308) 395-8586 (Ext. 3)

<http://www.ne.nrcs.usda.gov>

June 22, 2020

Central Platte NRD
215 North Kaufman Avenue
Grand Island, NE 68803

June Report to CPNRD

This month in my report I would like to provide an update on the COVID 19 pandemic and how we are getting closer and closer to a more routine Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office of operation. Please let this update serve as notification that 3 of our NRCS offices in the Central Platte are at the Phase 1 Reopening stage. The three Field Offices are Grand Island, Central City, and Lexington, this is as of Monday, June 22, 2020. Attached you will find a copy of one of the notification letters, specific to the Grand Island Office. The letter includes detailed information about the conditions, expectations, and requirements for entering Phase 1. It should provide to all transparency, work coordination efforts, and a preview of what will follow over time, at the remaining Kearney NRCS Field Office and other offices in the State of Nebraska.

The transitioned of Field Offices and our Central Area Office to Phase 1 started back on 6/8/2020. The 29 Offices in the Central Area at Phase 1 are as listed (Hastings, Spencer, Ainsworth, Clay Center, Elwood, Burwell, Grand Island, Alma, O'Neill, St. Paul, Fairbury, Minden, Central City, Seward, Ord, Red Cloud, York, Franklin, Fullerton, Holdrege, Neligh, Spalding, Albion, Aurora, Beaver City, Geneva, Hebron, Lexington, and Osceola) they will remain in that status until formal notification is provided for the transition to Phase 2.

NRCS, FSA, and Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC) Leadership will continue to evaluate the data metrics, criteria, and methodology associated with the gradual and phased approach to reopening and submit additional requests to enter Phase 1 at additional Field Office locations soon. That evaluation process will also include consideration for Field Office transition from Phase 1 to Phase 2. Our NRCS staff continue their efforts to provide excellent customer service while ensuring the safety and well-being of everyone.

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Also, during the month of May and into early June, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, as part of its responsibility in carrying out the conservation provisions of the National Food Security Act (NFSA) of 1985, as amended, conducted annual status reviews in the Central Platte NRD and across the state. The purpose of these annual status reviews is to determine if the conservation compliance provisions of the current farm program legislation are being followed on each tract randomly selected that year. In total across the Central Platte NRD we completed 65 status review for the 2020 season. This required staff to evaluate each of these 65 tracts for potential wetland and/or highly erodible land issues. When the review is complete, we then notify the owner and operator of our tract review findings with a letter.

Respectfully Submitted,

/s/ Joe Krolikowski

Joe Krolikowski
District Conservationist

Attachment:

FPAC Phase One Reopening Facility Letter Nebraska NRCS Grand Island Field & Area Office
Phase 1 6-5-2020

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Natural Resources Conservation Service
Central City Field Office
1708 31st St Suite 2
Central City, NE 68826
308-946-3035 Ext. 2

<http://www.ne.nrcs.usda.gov>

June 24, 2020

Central Platte NRD
215 North Kaufman Avenue
Grand Island, NE 68803

June Report to CPNRD

Central City Field Office Updates:

Programs

EQIP- Central City had 63 applications for 2020. This year there was special funding available in a Source Water Protection fund pool, which prioritized ground in wellhead protection and Phase II or higher areas. Water quality improvement practices such as cover crops, irrigation water management, gravity to pivot or SDI conversion, and nutrient management were eligible and received special higher cost-share rates. We had nine applications pre-approved in this pool, the majority being gravity to center pivot conversions. Pre-approvals in the local pools are still being decided.

CSP- Central City had 18 applications. A new workload prioritization tool was used this year to target applications that offered the greatest conservation benefits. Six of our applications were determined to meet the criteria, and we are developing those to be ranked in the first round of funding. The remaining applications will be ranked if funding is available after the initial round.

Staffing

Our district secretary resigned back in March so we will again be looking to refill that position once things improve with the Covid-19 pandemic. We look forward to bringing this new person onboard as their assistance is very important to our office. A soil-conservation technician job was also posted, and a person was selected, but at the last minute they chose a different option. Hopefully that position can be re-advertised soon.

