



MINUTES
 Beartooth RC&D Area, Inc. Board of Director's Meeting
 December 3, 2009

Reminder: Meetings scheduled for third Thursday of odd numbered months.

<p>Board Members Present Chuck Egan, Chairman, Town of Columbus Marvin Carter, Vice-Chairman, City of Laurel Penny Landon, Treasurer, Carbon Conservation District Bob Van Oosten, Stillwater Conservation District Dan Lowe, Big Horn Conservation District Dennis Hoyem, Stillwater County Ed Ulledalen, City of Billings Jeffrey McDowell, City of Hardin/Two Rivers Authority Jim Reno, Yellowstone County Katie Callahan, Town of Joliet Ken Gomer, Town of Bridger Steve Arveschoug, Big Sky EDA, Billings Philip Hathaway for Susie Mosness, Sweet Grass County</p> <p>Members at Large Present Kendall Hartman, Billings Job Service Lisa Skriner, MSU-Billings, College of Technology</p>	<p>Sponsors Not Represented Ada Iron, Crow Nation Brian Roat, City of Red Lodge Doug Tucker, Carbon County Emelie Eaton, Yellowstone Conservation District John Pretty On Top, Big Horn County City of Big Timber</p> <p>Members at Large Not Present Melissa Kramer, Stillwater Economic Development</p>
<p>Guests Charlotte VanOosten Prairie Bighorn – Native American Development Corp.</p> <p>NRCS Staff Seanna Sparks –DC Hardin Field Office</p> <p>Congressional Staff Liz Ching, Senator Baucus' Office Vicky Stephens, Senator Tester's Office</p>	<p>Staff Joel Bertolino Jillann Knutson Elaine Nowak Dick Rath Paige Weber Carla Lawrence, NRCS Coordinator</p> <p>Staff Not Present Chris Mehus</p>

Meeting Called to Order at 6:20 p.m. by Chairman Egan.

Welcome – Chuck Egan

Chairman Egan welcomed all present. He led the Pledge of Allegiance and had everyone in attendance introduce themselves.

Forester – Dick Rath

Rath showed a video presentation by FireSafe Montana.

Administrative Assistant – Paige Weber

Approval of September 17, 2009 Minutes

Motion: To approve minutes, as written.

By: Bob Van Oosten

Second: Jim Reno

Action: Carried

Revolving Loan Fund Manager/Bookkeeper – Jillann Knutson

Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) - Knutson

The budget is tight this year. We will need to take a draw by the end of the year from our revolving loan fund. We try to take the draw as late in the year as we can to earn as much interest income as we can. Our goal is to eventually have this fund pay at least one staff position. We have had a lot of unforeseen expenses to our budget which we should have not in the coming year. Our salary expense went over the budget due to increasing the hours of our Administrative Assistant. We are trying to clean up our revolving loan fund account and are now receiving payments from every loan, even the ones in default.

We are in the process of moving our bank accounts with Wells Fargo to the Bank of Joliet, primarily for convenience and access to make cash deposits more timely.

We are required by law to furnish each board member with a copy of the audit. If there are any questions after reviewing it, please direct them towards Jillann. This was our first audit and will be an additional reoccurring expense from here on out.

Lawrence gave a brief update on the meeting with the congressional staff, Liz Ching, Rachel Court and Dustin Frost, to determine what has been happening with federal funding, what other resources might be available and where to go from here.

Reno gave an update on the meeting with the Yellowstone County Commissioners discussing the community assessment fees. The Assessment Fee Committee met and did not have a consensus on increasing the assessment fee from its current .1537¢ per capita, based on the most current census. Reno questioned where the traditional federal funding in this area has gone or been moved to? He expressed that in these economic times, he would like to know who made these decisions on a federal level and where that funding has gone before asking the communities to pick up what we lost in funding

Lawrence updated the board on the meeting the RC&D had with the Congressional Staff about the cut in federal funding from the NRCS, that EDA funding has been static, Rural Development's lack of grant administrative income for the projects we work on, what has changed in the housing funding, the role of the National RC&D lobbying efforts and in other areas. During the MACD Convention, there was a State RC&D meeting where it was revealed that there was a change in the formula to calculate the funding the RC&D's received nationally. Montana RC&D's will have their funding cut statewide by \$143,000.00 for the 2010 year.

Knutson presented the 2010 preliminary budget for discussion. The services to our communities will not be cut back, but the budget cuts will limit staff travel, salary increases and benefits. We did add a lease expense into the 2010 budget as there will be some changes in the office space we are currently leasing. Reno expressed concern over why the NRCS is cutting services it has traditionally provided to the RC&D's and on what level that decision was made. Liz Ching commented that over the years, the role and mission of the RC&D's has changed. RC&D's have become local advocates and provide a valuable service to its communities. It has been discussed for years what can be done or should be done and whether to keep it's funding under the NRCS.

