



## LOWER PLATTE SOUTH natural resources district

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### MEMORANDUM

Date: July 14, 2023

To: Lower Platte South Natural Resources District Board of Directors

From: Will Inselman, Resources Coordinator *WI*

Subject: Minutes for Recreation, Forestry & Wildlife Subcommittee Meeting

On Thursday, July 13, 2023, at 6:04 p.m., the Recreation, Forestry and Wildlife subcommittee met in the Large Conference Room. Subcommittee members present; Anthony Schutz – Chair, Gary Hellerich, Stacie Sinclair, Christine Lamberty, Don Jacobson, John Yoakum, and Ray Stevens. Other attendees were David Landis, Paul Zillig, Mike Sousek, David Potter, Ariana Kennedy, and Will Inselman.

The first item on the agenda was the amendment to the agreement with Solidago Conservancy to increase the NRD's funding commitment from \$20,000 annually to \$30,000. Solidago has seen an increase in staff time and fixed costs for the organization. The group is currently working on a fund development plan for fundraising to offset these additional costs. This request is in line with the funding commitment from the Lincoln Parks and Recreation Department. Staff provided a letter of request and a progress report submitted by Solidago, detailing their projects completed over the last two years. Staff reported that Solidago has already been a helpful player in acquiring important conservation properties and working on outreach to landowners with whom we would like to acquire additional land or easement for projects. Staff fully supported this request from Solidago Conservancy.

**It was moved by Yoakum and seconded by Sinclair and approved to recommend the Lower Platte South NRD Board of Directors approve an amendment to the agreement between the NRD and Solidago Conservency to change the annual funding commitment from the NRD to Solidago Conservancy from \$20,000 to \$30,000.**

**Motion Passed: 6-1 (Hellerich voting No)**

Second on the agenda was a resolution to pursue the purchase of a conservation easement from Audubon on a new addition to Spring Creek Prairie, the Boman property. After conversations with Audubon, it is requested that the LPSNRD Board of Directors consider passing a resolution that would affirm the NRD's commitment to purchasing a conservation easement on Audubon's Boman property, which Audubon is currently in the process of purchasing. The Boman property is an approximately 310-acre tract of land that borders the northern boundary of Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center. This piece is integral in the development of the Prairie Corridor on Haines Branch Trail. This conservation easement would be purchased by the NRD using funds allocated in the FY2024 budget set aside to assist Audubon in its acquisition of this particular property. The

resolution would give staff the authority to start the conservation easement acquisition process with Audubon. Audubon will bankroll the entire purchase of the property and this resolution will provide an assurance to Audubon that the NRD is committed to providing funds towards this purchase in return for a conservation easement. Both the NRD and the Lincoln Parks and Recreation Department will partner on providing funds for the conservation easement. Staff anticipate the conservation easement will be acquired by December 2023. Solidago Conservancy is in the process of purchasing the property from the current landowner and will then subsequently sell that property to Audubon, who will be the owner and manager of the property.

**It was moved by Stevens and seconded by Yoakum and approved to recommend the Lower Platte South NRD Board of Directors approve Resolution 7-19-2023 authorizing the NRD to partner with the City of Lincoln to work towards purchasing a conservation easement from Audubon on the Boman property as part of the Prairie Corridor on Haines Branch Project.**

**Motion Passed: 6-1 (Hellerich voting No)**

Third on the agenda was a discussion on request from a Lancaster County Commissioner for funding support on the replacement of the SW 91<sup>st</sup> bridge, south of Denton. The Commissioner has requested that the LPSNRD consider contributing \$100,000 towards the replacement of a bridge on SW 91<sup>st</sup>. The SW 91<sup>st</sup> bridge has been on the repair list for the county for many years, but funding has not been available to complete the ~1-million-dollar project. With the recent award of a \$250,000 NDOT grant, the County is now hoping to get this project done. This road is currently only used by the Village of Denton to access the village's water source and the LPSNRD to access our Honvlez and Kapke properties. However, LPSNRD is currently in the process of developing an alternative access off Yankee Hill Rd. NRD staff would support this funding commitment if the bridge can be used in the future as a trail crossing over Spring Creek. NRD and Lincoln Parks and Recreation staff had highlighted this bridge and portion of SW 91<sup>st</sup> as part of the trail corridor many years ago. Partners on the project would be LPSNRD, City of Lincoln (Parks & Recreation), Village of Denton, NDOT, and Lancaster County. Staff indicated that they would be meeting with Lincoln Parks and Recreation Department to get on the same page for partnering on funds for this project. Staff indicated that there would need to be assurances from the County to allow us use of the bridge and road for our trail. Staff will report back to the subcommittee when a formal plan is ready for review.

**It was moved by Stevens and seconded by Yoakum and unanimously approved to recommend staff continue discussions with Lancaster County Engineering Department and Lincoln Parks and Recreation Department on a plan to contribute funds towards the replacement of the SW 91<sup>st</sup> Street bridge.**

**Motion Passed:7-0**

Fourth on the agenda was a request for a crossing on Oak Creek Trail. In May, staff received a letter from landowner Marvin Potter in Saunders County requesting the development of an agricultural crossing across the Oak Creek Trail to access his property. The current landowner inherited this parcel from his parents and due to how the properties were split up, cannot get access to part of his property from his neighbor (his brother). Currently the trail splits the landowner's property into a north and south parcel. The landowner would like an agricultural crossing to allow a new tenant to farm both sides of the trail. The landowner does not currently have a way to access the ~4 acre parcel of his property. Staff provided a report on the pros and cons of having a crossing in this location, and remained neutral on the matter. Mr. Potter was present and fielded questions from the Directors. Staff will begin working on a draft temporary easement to bring back to the subcommittee for action.

It was moved by Hellerich and seconded by Stevens and unanimously approved to recommend staff work on drafting a temporary easement that would allow the construction, use, and maintenance of an agricultural crossing across Oak Creek Trail that was requested by landowner Marvin Potter.

Motion Passed: 7-0

Fifth on the agenda was consideration of conducting a conservation easement appraisal on a property with the Prairie Corridor on Haines Branch Project area. Staff have been in discussion with a landowner south of Denton within the Prairie Corridor on Haines Branch Project. The landowner, Terry Clement, had approached the NRD in the past about conservation easements but had not followed through. The Clements family would like to revisit discussions on a conservation easement on his 160-acre property or pursue a conservation easement for a trail on the far east side of his property. Staff would like approval to proceed with an appraisal to take the next steps with the landowner. Staff would be updating an appraisal that was completed in 2016. This parcel is a critical piece of the Prairie Corridor on Haines Branch Project and borders the Samani conservation easement to the north. If staff were able to acquire this property, there would be only one more property left to complete a corridor from Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center to the Village of Denton. The Directors encouraged staff to take these next steps and continue discussions with the landowner. Staff will work on scheduling an appraisal and will report back to the subcommittee once there are actionable items on this matter.

Last on the agenda were staff updates. Reports/updates: Mopac East Connector update was provided by staff.

Meeting adjourned at 7:12 p.m.

PC: RF&W subcommittee file