**Beartooth RC&D**

**Board Meeting Minutes**

**May 18, 2023 – 1:00 pm**

**Columbus Fire Hall**

**Members Present:**

Joel Bertolino, BRCD

Nan Knight, BRCD

Jacy Head, BRCD

Myrna Lastusky, BRCD

Edie Vogel, Yellowstone Conservation District

Ryan VanBallegooyen, Billings Job Service

Commissioner Melanie Roe, Sweet Grass County

Emily Schneller, Rep. Rosendale

Lorene Hintz, BSED

Kayla Vokral, SBA

Emily Schneller, Rep. Rosendale’s Office

**Present via Zoom:**

Holly Higgins, First Interstate Bank of Hardin

Danny Choriki, City of Billings

Tory Kolkhorst, Sen. Daines

Chris Mehus, Sweet Grass Conservation District

Jacob Cote, City of Red Lodge

**Meeting Called to Order:** Chair VanBallegooyen called the meeting to order.

**Pledge of Allegiance, Introduction of Members and Guests:** All introduced themselves with a special mention of Edie Vogel, who has taken Barb Wagner’s place on the board for Yellowstone Conservation District.

**Review March Board Minutes (Action):** Melanie motioned to approve the minutes; Holly seconded. Motion carried.

**Congressional Updates:**

* **Tory Kolkhorst (Sen. Daines)**
	+ Debt ceiling update – don’t foresee any cuts being made to veterans’ benefits, thankfully. Sen. Daines thinks federal spending is out of control and some cuts need to be made to spending if the debt ceiling will be raised.
	+ Senator has a bill to make tax relief for MT small businesses permanent (Main Street Tax Certainty Act) to cut red tape, strengthen small businesses. Also pushing for New Markets Tax Credits, which have been beneficial to many MT businesses.
* **Emily Schneller (Rep. Rosendale)**
	+ Rosendale in state last month and made some stops – MT Silver Smiths, Veteran Town Hall in Billings.
	+ Emily was in Gardiner last week and heard presentation from Yellowstone Superintendent Cam Sholly, which was very interesting. The new road looks great (narrow and windy!). Impressive that they got it done so quickly. Another year before making a decision on a more permanent road plan.
	+ Nye Road starting to look much better. Should be completed in next few months.
	+ Rep. Rosendale is busy in DC. Debt ceiling a hot topic. House Republicans recently passed the Limit, Save, Grow Act to address the debt crisis and protect Social Security, Medicare, and Veterans’ benefits.
	+ Working on several natural resources issues. Legislation to delist grizzlies passed committee. Following some Forest Service issues, EPA and BLM proposals.
	+ Will be doing another energy tour at end of June with stops in Colstrip, Big Horn County, Yellowstone County, and Stillwater Counties.
	+ Joel: Any support in Senate for delisting grizzlies?
		- Tory: Sen Daines is a huge proponent for delisting. He has given sound statistics to show the grizzly bear has made a full and robust recovery in MT. Sec. Holland said she would like to ask the bears what they think . . .

**Treasurer/Financial Reports**

1. **RC&D Financials / RLF Financials / RMAP**
	1. April books
		1. 17 loan clients
		2. $1.4 million of revolving loan totals outstanding
		3. Signed paperwork and approved for RMAP loan and should be able to do first round of disbursement by end of month.
		4. 1 new loan in Hardin we are funding. 2nd position with FIB.
		5. We received money from State for SSBCI program.
		6. Available for funding currently is $200K in Beartooth books.
		7. Haven’t received drawdowns in a few programs, so the budget will change a bit.
* Jacy: For CRDC program, we normally have the contract in place already, but there has been a lot of turnover in the procurement office. Have a meeting with Liane Taylor, the division manager for CRDC, after MEDA conference.
	1. Holly asked if we are able to issue statements more often (asking for a client).
		1. Nan: My predecessor had it set up to do it annually, but I can do it different. I do it monthly for one client and quarterly for another, so he just needs to let me know how he would like it done.
		2. Holly: Mr. W. would like to do statements monthly moving forward.

**Melanie motioned to approve the financials for Beartooth RC&D and RLF Financials. Holly seconded. Motion passed.**

**New Accounting / Auditor for Beartooth (Nan):**

* We have been with Wipfli for many years, but the spike in the audit cost really hurt our budget, so we are looking for a new auditor. Any suggestions, please send them our way.

