

LOWER BIG BLUE NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT
BOARD MEETING
September 18, 2025
Immediately following budget and levy hearings

Notice of the meeting was published in accordance with Section 84-1411, Nebraska Statutes, in the Beatrice Daily Sun and the Wilber Republican. Notice was also sent to Radio Station KWBE, Crete News, and Fairbury Journal-News. In accordance with the Nebraska Open Meetings Act, the Open Meetings Act is posted on the north wall of the meeting room for public viewing.

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Duane Parde at 9:02 a.m.

Directors Present: Larry Barta, Ryan Birkett, Brent Katz, Steve Kelley, Bob Lorenz, Duane Parde, Jason Pohlmann, Dean Roehr, Rodney Skleba, Doug Stokebrand, Chad Weichel.

Directors Absent: Jason Sand, Bruce Weise

Staff Present: Scott Sobotka, Manager; Tyler Weishahn, Assistant Manager; Adam Kimmerling, Office Administrator; Nick Schroeder, GIS/IT/Data Specialist; Ryan Thomas, Resources Specialist; Brandy Scholl, Gage County NRD Secretary/Programs Assistant.

Others Present: Josh Malchow, Gage County NRCS.

CONSIDERATION OF EXCUSED ABSENCES

Bruce Weise and Jason Sand have asked to be excused from the September 18th, 2025 Board meeting.

MOTION #1 was made by Brent Katz, seconded by Larry Barta, to excuse Bruce Weise and Jason Sand from the September 18th Board meeting. Motion carried.

YEA: Barta, Birkett, Katz, Kelley, Lorenz, Parde, Pohlmann, Skleba, Stokebrand, Weichel. **NAY:** None **ABSTAIN:** None. **NOT PRESENT:** Roehr

APPROVAL OF SEPTEMBER 18, 2025, CONSENT AGENDA

MOTION #2 was made by Doug Stokebrand, seconded by Steve Kelley, to adopt the Consent Agenda for the September 18, 2025 Board meeting, which includes: adoption of the agenda as submitted, approval of the August 28th, 2025 meeting minutes, financial status report dated August 31, 2025, August 2025 revenues, and expenditures; Beatrice West and Wymore Rural Water financials. Motion carried.

YEA: Barta, Birkett, Katz, Kelley, Lorenz, Parde, Pohlmann, Skleba, Stokebrand, Weichel. **NAY:** None **ABSTAIN:** None. **NOT PRESENT:** Roehr

OPEN PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

Dean Roehr arrived at 9:06 A.M.

WATER COMMITTEE REPORT

Chad reviewed the Water Committee minutes from September 16, 2025. The committee discussed comments from the Nebraska Department of Water, Energy and Environment. They recommended setting a public hearing on October 30, 2025, at 7:00 p.m. at the 4H Building on the Gage County Fairgrounds to hear public comment on the rules as proposed.

The committee also reviewed a replacement well permit and a variance application.

Ryan discussed participation in several programs including the Nitrogen Reduction Incentive Act and the partnership with The Nature Conservancy.

MOTION #3 was made by Jason Pohlmann, seconded by Steve Kelley to hold a public hearing for comments on the proposed Rules and Regulations as presented on October 30th, 2025 at 7 P.M. at the 4-H building on the Gage County Fairgrounds. Motion Carried.

YEA: Barta, Birkett, Kelley, Lorenz, Parde, Pohlmann, Roehr Skleba, Weichel. **NAY:** Katz, Stokebrand. **ABSTAIN:** None.

WELL PERMITS, IRRIGATION AGREEMENTS

Tyler presented a replacement well permit located in Section 5, Township 2 North, Range 5 East, Gage County the permit was approved by staff earlier this month, as is allowed during the growing season.

MOTION #4 was made by Chad Weichel, seconded by Doug Stokebrand to approve the replacement well permit located in Section 5, Township 2 North, Range 5 East, Gage County. Motion Carried.

YEA: Barta, Birkett, Katz, Kelley, Lorenz, Parde, Pohlmann, Roehr Skleba, Stokebrand, Weichel. **NAY:** None. **ABSTAIN:** None.

Tyler also presented A variance application requesting to increase irrigated acres located in Section 31, Township 4 North, Range 2 East, Jefferson County. This is essentially the same variance applied for and denied last year but under different ownership. NRD rules and regulations grant the Board sixty (60) days to approve or deny variance applications.

