

LOWER BIG BLUE NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT
BOARD MEETING
September 17, 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 Chad Weichel at 9:05 a.m.

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

Directors Absent: Jason Sand

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: Kelli Evans, Gage County NRCS; Matthew Mason, Applicant for Sub-District Six Director

CONSIDERATION OF EXCUSED ABSENCES

Jason Sand has asked to be excused from the September 17th, 2026 Board meeting.

MOTION #1 was made by Doug Stokebrand, seconded by Dean Roher, to excuse Jason Sand from the September 17th Board meeting. Motion carried.

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

APPROVAL OF SEPTEMBER 17, 2026, CONSENT AGENDA

MOTION #1 was made by Doug Stokebrand, seconded by Steve Kelley, to adopt the Consent Agenda for the September 17, 2026 Board meeting, which includes: adoption of the agenda as submitted, approval of the August 27th, 2026 meeting minutes, financial status report dated August 31, 2026, August 2026 revenues, and expenditures; Beatrice West and Wymore Rural Water financials. Motion carried.

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

OPEN PUBLIC COMMENTS

Scott read a letter from Jane Filipi announcing her retirement at the end of the year.

APPOINTMENT OF SUB-DISTRICT SIX DIRECTOR

Scott reviewed the vacancy in Sub-District Six. The vacancy was advertised, and one application was received. Matthew Mason was present at the meeting to answer questions from the Board.

MOTION #3 was made by Bruce Wiese, seconded by Rodney Skleba to appoint Matthew Mason to the vacancy in Sub-District Six. Motion Carried.

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

Scott administered the Oath of Office to Matthew Mason.

PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS COMMITTEE REPORT

Ryan reviewed the minutes of the September 9th committee meeting including an update on the ONERED program, NSWCP and the Little Indian WFPO project.

MOTION #4 was made by Ryan Birkett, seconded by Bob Lorenz to enter into agreement with NRCS in the amount of \$8,302,180 for design work on the 24 proposed structures in the Little Indian WFPO project. Motion Carried.

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

MOTION #5 was made by Ryan Birkett, seconded by Dean Roehr to enter into a scope of services agreement with JEO in the amount of \$8,302,180 for design work on the 24 proposed structures in the Little Indian WFPO project.

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

WELL PERMITS, IRRIGATION AGREEMENTS

The following permit received this month meets all District rules and regulations:

LBB-1202 – E^{1/2} NE¼ Section 10-7N-4E. The permit is in Sub Area One.

Tyler reviewed the scoring system and presented test pump data from the well. The well pumped 808 gpm for 24 hours and the system is designed for 750 gpm. The well meets the test pump provision in the rules.

MOTION #6 was made by Jason Pohlmann, seconded by Larry Barta to approve the well permit. Motion Carried.

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

FY 2027 BUDGET APPROVAL

Scott summarized the Budget Hearing that was held prior to the NRD Board meeting. Scott presented an updated budget. The FY 2027 budget calls for expenditures of \$7,494,959 as compared to FY 2026 of \$7,733,930. The FY 2027 expenditures include \$2,000,000 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, \$124,192 for Water Quality Programs and Nitrogen Reduction and Efficiency Programs, \$131,897 for NRD Small Dams and Urban Conservation Programs, \$100,000 for flood control maintenance work, \$25,000 for P.L. 566 emergency watershed maintenance work, \$112,000 for recreation and Wildlife management area Operation and Maintenance, \$145,000 for Water Sustainability Airborne Electromagnetic Surveys and Eastern Nebraska Water Resources Assessment, \$800,000 for Clatonia Creek 3A Watershed 319 Project, \$100,000 for the Nine County Hazard Mitigation Plan Update, and \$64,190 for Groundwater Management Studies and Interactive Producer Portal and Turkey Creek Stream Gauge. The district has \$1,310,000 budgeted for construction of an office, shop and storage shed. Separate expenditures include \$81,906 for the Beatrice West Public Water Project and \$427,439 for the Wymore Rural Water Project.

Scott reviewed the county valuations for FY 2027 and provided a summary of the current sinking fund amounts and expected additions to those funds in FY 2027.

