



MINUTES
 Beartooth RC&D Area, Inc. Board of Director's Meeting
 January 20, 2010

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 Bob Van Oosten, Stillwater Conservation District Brian Roat, City of Red Lodge Dennis Hoyem, Stillwater County Emelie Eaton, Yellowstone Conservation District Jeffrey McDowell, City of Hardin/Two Rivers Authority Katie Callahan, Town of Joliet Page Dringman, City of Big Timber Steve Arveschoug, Big Sky EDA, Billings</p> <p>Members at Large Present Lisa Skriner, MSU-Billings, College of Technology</p>	<p>Sponsors Not Represented Ada Iron, Crow Nation Dan Lowe, Big Horn Conservation District Doug Tucker, Carbon County Ed Ulledalen, City of Billings Jim Reno, Yellowstone County John Pretty On Top, Big Horn County Ken Gomer, Town of Bridger Penny Landon, Treasurer, Carbon Conservation District Susie Mosness, Sweet Grass County</p> <p>Members at Large Not Present Kendall Hartman, Billings Job Service Melissa Kramer, Stillwater Economic Development</p>
<p>NRCS Staff Nick Vira – NRCS DC Billings Field Office Gordy Hill – NRCS DC Joliet Field Office</p> <p>Congressional Staff Liz Ching, Senator Baucus' Office Rachel Court, Senator Tester's Office</p>	<p>Staff Chris Mehus Joel Bertolino Jillann Knutson Elaine Nowak Dick Rath Paige Weber Carla Lawrence, NRCS Coordinator</p>

Meeting was Called to Order at 11:40 a.m. by Chairman Egan and was held at Donna Lea's Steakhouse in Laurel.

Welcome – Chuck Egan

Chairman Egan welcomed all present. Brian Roat led the Pledge of Allegiance and had everyone in attendance introduce themselves and give a short update about what is happening within their communities and/or the organizations they represent. Chairman Egan welcomed new board member, Page Dringman, who will represent the City of Big Timber.

Administrative Assistant – Paige Weber

Approval of December 3, 2009 Minutes

Motion: To approve minutes, as written.

By: Jeff McDowell

Second: Katie Callahan

Action: Carried

Bookkeeper – Jillann Knutson

Approval of Treasurer's Report – Financial Report

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

By: Emelie Eaton

Second: Lisa Skriner

Action: Carried

The Beartooth financials ended in a positive this year with a net profit of \$7,582.36. We did have to draw about \$16,000.00 from the Revolving Loan Fund. The net profit will go into a savings fund that we carry from year to year to be used in future if the organization were to lose some funding sources.

The RC&D did make some year end purchases of a new computer, color printer, office supplies and will have Technology by Design update our website and make it more user friendly. We have been very appreciative of Ken Gomer who we have relied on to make any updates to the current website.

Revolving Loan Fund Manager – Jillann Knutson

Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) – VanOosten/Knutson

Bob VanOosten, chairman of the Revolving Loan Fund Committee, gave the board an overview on the RLF. The committee meets monthly and consists of 5 voting members and 3 advisory members. Last meeting the committee voted to write off some of the delinquent loans on the books and renegotiate terms on several other loans, which helped to clean up the books. The RLF has received some payoffs allowing more funds available to loan, but there hasn't been any real good new applications. Knutson will work on promoting the loan fund more this year.

Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) Plan Certification – Knutson

Every year in January, the board has to review and approve the loan fund rules, terms and service area. There have been no changes made to the plan we have been using and VanOosten, stated that the committee approved of the current terms and did not see that any changes needed to be implemented.

Motion: To continue using the current plan previously approved by the board.

By: Bob VanOosten

Second: Marvin Carter

Action: Carried

Document Destruction Policy & Whistleblower Policy – Knutson

These policies were required to be created and implemented after the 2009 audit. Hoyem expressed concerns about the format of the Document Destruction Policy and it was discussed that the format was taken from a sample policy provided by Galusha, Higgins & Galusha.

Motion: To approve the policies as written.

By: Katie Callahan

Second: Emelie Eaton

Action: Carried

2010 Budget

Knutson presented the final figures for the 2010 budget. There were a few changes made from the preliminary budget which included a lease expense. The lease expense will not pertain to the budget for 2010 and was removed and cost of living raises were added to the staff expense.

Motion: To approve the 2010 budget.

By: Dennis Hoyem

Second: Marvin Carter

Action: Carried

Economic Development Director - Mehus

Closeout Projects

The list provided indicated projects that were still open and were approved by the board. The bulk of the work on these projects has been completed and for all intents and purposes, these projects should be closed out. There are a few that will continue to require minimal time spent on them, but they are completed as per the original project requests.

Motion: To close the projects as requested.

By: Jeffrey McDowell

Second: Dick Rath

Action: Carried

Year End Project List

The RC&D uses this form to track and record activities we are involved in. It is designed to help with our reporting and community activity. The numbered items are board approved projects. We are in the process of cleaning up this list and will remove the completed projects from 2009. Roat suggested the RC&D needed to work more closely and keep board members informed on projects we are working on. In the future, this project list will be updated and provided at all board meeting and more of an effort will be made to get board members more involved with the projects in their communities. We will try to organize and make this form more efficient.

