

LOWER BIG BLUE NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT  
BOARD MEETING  
January 08, 2026  
1:30 P.M.

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 1:30 P.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, Bruce Weise.

Staff Present: Scott Sobotka, Manager; Tyler Weishahn, Assistant Manager; Adam Kimmerling, Office Administrator; Scott Theis, Operations Supervisor; Ryan Thomas, Resources Specialist; Brandy Scholl, Gage County NRD Secretary and Programs Assistant; Jarrett Koch, Operations Assistant.

Directors Absent: Jason Sand

Others Present: Don Whitten, Tallgrass Energy; Kennon Meyer, BWJ Law Group.

CONSIDERATION OF EXCUSED ABSENCES

Jason Sand has asked to be excused from the January 8<sup>th</sup> meeting.

MOTION #1 was made by Doug Stokebrand, seconded by Larry Barta, to excuse Jason Sand from the January 8, 2026 board meeting.

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

APPROVAL OF JANUARY 8, 2026 CONSENT AGENDA

MOTION #2 was made by Steve Kelley, seconded by Chad Weichel, to adopt the Consent Agenda for the January 8, 2026, board meeting which includes: adoption of the agenda as submitted, approval of the December 11, 2025, meeting minutes, financial status report dated December 31, 2025, December 2025 bills payable, December 2025 revenues, monthly bank account summary and Beatrice West and Wymore Rural Water Financials. Motion carried.

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

OPEN PUBLIC COMMENTS

Steve informed the board that he is no longer doing contract work with Olsson.

## ELECTION OF OFFICERS FOR 2026

Election of officers is conducted by roll call vote for single nominees and secret ballot if multiple nominations are received.

### CHAIRPERSON

Nominations were taken from the floor. Chad Weichel was nominated for office of Chairperson. No other nominations were received. Weichel received eleven votes and will serve as Chairperson.

Newly elected chairperson Chad Weichel assumed the responsibilities of the Chairperson for the remainder of the meeting.

### VICE-CHAIRPERSON

Nominations were taken from the floor. Doug Stokebrand was nominated for the office of Vice-Chairperson. No other nominations were received. Stokebrand received eleven votes and will serve as Vice-Chairperson.

### SECRETARY

Nominations were taken from the floor. Jason Sand was nominated for the office of Secretary. No other nominations were received. Sand received twelve votes and will serve as Secretary.

### TREASURER

Nominations were taken from the floor. Dean Roehr was nominated for the office of Treasurer. No other nominations were received. Roehr received eleven votes and will serve as Treasurer.

### NARD REPRESENTATIVE

Nominations were taken from the floor. Steve Kelley was nominated for the office of NARD Representative. No other nominations were received. Kelley received eleven votes and will serve as NARD Representative.

### ALTERNATE NARD REPRESENTATIVE

Nominations were taken from the floor. Bruce Weise was nominated for the office of Alternate NARD Representative. No other nominations were received. Weise received eleven votes and will serve as alternate NARD representative.

### LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE VOTING DELEGATE AND ALTERNATE

Nominations were taken from the floor. Doug Stokebrand was nominated for legislative conference voting delegate and Steve Kelley was nominated for legislative conference alternate. No other nominations were received. Stokebrand and Kelley each received eleven votes and Stokebrand will serve as the legislative conference voting delegate with Steve Kelley serving as legislative conference alternate.

### COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

Chad Weichel reviewed the current committee assignments listed in the table below with the directors. Chad ask to let him know if anyone was interested in a committee.

| 2026 Committee Assignments                                  |                         |                           |                |               |
|---|-------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|---------------|
| <b>Chad Weichel, Chair - Attends all committee meetings</b> |                         |                           |                |               |
| Programs and Projects                                       | Personnel and Equipment | Information and Education | Water          | Building      |
| Ryan Birkett  | Steve Kelley            | Brent Katz                | Larry Barta    | Steve Kelley  |
| Jason Pohlmann  | Jason Sand              | Duane Parde               | Duane Parde    | Bob Lorenz    |
| Bob Lorenz  | Dean Roehr              | Doug Stokebrand           | Steve Kelley   | Dean Roehr    |
| Bruce Weise   | Rodney Skleba           | Larry Barta               | Bruce Weise    | Rodney Skleba |
|   |                         |                           | Jason Pohlmann | Duane Parde   |

### UPDATE OF GROUNDWATER QUANTITY RULES AND REGULATIONS REVISIONS

Scott noted that copies of the rules approved at the last meeting as well as a handout depicting each sub area have been given to each director. He also reviewed a newsletter which should be in local papers next week as well as a draft news release and letter to send to those landowners in sub-areas 3, 7 and 9 which are currently designated Phase 2 Groundwater Quantity Management Sub-Areas.

### WELL PERMITS, IRRIGATION AGREEMENTS

Tyler presented permit # LBB 1175 for a new well in the SWSW<sup>1/4</sup> Section 26-8N-2E. The permit is in sub area one and meets all rules and regulations.

MOTION #3 was made by Jason Pohlmann, seconded by Rodney Skleba, to approve well permit #LBB 1175. Motion carried.