MOTION #7 was made by Steve Kelley, seconded by Dean Roehr, to approve the FY 2027 Lower Big Blue NRD Budget as presented, with total Expenditures of \$7,494,959.42 and Revenues of \$5,976,667.00

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

FY 2027 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 2027 are expected to be \$5,976,667 as compared to FY 2026 Revenues of \$4,922,679. The District begins FY 2027 with \$102,291 cash on hand and \$687,018 in Nebraska Public Agency Investment Trust. In FY 2027 we expect \$860,139 from state funds (FY2026 \$472,695), including \$255,000 from the Water Sustainability fund for Airborne Electromagnetic Surveys and the Little Indian Flood Prevention Project, \$35,117 from the Water Quality Fund, \$164,850 for the Buffer Strips Program, and \$169,192 from Nitrogen Use Efficiency Program, Nitrogen Reduction Act and assistance with State's ONE RED Program. FY 2027 Federal funds are estimated to be \$2,100,000 (FY2026 \$575,100) with \$500,000 in 319 funds for the Clatonia Creek 3A Renovation Project, \$1,450,000 for the Little Indian Watershed Flood Prevention Project and \$40,000 for the Nine County Hazard Mitigation Plan Update. Property rent will be \$19,108, customer charges for camping, tree planting, tree protectors and flags is \$47,100; Miscellaneous Revenues, \$171,615 that includes a \$60,000 in Hazard Mitigation Funds; and \$2,758,289 from property taxes. The District has \$289,951 in a dam operation and maintenance and emergency watershed repair sinking fund that will be utilized to cash flow the Little Indian WFPO project, \$200,138 Public Use Improvement Fund to be utilized in a Clatonia 319 Project, and \$403,493 in a Capital Improvement sinking fund. Separate revenues include \$39,510 for the Beatrice West Public Water Project and \$220,600 for the Wymore Rural Water Project.

MOTION #8 was made by Steve Kelley, seconded by Rodney Skleba, that a resolution be adopted for the Lower Big Blue NRD Fiscal Year 2026 Tax Requirement of \$2,758,289.09 and a Fiscal Year 2027 Tax Levy of \$0.030319/\$100 valuation, and that said resolution is submitted to the County Clerks on or before October 15, 2026.

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

NRD ACTIVITIES

Scott reported that Gage County passed a 12-month moratorium on data centers.

Scott provided an update on the Little Blue Rural Water Project

Scott Theis reported on a recent NPPD meeting for a proposed infrastructure project which could cross the Swan Creek and Cub Creek Watersheds.

Scott reported that the Manager of the Upper Big Blue will be retiring at the end of the year.

Staff have been contacted about a project which would run power across Big Indian 17B. Staff will work with representatives from Norris Public Power to enter into a crossing consent agreement.

Staff are working with the neighboring landowner to install a fence at Cub Creek 12A.

The District has been contacted by a tenant at Plum Creek 3C regarding a fence replacement. Staff will work with the landowner on the project.

AGENCY REPORTS

NRC

Steve reported that the next meeting will be September 29th during the NARD conference.

NARD

Steve reported that the next meeting will be September 29th during the NARD conference. Bruce Weise, NRD Alternate, will attend in place of Steve.

NRCS

Kelli Evans reported that NRCS staff are working on designs for EQIP contracts, CSP documentation and CRP status reviews.

EXTENSION OFFICE

No Report

BUILDING COMMITTEE REPORT

Dean reported that Rogge has contacted High Country regarding a schedule to order materials and remove and replace the roof. Dean also provided an update on other action items with the building.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

- a. September 29th – 30th - NARD Annual Conference – List Attending
- b. October 8th - Board Meeting 7:00 p.m.
- c. October 12th - Office Closed - Columbus Day
- d. October 14th - State Land Judging Contest – LBBNRD

Being no further business, Chairperson Chad Weichel adjourned the meeting at 10:36 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 17, 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

LOWER BIG BLUE NRD 2026-2027 BUDGET HEARING

Chairperson Chad Weichel 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 2026-2027. Chairperson Weichel 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 9th, Crete News on September 9th, Fairbury Journal News on September 9th and Pawnee Republican on September 10th, 2026. 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, 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; Nick Schroeder, GIS/IT/Data Specialist; Ryan Thomas, Resources Specialist; Brandy Scholl, Gage County NRD Secretary/Programs Assistant.

