




LOWER PLATTE SOUTH natural resources district

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Memorandum

Date: April 14, 2022
To: Each Director
From: Paul D. Zillig, General Manager 
Subject: Executive Subcommittee Meeting Minutes

The Executive Subcommittee met at 5:30 pm on Wednesday, April 13, 2022 in the NRD Conference Room. Directors participating were Deborah Eagan, David Landis, Chelsea Johnson, Bob Andersen, Larry Ruth, and Luke Peterson. Others participating included Kristin Buntemeyer and myself.

Chair Eagan called the meeting to order, welcomed those participating and reported that she talked to a few Directors to draft some ideas on Director ethics or a code of conduct. Eagan handed out some ideas and asked the Subcommittee members to please review and the Subcommittee can discuss it next meeting.

The next item on the agenda was to answer any questions on the FY 22 Accomplishments that were emailed out. There were no questions but Ruth commented that we need to continue to keep current on our review of District activities and how it relates to climate change.

I then reviewed with the Subcommittee our current staffing (see attached Organizational Chart). I reported that we've had several retirements and openings on our staff this year. Replacing these experienced employees is challenging but I feel good about our new employees. I reported on the staff changes and we now need to hire a new District Engineer. Considering that the Deadmans Run Project is nearing a critical phase of plan review I will likely obtain private sector assistance until our new District Engineer is hired and able to assist.

I also reported on the need and opportunity to provide additional assistance to communities and well owners in protecting their drinking water. I reported that the NRD has been assisting Waverly with their Source Water Assessment and Drinking Water Management Plan. Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy has offered to consider providing Section 319 funding for a 5 year term to provide 60% cost-share assistance for the position. I reported that drinking water protection is a priority of many Directors and adding a staff person for this purpose is needed. The Subcommittee discussed their support for this position and that receiving Section 319 financial support for 5 years would be appreciated but not required for approval.

It was moved by Landis, seconded by Andersen, and unanimously approved by the Subcommittee to **recommend the Board of Directors authorize the General Manager hire a Drinking Water Protection Specialist in FY 2023 and apply for Section 319 assistance.**

The next item on the agenda was to discuss salary adjustments for Fiscal Year 2023. I reported that the Board annually considers adjustments this time of year and we typically approve an adjustment for all of staff (i.e. cost of living), several years the Board included some additional across-the-board increases (i.e. in 2022 the cost of living was 1.7% and an additional 0.3% was added), and typically approves approximately \$20,000 for merit raises to be determined by the General Manager. The past 5 years the “cost of living” adjustment has been based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and it has been typically around 2%.

I stressed the need to retain our employees and that between the pandemic, low unemployment, and inflation employee salaries are increasing along with the cost of almost everything else. I shared my concern we will lose employees if we don’t compensate them fairly, and I don’t want to lose more employees.

I then reviewed the CPI report for March 2022 (attached). I reported that about this time last year the CPI began a steady climb and inflation has been occurring for the past year. The CPI for the past 12 months was 8.0% as of February and for March is at 8.6%. I reported that the CPI takes into account food, energy, shelter, medical care, vehicles, household, etc., all these have increased for everyone. I’ve continued to look for more accurate methods to utilize for staff salary adjustments but have not identified any. The bottom line is that the cost of goods and services are going up for all of us individually and for all taxpayers/agencies/businesses. I reported that I didn’t know what the solution was, but we need to increase wages.

I reported that my recommendation was to continue to use the CPI and “recommend the Board of Directors approve for FY 2023 an across-the-board increase of 8.6% for all salaried and part time employees, and an additional \$22,000 for merit and adjustments for changes in duties.” This motion was put on the floor for discussion by Andersen and seconded by C. Johnson. Discussion ensued.

The Subcommittee discussed the need to retain employees, they discussed factors such as the low unemployment rate, how would they adjust salaries when the CPI falls, how gas prices fluctuate, and discussed a number of ways to make the adjustments over a longer period of time.

The Subcommittee realized that some additional information and discussion will be required, Andersen offered to withdraw the motion, and C. Johnson agreed. The Subcommittee agreed that additional information is needed and directed me to report back next month, in the mean time the Subcommittee will listen to additional information.

The final item on the agenda was to consider appointing a second representative on the Nebraska Land Trust Board of Directors (see attached information on the Nebraska Land Trust). I reported that Dan Schulz had served as the LPSNRD representative for the past 6 years along with myself as the alternate. The Subcommittee discussed the District's representation, who would be interested and willing to serve, and who would be able to assist the Trust in these challenging times. It was moved by Landis, seconded by C. Johnson and unanimously approved by the Subcommittee to **recommend the Board of Directors appoint Larry Ruth to serve as the Lower Platte South NRD's representative on the Nebraska Land Trust's Board of Directors.**

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 7:15 pm.

PDZ/pz

pc: Steve Seglin
Corey Wasserburger