**Staff Reports – Program/Project Updates**

1. **Food/Ag Program – Joel Bertolino**
	1. P.14 – had a face-to-face meeting in Helena on Apr. 4th. Talked about GTA grant programs, direction of Food and Ag Centers, RFP for FADC funding.
	2. Had to submit new FADC application. Myrna assisted and that was submitted on May 1st. Joel goes to Lewiston on June 9th to answer any questions the committee has on the app.
	3. Projects
		1. S-Ranch Meats – new processing plant in Hardin. Submitted a VAPG application for $250K to further marketing and development of product line of fresh meats – produced on their ranch, processed by them, and then marketed.
		2. Oswald Farms – narrowly missed VAPG funding last year and reapplied this year. Did a great job on the application this year. Both S-Ranch and Oswald do direct marketing sales and to restaurants.
		3. Speedy & Flo’s Sweet Corn – Tina Toyne brought to our attention. Put together a small GTA grant to help them buy marketing materials including bags for their produce.
		4. Valley Farmer’s Supply – fertilizer grant. USDA still hasn’t released who will be funded, so we are waiting
		5. Haven’t heard from FEI Fertilizer and Fuel or Undammed Distilling. Undammed is still considering a GTA grant.
		6. Greycliff Mill – work with them off and on when they have questions on funding.
		7. MT Prime Meats – hope to fund them with RMAP loan. Nan and Joel visited and they have a drive-through window at retail location, which is a great idea.
		8. Yellowstone Valley Farms – working on a REAP application.
		9. Primitive Meats – haven’t talked to recently but waiting for an update.
		10. Becky’s Berries – developing a whole new line of products; working with MMEC on developing recipes, etc.
		11. Charter Ranch Vermicast – received a GTA for adding value by adding vermicast (use of worms to create healthy soils), then bag those soils and sell them.
2. **RLF – Nan Knight**
	1. SSBCI funding was approved and will drop in our account tomorrow. That will be closed. Participation with FIB on a café in Roberts. The process went smoothly, good to work with Ryan at FIB.
	2. Very busy lately – a few loans in the works
		1. Burger restaurant hoping to open in Laurel – working on business plan, profits and losses, location.
		2. SBDC referred a client with a food truck in Laurel and hope to help her.
3. **Economic Development / CRDC – Jacy Head**
	1. BSTF – Nan has been helping with that. Received extension, so it needs to be finished by Sept instead of June.
	2. RCDI grants are going well in Big Horn County and Red Lodge.
	3. CRDC Q1 report was complete and Work Plan too. EDA PPG semi-annual report coming this summer.
	4. RCDI reports are not completed due to waiting on some info. Our Red Lodge one will need to have some changes due to too many people charging time to the grant.
	5. Helping Hands Food Bank – things are moving along well. Sampling and analysis have been completed and hope to get the report next week.
	6. Brownfields Assessment grant – hope to have an update next time.
	7. EIG/EDA case study – still do not have EDA’s permission to distribute.
	8. MT Community Foundation – MT Disaster Recovery Grant. BRCD received $15,000 and we took sub-grant applications for $500-$1,000. Myrna has taken lead on this and has a spreadsheet outlining fund disbursement if anyone is interested. We do have some remaining funds to grant out.
	9. DOC-Business Attraction – Jacy has been attending the monthly check-ins with the State. They will be coming down to meet with Nan and Joel next week to tour Stillwater County.
	10. Roman Theater – looking at developing housing in the 2nd story. Working with them and Randy Hafer at HPA.
	11. Yellowstone Horse and Mule – expanding into Red Lodge area (from outside Yellowstone National Park) and we are going to help them with a tourism grant
	12. Worden Senior Group – Myrna worked with them to apply for MDRF funds.
	13. Rocky Fork Inn (Red Lodge) – working with City of Red Lodge and the owners to initiate Brownfields on that property. Need to do a structural assessment and then DEQ may be able to assist with demolition. Red Lodge is also applying for a RRGL grant and we will assist and hopefully help them repurpose this property. This was the house that took the brunt of the flood’s force.
		1. Joel: They are pulling cottonwoods out of the creek in that area and there is a mountain of cottonwoods getting pulled out.
4. **Operations Support – Myrna Lastusky**
	1. FADC App – assisted Joel with this
	2. Lots of reporting
	3. MT Disaster Recovery Fund Grants – We applied for money and received $15,000, which we then are sub-granting to other organizations. We have approved about 12 different organizations to receive money from this grant. Great variety of projects from flood relief to Bone Daddy’s in Red Lodge (roof collapsed from snow) to those who are serving vulnerable populations like elderly, low-income children, veterans, etc. Still have a few thousand dollars in reserve as we await a few applications or in case an applicable project pops up that could really use some help.

**Regional Roundup**

**Danny Choriki, City of Billings:**

* Legislature has had serious impacts on local governments and we’re still trying to figure them all out. Will have a report in June to Council. Some money was put aside for recreational construction around the reservoir, so that’s great.
* City’s budget: Focusing on family violence prevention in focus on crime.
* Housing – housing starts have been down this year, but there’s a lot of work going on in background. Have seen projects underway in downtown area and hope for more soon.

**Holly Higgins, First Interstate Bank:**

* Ag market is looking good – looking at $1400/head calves in fall.
* Empty lot bought to put in a gated storage unit – sounds like it will be very nice. Starting with landscaping.
* KOA opened up in April and have been busy.
* St. Vincent’s is closing its Hardin clinic. With One Health, they feel that’s enough to service the area. Big Horn Hospital is looking into offering a clinic. Majority of employees were offered jobs somewhere else, but some locals will be looking for work.
* Concerned that the Teepee Service/Convenience store in Crow will close. It’s been for sale for a long time.
* Plenty Doors CDC had an open house last week. They moved offices to a new location, and Tipi Creek Coffee opened. Great turnout, delicious food. Plenty Doors will tear down the old building for the incubator, with construction expected to start early 2024.