Housing Program Update

Elaine Nowak, who has been the Homebuyer Education Instructor for the past 10 years, has retired her position with the Beartooth RC&D. The board and staff thanked Nowak for her years of service and commended her on the housing program and the partnership she was instrumental in helping develop between the RC&D and NeighborWorks®.

Since its inception in 1999, the homebuyer education class has seen 2,143 families participate. In 2009, we had 309 families participate. The highest year of participation was in 2004 where 358 families participated. Nowak stated this was due to the additional housing classes provided that year to the Crow Tribe, whom has now established their own housing program.

The \$8,000.00 stimulus tax credit has been extended. The paperwork/written contract has to be together by April 30th and the loan closed by June 30, 2010, in order to receive the tax credit.

Ag Program Technician – Joel Bertolino

Update

Bertolino gave an update on the meeting Jeff McDowell set up with Senator Ed Butcher and some potential investors from China for a proposed horse slaughter/processing facility in the Hardin area. They toured some potential sites and looked at some of the existing structures of businesses interested in hosting this type of facility. There was a good attendance at this meeting and some strong interest in people who favored trying to market these sites to the Chinese investors. There is a feedlot site in Conrad that is another potential site, but McDowell felt that the Hardin area had some advantages in its rural area, transportation structure, its proximity to the Billings airport and the fact that the state of Montana's legislation enables it to be the only state that would allow the construction of a horse slaughter facility. There are issues that have been brought up about not being able to do this as the USDA quit supporting inspectors of these facilities and shut them down. There is obviously a need for this type of facility to deal with the issues of unwanted horses and no markets for them, plus the jobs that it could bring to the area.

Mehus and Bertolino had the opportunity to meet the owners and tour one of the two Montana Cattle Company's beef-processing plants near Laurel. They have been inspected to come up to USDA compliance and are waiting on them for final approval on the business before processing begins. Bertolino discussed with the owners the potential for a Big Sky Trust Fund (BSTF) grant for a feasibility study on the larger plant.

NRCS Coordinator – Carla Lawrence

Update

The staff finished up with the last of their annual visits to the City of Billings and with Big Sky EDA. The RC&D was received well by the cities and counties and had the opportunity give them some insight as to some of the projects the RC&D works on. The memorandum of understanding invoices were mailed out in January 2010.

Lawrence is working with the Carbon County Commissioners on trying to obtain an energy efficiency grant through the DEQ to help fund the rebuilding of the Carbon County Maintenance Shop, which burned down in January.

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 and the Beartooth RC&D will be sending 4 staff and 4 board members. The RC&D has been working on preparing a power point presentation, gathering items for the silent auction baskets and emailed two success stories that were posted on the Western Conference website. Liz Ching stated that the congressional staff would be attending the Western RC&D conference as well this year.

Forester – Dick Rath

Update

Rath discussed the far reaching effect that the closure of the Smurfit- Stone Container Corporation in pulp/sawmill in Missoula will have on the economy and fuels program. The pulp wood is moved by rail and truck and has had a direct effect to Montana Rail Link with the loss of 46 jobs and \$6 million in revenue from the closure of Smurfit-Stone.

FireSafe Montana is a non-profit group that provides fire education on fuels reduction to protect your home and property from wildland fires. If you haven't had a chance to view the video Rath presented at the past board meeting, please do so. Extra copies of the video are available at the Beartooth RC&D office.

February 25-27th, FireSafe Montana is holding a conference in Fairmont Hot Springs with a wide array of agenda topics presented by fire specialists, local land owners and success stories in Montana communities with wildfires. Mehus will speak on behalf of the RC&D on the success and completion of projects the organization has worked on.

Rath and Mehus will meet with the Big Horn County Commissioners and County Fire Chief next week to discuss fire suppression projects. The fuels project in Carbon County at Grizzly Peaks will begin as soon as we receive a contract back from the landowners. We will be working with the Beartooth Christian Ranch to clean up damage from a wind throw area to reduce fuels. Rath will also discuss and help determine if there is a sufficient fire evacuation plan at the camp and help implement one if there is not.

Announcements – Miscellaneous

Liz Ching gave a brief update on the Healthcare reform discussion going on in Washington D.C. as well as jobs legislation and small business legislation. Senator Baucus has sent out his staff to talk to small businesses, groups and individuals about the impacts they are feeling right now, what they would like to see and not see.

Rachel Court stated that Senator Tester's office will be holding a workshop in Bozeman February 19th and possibly more throughout the state to help Montana businesses be more competitive for contracting jobs.

Roat gave an update on the nomination committee. The committee recommended retaining the current committee members for another year. Mehus thanked the current committee for their service and availability.

Motion: To cease nominations and retain the current Executive committee board.

By: Emelie Eaton

Second: Katie Callahan

Action: Carried

Egan asked for closing announcements or comments. Gordy Hill, with the Carbon Conservation District, mentioned there is funding available with the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) to fight Russian Olive.

Next Scheduled Board Meeting- March 18, 2010 in Hardin at The Depot.

Adjournment: 1:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Paige Weber
Administrative Assistant