FY 2025 BUDGET APPROVAL

Scott summarized the Budget Hearing that was held prior to the NRD Board meeting. Scott presented an updated budget. The FY 2026 budget calls for expenditures of \$7,510,759 as compared to FY 2025 of \$3,985,286. The FY 2026 expenditures include \$250,000 for the Little Indian Watershed Flood Prevention Project, \$152,000 for the buffer strip program, \$130,000 for NRD land treatment and flowmeter cost-share, \$55,575 for Water Quality Programs and Nitrogen Reduction Program, \$50,000 for NRD Small Dams-Urban Recreation Program, \$100,000 for flood control maintenance work, \$25,000 for P.L. 566 emergency watershed maintenance work, \$62,000 for recreation and Wildlife management area Operation and Maintenance, \$296,666 for Water Sustainability Airborne Electromagnetic Surveys, \$500,000 for Clatonia Creek 3A renovations, \$50,000 for the Nine County Hazard Mitigation Plan Update, and \$11,190 for the Blue Basin Groundwater Model – Interactive Producer Portal and Turkey Creek Stream Gauge. The district has \$4,039,210 budgeted for construction of an office, shop and storage shed and \$96,811 for the Urban Conservation Assistance Program. Separate expenditures include \$73,200 for the Beatrice West Public Water Project and \$377,215 for the Wymore Rural Water Project.

Scott reviewed the county valuations for FY 2026 and provided a summary of the current sinking fund amounts and expected additions to those funds in FY 2026.

MOTION #5 was made by Ryan Birkett, seconded by Dean Roehr, to approve the FY 2026 Lower Big Blue NRD Budget as presented, with total Expenditures of \$7,510,759.00 and Revenues of \$4,897,679.

YEA: Barta, Birkett, Kelley, Lorenz, Parde, Pohlmann, Roehr Skleba, Stokebrand, Weichel. **NAY:** Katz. **ABSTAIN:** None.

FY 2025 LEVY AND TAX REQUEST APPROVAL

Scott summarized the Levy and Tax Request Hearing that was held prior to the NRD Board meeting. Revenues from all sources for FY 2026 are expected to be \$4,897,679 as compared to FY 2025 Revenues of \$3,690,176. The District begins FY 2026 with \$80,206 cash on hand and \$545,783 in Nebraska Public Agency Investment Trust. In FY 2026 we expect \$472,695 from state funds (FY2025 \$489,849), including \$220,000 from the Water Sustainability fund for Airborne Electromagnetic Surveys and Little Indian Flood Prevention Project, \$35,117 from the Water Quality Fund and \$154,753 for buffer strips. FY 2026 Federal funds are estimated to be \$575,100 (FY2025 \$298,907) with \$300,000 in 319 funds for the Clatonia Creek 3A Renovation Project, \$200,000 for the Little Indian Watershed Flood Prevention Project and \$50,000 for the Nine County Hazard Mitigation Plan Update. Property rent will be \$23,392, customer charges for camping, tree planting, tree protectors and flags is \$39,100; Miscellaneous Revenues, \$998,885 that includes a \$900,000 building construction loan; and \$2,758,013 from property taxes. The District has \$279,036 in a P.L. 566 dam operation and maintenance and emergency watershed repair sinking fund, and \$2,228,342 in a building construction sinking fund. Separate revenues include \$39,710 for the Beatrice West Public Water Project and \$220,600 for the Wymore Rural Water Project.

MOTION #6 was made by Steve Kelley, seconded by Dean Roehr, that a resolution be adopted for the Lower Big Blue NRD Fiscal Year 2026 Tax Requirement of \$2,758,013.26 and a Fiscal Year 2026 Tax Levy of \$0.032155/\$100 valuation, and that said resolution is submitted to the County Clerks on or before October 15, 2025.

YEA: Barta, Birkett, Kelley, Lorenz, Parde, Pohlmann, Roehr, Sand, Skleba, Stokebrand, Weichel. **NAY:** Katz
ABSTAIN: None.

LITTLE INDIAN WFPO AND NEW WFPO APPLICATIONS

Scott Reported that he and Tyler met with staff from Senator Deb Fischer's office to discuss a Congressionally Directed Spending allotment. Tyler has also reached out to the offices of Senator Pete Ricketts and Congressman Adrian Smith.

Tyler also discussed possible funding through Google's Water Efficiency and Quality Infrastructure Project Fund.

Staff plans to send a letter to all landowners involved updating them on the status of the project.

NRD ACTIVITIES

Scott reported that Cub Creek is currently on Health Alert for Microcystin, the toxin emitted from blue-green algae.

The Trailblazer/Tallgrass pipeline is crossing 13 critical infrastructure easements. Staff will continue to work with the company to make sure crossings are handled appropriately.

Scott stated that he has been contacted by Koch Fertilizer about possible partnership on water quality initiatives. Koch has previously sponsored part of the cost to maintain the Turkey Creek stream gauge near DeWitt.

Staff is working to have a representative from the Governor's Water Quality Task Force at the Blue Basin meeting in Kearney.