**Jacob Cote, Red Lodge**

* Just returned from MT Partnership Housing Conference – great few days trying to figure out how to fix the ongoing problem. Some great updates and exciting projects from NeighborWorks and Homeword and others. But the Association of Childcare Facilities and Expenses and how they can relate to housing affordability - discussed some projects including childcare incorporated into housing design and development. Good ideas & hope to learn more about that in the future and how it could work in more rural areas.
	+ Also quite a bit on recent legislative bills – lots of “we’ll see” comments but a lot of excitement at potential solutions to the problem.

**Edie Vogel, Yellowstone Conservation District**

* Edie is the new hire & just came on in April, so just learning the ropes.
* Built a website and will be getting YCD online soon.
	+ Resources, 310 permits, water reservation applications, etc. will all be online
* Local workgroup meeting soon and will bring in community members to drive the program.
* Collaborating with Extension on some Weed District education.
* Nile education will be resumed for 4th graders – another part of Edie’s role.
* Also will be taking over grants and administering those. Lots on Edie’s plate!

**Lorene Hintz, BSED/SBDC**

* 1 new BSTF we were hoping to get in by June but now they aren’t opening it until September.
* Submitted a nomination for Wayne Nelson for Business Champion and had a little celebration at Rock31.
* MEDA Spring Conference is in Billings next week.
* Kayla was just named the Interim Rock31 Director – she isn’t leaving SBDC; just taking on additional responsibilities.

**Kayla Vokral, SBA**

* Kayla: Wrapping up 10-week SBDC/Rock31 Business Accelerator and will have a pitch competition during MEDA (3-5 on Tuesday). Also will have investors in the room so even if they don’t win a prize, they may get some private investment. Will continue to do this annually.
* Just finished Profit Mastery – a 16-hour financial course for small business owners. Hope to do this one or two times per year. Might have another round in fall. Helps businesses understand their financials and deep dive into balance sheets, income statements, etc.
* QuickBooks training starting in June – every Tuesday from 4-6 throughout June. Let clients know that is an opportunity.
* Space2Place grants – gave out about 5. A cool one happening in Worden. Painting a whole trail of things to do.
* Podcast – Joel was on. ☺ Nearing 3,000 downloads and are on all continents except Africa and Antarctica. [www.thevaultat201.com](http://www.thevaultat201.com) Listen on any listening platform, Facebook, etc.
* Will also have a Brownfields update next time.

**Scott Miller, Carbon County**

* Housing – tearing down old trailer house lot that was flooded in Fromberg. Owner is going to put up affordable housing and he’s doing it with their own money. Very exciting.
* RLACF is still working on housing with different avenues.
* CART has 3 vans running seniors around the county. County will hopefully give them some money to keep them going.
* Carbon County Meats is up and running in Bridger. Some drama with septic and blood tanks, but they are going. USDA-approval will come in July.
* We have canals filling with water that we didn’t think would hold water due to last year’s flooding, head gates working, Orchard Canal is up and running . . . lot of money and work has been happening to get water to all these places. Rock Creek – Conservation District helped them and should have water running in a few weeks – they haven’t had water for a couple years, so that’s exciting.
* Just hoping to get through June without a disaster.
* Water is lower than usual, snow pack is down a bit, so hopefully we’ll be okay flood-wise.
* There will be 200,000 cubic yards of rock removed from Rock Creek by Montana DES. FEMA is paying for it. Will take rock to gravel pits.

**Commissioner Melanie Roe, Sweet Grass County**

* Powder-coating place opened in Big Timber.
* Bar and Grill in Reed Point is open.
* Frosty Freeze opened and then had to shut down due to sewer issue.
* Looks like summer will be busy with plenty of concerts, BBQs, events
	+ Fiber Fest is this weekend
* A couple of campgrounds still closed after last year’s flooding
* Town Halls & MACo legislation – still waiting to hear how some of it will impact them
* County, churches, volunteers all working to make sure kids in park get food through the summer
* Also on BLM Solar Cooperatives group meeting as well as the Sage Grouse one and in both we are watching how things trickle down from DC – not sure how those will end up.

Jacy told everyone that EDA just opened up some Disaster-Recovery supplemental funding and will have a meeting next week. If you have projects, let us know.

* Melanie – we have a bridge. Jacy said that would be a good project.
* 12:30-1:30 next Wed in Billings there will be a meeting if you want to come.

Danny: Much better Zoom meeting than last due to our Montana version of The Owl. ☺

Optional Tour of new Stillwater County Fairgrounds following the meeting.

Next Beartooth RC&D Board of Directors Meeting: July 20, 2023 at Beartooth RC&D (12:30 luncheon with meeting to follow)

Scott Miller motioned to adjourn the meeting; Melanie seconded. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 2:08 pm.