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

### PROCUREMENT OF NRD VEHICLES AND EQUIPMENT

The 2026 budget allows for the purchase of two trucks, one mower and a snow blade. Bids packets for a 2026 crew cab were sent to four dealers with bids received from two dealers. The District is trading a 2020 crew cab with 74,000 miles. The low bid was received from Zoellner Ford for a purchase price with trade of \$28,830.00.

MOTION #4 was made by Doug Stokebrand, seconded by Dean Roehr, to purchase the 2026 Ford F-150 crew cab for \$28,830.00. Motion carried.

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

Bids packets for a 2026 extended cab were sent to four dealers with bids received from two dealers. The District is trading a 2019 extended cab with 74,000 miles. The low bid was received from Zoellner Ford for a purchase price with trade of \$31,475.00.

MOTION #5 was made by Brent Katz, seconded by Steve Kelley, to purchase the 2026 Ford F-150 extended cab for \$31,475.00. Motion carried.

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

Bids packets for a rear discharge mower were sent to eight dealers with bids received from three dealers. The District is trading a 2023 Z970R side discharge with 273 hrs. The low bid was received from Landmark implement for a purchase price with trade of \$5,924.86.

MOTION #6 was made by Duane Parde, seconded by Jason Pohlmann, to purchase the 2026 Z970R rear discharge mower from Landmark Implement for 5,924.86. Motion carried.

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

Bids packets for a snow pusher were sent to four dealers with bids received from three dealers. After discussing the bids, the larger capacity, weight and float option of the CL Fabrication unit was determined to be best suited to meet NRD needs.

MOTION #7 was made by Rodney Skleba, seconded by Duane Parde, to purchase a CL Fabrication snow pusher from Schweitzer Farm Sales for \$3,506.00. Motion carried.

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

#### BUILDING COMMITTEE REPORT

Dean updated the Board on the building project including the December 29<sup>th</sup> progress meeting. The latest architects field report, progress on concrete pours and the geothermal well field was discussed. Scott told the Board that both Eakes and Cornhusker State Industries plan to present to the building committee in January.

#### NRD PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS REPORT

Don Whitten with Tall Grass Energy addressed the Board and stated he was present today in case the Board had any questions regarding the crossing consent agreements.

MOTION #8 was made by Ryan Birkett, seconded by Duane Parde, to go into closed session only to discuss ongoing negotiations with Tallgrass Energy on Crossing Consent agreements for carbon dioxide pipeline crossings of the District's flood control structures, for the reason that negotiations on the final Crossing Consents are ongoing and the Board must consult with its legal counsel on said negotiations.

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

Chairman Weichel stated: "The Board will be going into closed session to discuss the Tallgrass Consent to Cross Agreements, as they are currently being negotiated by our legal counsel and those discussions are ongoing. The Board will be discussing all of the details of those negotiations and reviewing the contract in closed session with our legal counsel."

The Board entered closed session at 2:13 P.M.

The Board exited closed session at 2:44 P.M.

MOTION #9 was made by Ryan Birkett, seconded by Dean Roehr, to come out of closed session at 2:44 P.M.

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

MOTION #10 was made by Ryan Birkett, seconded by Bruce Weise, to approve the Crossing Consent Agreements between the District and Tallgrass as to form, but to be finalized by District staff and legal counsel prior to execution, which shall not occur before agreed upon compensation is received from Tallgrass.

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

#### NRD PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES REPORT

Scott mentioned that the federal mileage rate has increased 2.5 cents to 72.5 cents/mile. Scott reviewed the list of Directors who are up for election this year.

Adam stated that W-2s have been sent out and 1099's should be completed by the end of the week.

Tyler discussed the UNL master irrigator classes on February 27<sup>th</sup> and March 18<sup>th</sup>.

Tyler reviewed a summary of NRD programs for calendar year 2025. Scott updated the Board on the 9 county all hazard mitigation plan.

Ryan spoke about the Nitrogen reduction incentive program. The district has submitted 29 applications from 14 producers and approximately 4,000 acres. The Nebraska Department of Water Energy and Environment has fully funded all applications for approximately \$45,000.00

Scott noted that he plans to meet with staff in January to conduct annual performance reviews.

#### AGENCY REPORTS

##### NRCS

A report was distributed to the directors.

##### EXTENSION OFFICE

No Report

##### NRC

Steve reported that the next meeting will be in February.

##### NARD

Steve reported that the next meeting will be in January at the Legislative Conference.

#### ANNOUNCEMENTS, UPCOMING MEETINGS & ACTIVITIES

Steve expressed an interest in offering a scholarship to area youth who are interested in the Natural Resources field.

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| a. January 7 <sup>th</sup>                     | - | 109 <sup>th</sup> Legislative 60-Day Session Begins |
| b. January 26 <sup>th</sup>                    | - | NARD, I&E & NRD Managers Meetings – Lincoln         |
| c. January 27 <sup>th</sup> & 28 <sup>th</sup> | - | Legislative Conference – Lincoln                    |
| d. February 12 <sup>th</sup>                   | - | NRD Board Meeting 1:30 p.m.                         |
| e. February 15 <sup>th</sup> -19 <sup>th</sup> | - | NACD's 2026 Annual Meeting – San Antonio, TX        |

Being no further business, Chairperson Chad Weichel adjourned the meeting at 3:05 P.M.

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*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 January 8, 2026 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