Tyler stated that he is working with the engineers of the Homestead Trail from Riverside Park to the Heritage Center at Homestead National Historical Park as its construction will cross parts of the Beatrice West Water Project.

CONSIDERATION SWAN 31 MITIGATION PROJECT

Scott told the Board that he has been working with the landowner to increase the elevation of the low opening of the home. Staff have met with two contractors to bid tearing out and repouring the slab at a higher elevation. Those bids will be reviewed when received and presented at the October meeting.

BUILDING COMMITTEE REPORT

Dean reported that crews are working to add material to the shop floor in preparation to pour the slab. Drains are installed in the shop building and the erection crew is working to complete exterior sheeting of the office building. The next building committee meeting will be September 24, 2025. Pay app # 7 which includes costs for the pre engineered metal building system was reviewed.

AGENCY REPORTS

NRCS

Josh Malchow reported that NRCS staff are working on CSP certifications. A report was also distributed to the Directors.

EXTENSION OFFICE

No Report

NRC

Steve reported that the next meeting will be September 30th during the NARD conference.

NARD

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UPCOMING MEETINGS

- a. September 29th – 30th - NARD Annual Conference
- b. October 8th - Southeast Regional Land Judging Contest – LBBNRD
- c. October 9th - Board Meeting 7:00 p.m.
- d. October 13th - Office Closed - Columbus Day
- e. October 30th - Groundwater Rules and Regulations Public Hearing 7:00

Being no further business, Chairperson Duane Parde adjourned the meeting at 9:56 a.m.

Secretary, Jason Sand

I, the undersigned, Secretary of the Lower Big Blue Natural Resources District, hereby certify that these are true and correct minutes of the meeting of the Board of Directors of the District held September 18, 2025, that all of the subjects discussed at the meeting were contained in the agenda for the meeting, kept continually current and readily available for public inspection at the principal office of the District during normal business hours, and except for items of an emergency nature, the agenda was not altered later than twenty-four (24) hours before the scheduled commencement of the meeting; that at least one copy of all reproducible material discussed at the meeting was available at the meeting for examination and copying by members of the public; that the minutes were in written form and available for public inspection within ten working days and prior to the next convened meeting for said body; and that all news media requesting notification of the meeting of said body were provided advance notification of the time and place of said meeting and the subjects to be discussed at said meeting.

:amk

LOWER BIG BLUE NRD 2025-2026 BUDGET HEARING

Chairperson Duane Parde opened the Public Hearing at 8:30 A.M. and stated that the purpose of the hearing was to hear support, opposition, criticism, suggestions or observations of taxpayers relating to the Lower Big Blue NRD's budget for FY 2025-2026. Chairperson Parde appointed Scott Sobotka, Manager of the District, to be the District Hearing Officer to explain the proposed budget. Scott entered into the record of the hearing that public notices appeared once in the Beatrice Daily Sun on September 11th, Crete News on September 10th, Fairbury Journal News on September 10th and Pawnee Republican on September 11th, 2025. In accordance with the Nebraska Open Meetings Act, the Open Meetings Act is posted on the north wall of the meeting room for public viewing.

Directors Present: Larry Barta, Ryan Birkett, Brent Katz, Steve Kelley, Bob Lorenz, Duane Parde, Jason Pohlmann, Rodney Skleba, Doug Stokebrand, Chad Weichel.

Staff Present: Scott Sobotka, Manager; Tyler Weishahn, Assistant Manager; Adam Kimmerling, Office Administrator; Nick Schroeder, GIS/IT/Data Specialist; Ryan Thomas, Resources Specialist; Brandy Scholl, Gage County NRD Secretary/Programs Assistant.

The FY 2026 budget calls for expenditures of \$7,510,759 as compared to FY 2025 of \$3,985,286. The FY 2026 expenditures include \$250,000 for the Little Indian Watershed Flood Prevention Project, \$152,000 for the buffer strip program, \$130,000 for NRD land treatment and flowmeter cost-share, \$55,575 for Water Quality Programs and Nitrogen Reduction Program, \$50,000 for NRD Small Dams-Urban Recreation Program, \$100,000 for flood control maintenance work, \$25,000 for P.L. 566 emergency watershed maintenance work, \$62,000 for recreation and Wildlife Management Area Operation and Maintenance, \$296,666 for Water Sustainability Airborne Electromagnetic Surveys, \$500,000 for Clatonia Creek 3A renovations, \$50,000 for the Nine County Hazard Mitigation Plan Update, and \$11,190 for the Blue Basin Groundwater Model – Interactive Producer Portal and Turkey Creek Stream Gauge. The District has \$4,039,210 budgeted for construction of an office, shop and storage shed and \$96,811 for the Urban Conservation Assistance Program. Separate expenditures include \$73,200 for the Beatrice West Public Water Project and \$377,215 for the Wymore Rural Water Project.