Approval of Treasurer's Report – Financial Report

Motion: To approve the treasurer's - financial report as presented.

By: Kendall Hartman

Second: Lisa Skriner

Action: Carried

Economic Development

Bertolino presented a request for assistance from the Native American Development Corporation (NADC), to have the Beartooth staff apply for and administer a Big Sky Trust Fund grant from the Montana Department of Commerce to complete the funding on this program. Prairie Bighorn, of the NADC, stated that this non-profit organization is funded by the Department of Defense and their focus is on developing Native American businesses on reservations in MT, WY, ND & SD. The NADC has been approved for federal funding to establish six new technical assistance positions to provide assistance and training to potential business owners.

Motion: To approve the project.

By: Marvin Carter

Second: Jim Reno

Action: Carried

Lawrence presented a request for assistance from St. John's Lutheran Ministries and Carbon County for a \$60,000.00 planning grant to do a financial feasibility study and for project administration assistance. This new senior housing project would create 15-20 new jobs and be co-located with the new Beartooth Hospital.

Motion: To accept St. John's as a project and with funding the architectural reports and feasibility study.

By: Marvin Carter

Second: Katie Callahan

Action: Carried

Ag Program Technician – Joel Bertolino

Bertolino requested assistance for developing a proposal for a historic architectural master plan for the renovation of Lowriders Gallery in Laurel. This project would not only assist in the development of a new business in the community, but possibly create interest in refurbishing other building in the downtown Laurel business district.

Motion: To accept Lowriders Gallery as a project and assist with its historic renovation plan.

By: Jim Reno

Second: Ken Gomer

Action: Carried

Bertolino presented a request for assistance by Montana Beef Marketers for potential planning grant development and assistance with their business plan. This is a business developed by Sherry Fields to promote Montana Beef and evolve into a line of canned beef products.

Motion: To assist Montana Beef Marketers with business startup.

By: Jeff McDowell

Second: Ken Gomer

Action: Carried

Bertolino submitted a request for assistance for Howell Custom Construction for planning grant development and locating additional resources to build and develop an events center on the east end of Billings. The RC&D is helping with developing a business plan, determining where to look for funding and whether this will be a feasible venture. The project is still in the early stages.

Motion: To accept the Howell Events Center as a project and help develop a business model.

By: Ken Gomer

Second: Bob Van Oosten

Jim Reno abstained.

Action: Carried

Bertolino requested assistance from Montana Harvest Kitchen's, a community kitchen, to purchase equipment. We have helped them obtain a \$50,000.00 Montana Growth through Ag Grant to help with funding this equipment purchase.

Motion: To accept Montana Harvest Kitchen's as a project and assisting with grant and resource development.

By: Penny Landon

Second: Katie Callahan

Action: Carried

Homebuyer Education- Elaine Nowak

Update – Nowak

Nowak reported that we will go back to offering the homebuyer education classes twice a month in January.

The \$8,000.00 stimulus tax credit has been extended. Reno questioned whether it was a requirement to attend a homebuyer education class to receive this tax credit.

There is a new \$6,500 stimulus tax credit for current homeowner's who have lived in their current primary residence for at least five consecutive years out of the past eight years.

NRCS Coordinator – Carla Lawrence

Updates – Lawrence

The staff has been meeting with the city councils, county commissioners, conservation districts and our other contributors for the 2010 Economic Development Fee Assessments. We would encourage and appreciate the Board Members in those areas to attend the meetings along with the Beartooth Staff. We will prepare a list of the projects the RC&D has worked on in each of these counties. Once these visits have been completed, the memorandum of understanding invoices will be sent out in January 2010.

Lawrence gave an update on the MACD convention in Lewistown and said it was well attended.

The Western RC&D conference will be held in Montana this year on January 31, February 1, 2 & 3. Bitterroot RC&D is hosting the conference in Missoula. The registration is \$275.00 to attend. Please let us know if you have an interest in attending so we can arrange for transportation, lodging and registration. Liz Ching said the congressional staff would be attending the Western RC&D conference this year.

Announcements – Miscellaneous

Egan asked for interest in serving on the nomination committee.

Egan asked for closing announcements or comments.

Next Scheduled Board Meeting- January 21, 2010 in Laurel. Location to be announced.

Adjournment: 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Paige Weber
Administrative Assistant