Outreach

The Covid-19 situation has limited our options for outreach events. This spring we have received several calls from landowners with concerns about the Prairie Creek levels. Many have experienced flooded fields and wondered if NRCS had any programs to help them like in 2019, currently we do not have any disaster programs available to assist with flooding.

Respectfully Submitted,

/s/ Nicole Olsen

Nicole Olsen
Resource Conservationist



NRCS, Partner, and Contract Employees:

Effective, Monday, June 8, 2020 at 8:00 AM, the Grand Island NRCS Field & Area Office will begin Phase 1 of our reopening process. NRCS, FSA, FPAC leadership, and the Department have worked in close consultation to carefully determine that Hall County and the Grand Island NRCS Field & Area Office meet the criteria laid out in [USDA's Reopening Playbook](#), the [White House's guidance](#), and the [Office of Management and Budget guidance](#) which indicates we may begin a safe and gradual reopening.

In order to begin Phase 1, we confirmed Hall County has met the [federal gating criteria](#), begun phased reopening, implemented phased reopening of public and commercial activities, and lifted mandatory travel and closure restrictions. Additionally, we confirmed the Grand Island NRCS Field & Area Office has a requisite inventory of face coverings, cleaning supplies, and services to ensure sufficient social hygiene and mitigation practices are in place to protect employees, contractors, and the public by adhering to CDC Guidance on [proper hygiene](#), [proper facility cleaning](#), utilization of the CDC [Cleaning and Disinfecting Decision tool](#), and [proper social distancing](#). Applicable labor agreements have been reviewed to assess bargaining obligations and whether bargaining has occurred.

While the Grand Island NRCS Field & Area Office is authorized to begin phase one of reopening, we utilize the following guidelines as part of that process:

- *Telework usage is strongly encouraged in conjunction with staggered schedules for in office work ,in order to maintain social distancing.*
- *No more than 10 people in a single office space. 6 feet of separation must be maintained between employee work areas.*
- *At risk employees encouraged use maximum telework procedures.*
- *Frequent spot cleaning of commonly touched services (Ex. Counters, office equipment, door hardware, etc.)*
- *Common and break areas will be closed for employee gathering during break or lunch periods.*

Visitors are NOT allowed in an office during phase one. Only mission-essential, time-sensitive business travel will be considered. Any local requirements for quarantining upon return from travel should be followed.

Supervisors will reach out directly to communicate and discuss any change to your telework status or schedule. Your supervisor will communicate directly with you by June 8, 2020. Employees returning to the office will be required to wear a face covering onsite while in common areas where it is more difficult to maintain social distancing (Ex. building entrances, hallways, restrooms, open office areas where storage cabinets and office equipment is located, storage rooms, etc.). Employees may remove face coverings while working alone at their assigned workstation or in their private office, if social distancing requirements are met (6 feet of separation). You may use a personally owned face covering. If you do not have a face covering, notify your supervisor to have one provided.

We will continue to assess the Field Office status daily to ensure we are protecting your health as we continue to deliver our mission. Any changes to the Field Office status will be communicated in advance.

If you have questions or concerns, please contact your supervisor or ASTC/Field Operations.

CENTRAL PLATTE NRD
Cost Share
June 25, 2020

FLOW METER COST SHARE PROGRAM		\$	800.00
Thies Farms Central LLC – Merrick	\$	800.00	
CAPACITANCE PROBE COST SHARE PROGRAM		\$	2,500.00
Schulte Farms – Buffalo	\$	2,500.00	
SOIL MOISTURE SENSOR COST SHARE PROGRAM		\$	2,000.00
D & D Farms Partnership	\$	2,000.00	
WELL DECOMMISSIONING COST SHARE PROGRAM.....		\$	750.00
Scott Schaefer – Hall	\$	750.00	
Total		\$	6,050.00