The FY 2027 budget calls for expenditures of \$7,494,959 as compared to FY 2026 of \$7,733,930. The FY 2027 expenditures include \$2,000,000 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, \$124,192 for Water Quality Programs and Nitrogen Reduction and Efficiency Programs, \$131,897 for NRD Small Dams and Urban Conservation Programs, \$100,000 for flood control maintenance work, \$25,000 for P.L. 566 emergency watershed maintenance work, \$112,000 for recreation and Wildlife management area Operation and Maintenance, \$145,000 for Water Sustainability Airborne Electromagnetic Surveys and Eastern Nebraska Water Resources Assessment, \$800,000 for Clatonia Creek 3A Watershed 319 Project, \$100,000 for the Nine County Hazard Mitigation Plan Update, and \$64,000 for Groundwater Management Studies and Interactive Producer Portal and Turkey Creek Stream Gauge. The district has \$1,310,000 budgeted for construction of an office, shop and storage shed. Separate expenditures include \$81,906 for the Beatrice West Public Water Project and \$427,439 for the Wymore Rural Water Project.

Chairperson Weichel 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 17, 2026, regular meeting minutes of the Lower Big Blue NRD.

LOWER BIG BLUE NRD 2026-2027 PROPERTY TAX REQUEST HEARING

Chairperson Chad Weichel opened the Public Hearing at 8:45 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 2026-2027. Chairperson Weichel 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 9th, Crete News on September 9th, Fairbury Journal News on September 9th and Pawnee Republican on September 10th, 2026. 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, 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; 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 2027 are expected to be \$5,976,667 as compared to FY 2026 Revenues of \$4,922,679. The District begins FY 2027 with \$102,291 cash on hand and \$687,018 in Nebraska Public Agency Investment Trust. In FY 2027 we expect \$860,139 from state funds (FY2026 \$472,695), including \$255,000 from the Water Sustainability fund for Airborne Electromagnetic Surveys and the Little Indian Flood Prevention Project, \$35,117 from the Water Quality Fund, \$164,850 for the Buffer Strips Program, and \$169,192 from Nitrogen Use Efficiency Program, Nitrogen Reduction Act and assistance with State's ONE RED Program. FY 2027 Federal funds are estimated to be \$2,100,000 (FY2026 \$575,100) with \$500,000 in 319 funds for the Clatonia Creek 3A Renovation Project, \$1,450,000 for the Little Indian Watershed Flood Prevention Project and \$40,000 for the Nine County Hazard Mitigation Plan Update. Property rent will be \$19,108, customer charges for camping, tree planting, tree protectors and flags is \$47,100; Miscellaneous Revenues, \$171,615 that includes a \$60,000 in Hazard Mitigation Funds; and \$2,758,289 from property taxes. The District has \$289,951 in a dam operation and maintenance and emergency watershed repair sinking fund that will be utilized to cash flow the Little Indian WFPO project, \$200,138 Public Use Improvement Fund to be utilized in a Clatonia 319 Project, and \$403,493 in a Capital Improvement sinking fund. Separate revenues include \$39,510 for the Beatrice West Public Water Project and \$220,600 for the Wymore Rural Water Project.

Valuations of the NRD for FY 2027, as provided by the County Assessors, are as follows:

	<u>Valuations</u>			<u>Tax Requirements and Percentages</u>	
	2026	2025	% of Change		
Gage	\$4,678,610,245	\$4,327,898,636	8.10%	\$1,426,035.46	51.7%
Saline	\$2,943,738,972	\$2,811,489,983	4.70%	\$ 973,676.05	35.3%
Jefferson	\$1,232,796,503	\$1,204,437,589	2.35%	\$ 297,895.22	10.8%
Pawnee	\$ 242,315,966	\$ 233,344,306	3.84%	\$ 60,682.36	2.2%
TOTALS	\$9,097,461,686	\$8,577,170,514	6.07%	\$2,758,289.09	100%

2026 Growth Value – \$31,425,240 = 6.04% Value Attributed to Growth : (Total Change: \$520,291,172)

Pawnee - \$ 377,895 (4.21%) Gage - \$20,338,985 (5.80%)

Jefferson - \$ 2,079,065 (7.33%) Saline - \$ 8,629,295 (6.53%)

The Tax Requirement for FY 2027 is \$2,758,289.09. Last year's was \$2,758,013.26.

The NRD levy for FY 2027 is \$0.030319/\$100 Valuation. Last year's was \$0.032155/\$100 Valuation.

Chairperson Weichel 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, 2026, regular meeting minutes of the Lower Big Blue NRD.