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Five Rivers RC&D Council Meeting Minutes – May 19th, 2011

President Alan Richard called the regular meeting of the Five Rivers Resource Conservation & Development Council to order at 9:37 a.m. at the Five Rivers RC&D office location.

Members Present: Lower Big Blue NRD –Bob Lorenz
Johnson County – Tom Hamer
Gage County – Myron Dorn
Richardson County- Jim Davidson
Nemaha NRD– Scott Kudrna
At-Large – Jessica Jones
Nemaha County – Mary Kruger
Pawnee County – Alan Richard
Johnson County Alternate – Howard McNiff
Otoe County - Alfred Gigstad
Jefferson County - Jim Frager
At-Large – Paul Rohrbaugh

Members Absent: Saline County – Willis Luedke; At-Large – Wilmer Schlake; At-Large – Dale Haverty

Staff and Volunteers: Bobbie Meints, Program Support Assistant

Introductions: Introductions of each council member and staff as well as special guest, Seth Bingham, member of the Peru Community Development Committee, were given.

Presentation: Seth Bingham of Peru State College and committee member of the Peru Community Development group presented the council with information pertaining to a plan regarding the enhancements of the Steamboat Trace Trail located in and near Peru, Nebraska. Seth shared a power point presentation outlining the plans for the enhancements and explained that in addition to raising money, the group will be applying for funds through the NRD and the Nemaha County Lodging Tax Committee. Seth also explained that the community of Brownville will be included in future planning of the trail. On behalf of the Peru Community Development Committee, Seth requested to collaborate with Five Rivers RC&D on this project, seeking sponsorship from the organization's 501(c) 3 tax exempt status to pursue grants and other funding options. Kudrna made the motion to collaborate with the group and open the Steamboat Trace Trail Project. Frager seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Minutes: A motion was made by Hamer and seconded by Kudrna to approve the April 14th, 2011 minutes as previously mailed. Motion carried.

Bills and Financial Report: Kudrna made the motion to accept the financial report as presented and to pay the bills as listed. Davidson seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Correspondence: Meints informed the council that thank you notes to the Sheridan Training Facility and Ambassador Health Systems will be sent on behalf of the council in appreciation for use of the facilities during QuickBooks Training Sessions.

Staff Report: Meints gave an update on current and upcoming projects. Mary Kruger updated the council and encouraged all elected officials to attend the Community Leaders and Elected Officials training to be held on June 7th during the Southeast Resource Network meeting. Rohrbaugh updated the council on the 21st Century Grazing Conference to be held May 26th and 27th 2011 in Tecumseh, NE.

Update of Volunteer Hours: A volunteer hours reporting form was distributed.

Richard asked for the council's opinion on the new *Five Rivers RC&D Connections* Newsletter, which includes staff and project updates, and if the council would like to continue distributing the newsletter on a monthly basis. Kudrna suggested emailing copies to those who have email addresses to save on postage. President Richard requested that Bobbie check with the United States Postal Service on bulk rates. Kudrna also suggested setting up a Facebook account for the council to utilize free advertising for projects. Meints informed the council that a Facebook account has been set up for the council and encouraged all members and friends of the RC&D to visit the page and "like" Five Rivers RC&D in order to receive regular updates of events.

Unfinished Business:
RC&D Contingency Plan:

Discussion: President Richard reported that in a conversation with John Dageford, a representative of Windstream Communications, the lease on the property was not due to expire until July of 2012. The lease is paid for until July 21st, 2011. According to Dageford, if the council continues to pay rent on the property, there is no need to vacate the building. President Richard reported that the rent on the property is currently set at approximately \$500.00 per month, which includes utilities. President Richard also reported that the old NRCS building along HWY 50, now owned by Topps is a rental option. The rent is approximately \$500 a month and includes all utilities with the exception of propane. Richard also stated that he attended the last NRD board meeting to ask for permission to utilize the NRD basement for storage and/or office space if necessary. Scott Kudrna, Nemaha NRD Representative, informed the council that the board voted in favor of allowing Five Rivers RC&D to use the space as needed. If the arrangement is temporary, there is no rental fee. However, if the arrangement is permanent, Five Rivers RC&D and the NRD board would need to schedule a meeting to discuss finishing the basement and the agreed upon rental fee. Kudrna recommended preparing a proposal to the NRD for discussion. President Richard suggested tabling the discussion any further until additional details regarding the rental of the current facility are received, which would also give the council time to work with the NRD on a rental arrangement if the council decides on this option. Myron Dorn, Gage County Representative, also noted that the discussion should be tabled until the council has the necessary information to make an informed decision.