Chairperson Parde asked for comments from the public. No members of the public wished to speak.

Following no public comments, the hearing was closed at 8:45 a.m.

This record shall be attached as part of the September 18, 2025, regular meeting minutes of the Lower Big Blue NRD.

LOWER BIG BLUE NRD 2025-2026 PROPERTY TAX REQUEST HEARING

Chairperson Duane Parde opened the Public Hearing at 8:30 A.M. and stated that the purpose of the hearing was to hear support, opposition, criticism, suggestions or observations of taxpayers relating to the Lower Big Blue NRD's budget for FY 2025-2026. Chairperson Parde appointed Scott Sobotka, Manager of the District, to be the District Hearing Officer to explain the proposed tax request and levy. Scott entered into the record of the hearing that public notices appeared once in the Beatrice Daily Sun on September 11th, Crete News on September 10th, Fairbury Journal News on September 10th and Pawnee Republican on September 11th, 2025. In accordance with the Nebraska Open Meetings Act, the Open Meetings Act is posted on the north wall of the meeting room for public viewing.

Directors Present: Larry Barta, Ryan Birkett, Brent Katz, Steve Kelley, Bob Lorenz, Duane Parde, Jason Pohlmann, Rodney Skleba, Doug Stokebrand, Chad Weichel.

Staff Present: Scott Sobotka, Manager; Tyler Weishahn, Assistant Manager; Adam Kimmerling, Office Administrator; Nick Schroeder, GIS/IT/Data Specialist; Ryan Thomas, Resources Specialist; Brandy Scholl, Gage County NRD Secretary/Programs Assistant.

Scott reviewed the valuations and revenues from all sources. Revenues from all sources for FY 2026 are expected to be \$4,897,679 as compared to FY 2025 Revenues of \$3,690,176. The District begins FY 2026 with \$80,206 cash on hand and \$545,783 in Nebraska Public Agency Investment Trust. In FY 2026 we expect \$472,695 from state funds (FY2025 \$489,849), including \$220,000 from the Water Sustainability fund for Airborne Electromagnetic Surveys and Little Indian Flood Prevention Project, \$35,117 from the Water Quality Fund and \$154,753 for buffer strips. FY 2026 Federal funds are estimated to be \$575,100 (FY2025 \$298,907) with \$300,000 in 319 funds for the Clatonia Creek 3A Renovation Project, \$200,000 for the Little Indian Watershed Flood Prevention Project and \$50,000 for the Nine County Hazard Mitigation Plan Update. Property rent will be \$23,392, customer charges for camping, tree planting, tree protectors and flags is \$39,100; Miscellaneous Revenues, \$998,885 that includes a \$900,000 building construction loan; and \$2,758,013 from property taxes. The District has \$279,036 in a P.L. 566 dam operation and maintenance and emergency watershed repair sinking fund, and \$2,228,342 in a building construction sinking fund. Separate revenues include \$39,710 for the Beatrice West Public Water Project and \$220,600 for the Wymore Rural Water Project.

Valuations of the NRD for FY 2026, as provided by the County Assessors, are as follows:

	<u>Valuations</u>		<u>% of Change</u>	<u>Tax Requirements and Percentages</u>	
	<u>2025</u>	<u>2024</u>			
Gage	\$4,327,898,636	\$3,703,880,963	16.85%	\$1,425,892.86	51.7%
Saline	\$2,811,489,983	\$2,558,523,479	9.89%	\$ 973,578.68	35.3%
Jefferson	\$1,204,437,589	\$1,051,489,788	14.55%	\$ 297865.43	10.8%
Pawnee	\$ 233,344,306	\$ 211,063,224	10.56%	\$ 60,676.29	2.2%
TOTALS	\$8,577,170,514	\$7,524,957,454	13.98%	\$2,758,013.26	100%

2025 Growth Value – \$69,786,464 = 6.63% Value Attributed to Growth : (Total Change: \$1,052,213,060)

Pawnee - \$ 739,900 (3.32%)

Gage - \$20,138,726 (3.23%)

Jefferson - \$17,904,975 (11.71%)

Saline - \$31,002,863 (12.26%)

The Tax Requirement for FY 2026 is \$2,758,013.26. Last year's was \$2,758,013.26.

The NRD levy for FY 2026 is \$0.032155/\$100 Valuation. Last year's was \$0.036652/\$100 Valuation.

Chairperson Parde asked for comments from the public. No members of the public wished to speak.

Following no public comments, the hearing was closed at 9:01 a.m.

This record shall be attached as part of the September 18, 2025, regular meeting minutes of the Lower Big Blue NRD.