President Richard also informed the council that equipment and furniture that is not dispersed between field offices and other government agencies will be placed into government surplus and available for eligible non-profit organizations. Bobbie Meints is preparing the application required to become eligible to purchase any excess equipment.

Also discussed was the need for general liability insurance, especially since the council is no longer covered under the Earth Team Volunteer umbrella through NRCS. President Richard requested permission from the council to allow the executive committee to search and find the best policy at the best possible rate and purchase general liability insurance for the council. Frager made the motion to allow the executive committee to purchase general liability insurance and Rohrbaugh seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Develop Project Committees: The council did not develop project committees at this time, however President Richard designated Scott Kudrna, Tom Hamer, Mary Kruger, Howard McNiff, Paul Rohrbaugh, Bobbie Meints, and himself to a project committee responsible for determining which projects to continue or discontinue, project fees, and discussion of the council's plan of work.

Create Letter to Craig Derickson for NRCS Support: Hamer suggested formulating a letter to Craig Derickson.

Proposed Changes to By-laws: A motion was made by Kudrna and seconded by Frager to change Bobbie's title from Program Support Assistant to Executive Director, and therefore make the needed adjustments in Article VI, Section D, 5. Staff, to reflect this decision. Motion passed. A motion was made by Kudrna to adopt the By-law proposals. Motion seconded by Davidson. Motion carried.

New Business:

Close-Out Instruction/Discussion: President Richard informed the council that once he is given specific details of the close out instruction, that he will share it with the rest of the council.

5Rivers RC&D Council Vehicle/Mileage Reimbursement-Ratify Council Decision: President Richard informed the council that due to the high bidding on the federal van, the council did not attempt to place a bid on the vehicle. Davidson stated that he may have another option available for the council and that he would check into this option.

Plan of Work: As noted previously in the RC&D Contingency Plan Discussion, President Richard appointed a Plan of Work Committee to consist of Kudrna, Hamer, Kruger, McNiff, Rohrbaugh, Meints, and himself. The committee is to determine if the current plan of work applies to the future of Five Rivers RC&D and to make the necessary changes by eliminating, adding, or continuing on with current projects.

Change of Bobbie's Title: As discussed during the By-law proposals, Kudrna made the motion to change Bobbie's title from Program Support Assistant to Executive Director. Frager seconded the motion. Motion passed.

RC&D Budget/Finances:

Modification of Restricted Funds: President Richard asked the council to discuss the possibility of utilizing funds from Business Training to pay for all business related fees. Additionally, the council discussed using designated funds to pay for expenses incurred on specific projects while placing income earned into the general Five Rivers RC&D account. It was also noted that Bobbie is to charge each project for the time she works on each individual project rather than removing the expense from the general account.

Grant possibilities: President Richard encouraged all council members to share any grant opportunities at the next council meetings. Meints shared possible grant ideas with the council and stated that she would continue to search for other possibilities.

Membership Dues: President Richard informed the council that with the end of the fiscal year quickly approaching, it was time to send out membership due notices. Kudrna reported that he believes that the best possible solution to creating a sustainable council is to increase the membership due amount by requiring counties to pay per capita. Kudrna suggested \$.35 per capita, which would raise approximately \$20,000-\$30,000, allowing the council to continue to pay staff and complete projects. Kudrna also reported that in order to meet this goal, the two largest counties in the Five Rivers area, Gage and Otoe, would have to agree to the suggested per capita rate. Kudrna also suggested increasing the NRD donation amount to \$2,000.

21st Century Grazing Conference: Meints reported that the 21st Century Grazing Conference featuring Greg Judy is scheduled to take place on May 26th and 27th at the Johnson County 4-H building in Tecumseh. Meints also reported that there were over forty participants signed up for the conference with interested parties continuing to call the office for more details. Rohrbaugh invited all interested council members to attend the conference free of charge.

Telephone/Answering Machine-Meints: Meints informed the council that due to the loss of federal funding, NRCS would be removing the current phone system; therefore the council was in need of a new telephone/answering machine device. The council gave Meints permission to purchase a new phone system.

Projects to close:

Projects to open: 11-304 Steamboat Trace Trail

Other Business:

Next Meeting: The next meeting of the RC&D Council will be held at the Five Rivers office location in Tecumseh, NE at 9:30 a.m. on June 16th, 2011.

Meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m.



Al Gigstad, Secretary