

NORTHERN COUNTIES LAND USE COORDINATING BOARD

Minutes

Thursday, July 7, 2011

Northome, Minnesota

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. by Chair Commissioner Wade Pavleck with the following in attendance. (All actions of the Board were supported unanimously unless otherwise indicated.)

All Member Counties Present:

Commissioner Fritz Sobanja, Cook
Commissioner Brian McBride, Koochiching
Commissioner Wake Pavleck, Koochiching
Commissioner Rich Sve, Lake
Commissioner Todd Beckel, Lake of the Woods
Commissioner Don Jensen, Pennington
Commissioner Jack Swanson, Roseau
Commissioner Chris Dahlberg, St. Louis
Commissioner Mike Forsman, St. Louis

Others Present:

Commissioner Rob Ecklund, Koochiching
Douglas Skrief, NCLUCB Staff

Administrative Actions:

1. Approval of Agenda with the following additions:

- 1) Chip Cravaack Duluth Office visit (Comm. Sve - Local)
- 2) Injunction on DNR Timber Harvest (Comm. McBride - Local)
m. McBride s. Swanson

2. Approval of Minutes: June 2, 2011 Meeting with the clarification that Local Item 4 record that a case brought by the Friends of the Boundary Waters halted construction near the BWCAW of a communications tower.

m. Sve s. Beckel

3-4. Financial Report and Bills:

The Director reviewed the income and expenditures sheets reflecting a general account balance of \$105,132.93 and a Land Use Conflict Management balance of \$15,005.28. The total accounts balance, after payment of approved expenses of \$1,255.99, was \$120,140.21.

The Executive Director submitted an invoice for \$678.14 for one month of professional services and expense reimbursement. Room rental and refreshments of the day's meeting place were invoiced at \$55.00. Comm. Swanson asked about the intent and potential use of the Board's large reserve, suggesting it might be used in support of advocacy. The issue will be added to the next agenda.

m. Jensen s. Dahlberg

Correspondence:

A response from Secretary Tom Vilsack, United States Department of Agriculture, to a joint letter from Northern Counties and the Joint Powers board, explained loss of \$200,000 of earmarked funds for wolf damage management activities and the use of available resources to continue protection of American agriculture under appropriate legal activities.

The Director reported that Aitkin County had requested a response to a letter about NCLUCB's function and dues. The Board requested that all counties receive a similar letter of explanation.

Discussion Issues

LOCAL

1. PILT Comm. Beckel reviewed a DNR proposal for PILT payments to counties, noting that last year was a reevaluation year and that the proposal suggests capping an increase at ten percent. Because of

the percentage cap, some counties would not receive the full amount determined by the reevaluation. Total payments would amount to \$22.4 million. Payments, some for wildlife management areas, range statewide from under one dollar to \$1,000 an acre. Most northern counties would be getting their full payment under the proposal. In the past, PILT payment has been a DNR issue; this year the DNR is acting only in an advisory capacity to the Legislature. Discussion revolved around alternative means of payment distribution and land ownership.

2. Logging Injunction Comm. McBride reported on an approach to the courts by area loggers to get an injunction to be able to continue logging under state contracts on state land despite the state government shutdown. The judge ruled in favor of the loggers to log and haul on any land for which they carried contracts but that they could not open a new permit. Comm. Beckel pointed out that already-cut wood would otherwise not be available for hauling and that the state would otherwise lose income.

In a sidelight, Comm. Pavleck asked if other counties were continuing road projects during the shutdown. Comm. Forsman noted that St. Louis County is continuing on county projects where there is federal funding and where the county is managing the project. State allotments had been distributed. At risk is a five percent holdback of the State. Completion of State rights-of-way is a concern. Timing of liquor licenses and fishing licensing was reviewed.

3. Representative Chip Cravaack's Duluth Office Visit Comm. Sve reported on a visit by him in the Silver Bay library with Tim Olson, the Duluth office staff person of Rep. Cravaack. The board recommended an invitation to Mr. Olson to visit Northern Counties at its September meeting.

m. Sve s. Forsman

4. Communication Towers Comm. Beckel outlined a problem of affordability for new communication towers that can cost millions of dollars. Of 34 counties in the southern part of Minnesota, thirteen have now said they cannot afford 800 megahertz towers, reported Comm. Swanson, a member of the Statewide Radio Board. Hubbard County was not prepared to narrowband even with existing infrastructure. Roseau County is in good shape. Pennington has recently updated. The statewide board has now approved funding for an IP satellite system that is cell phone- and computer-based. The 800 megahertz technology may be outdated in five years, making investment for small counties, which might need to add a significant percentage onto their annual levy to cover installation costs, an issue. Maintenance will be the bigger cost over time. The MN DOT is also using towers to be ready by 2012. Comm. Forsman added that St. Louis County has supported 800 megahertz but that the technology will not work across all of the county's rolling topography; an interface is necessary to communicate with the DNR and the Forest Service as well as the State Patrol. Satellite control may be an issue in the future for cell and digital communication. The City of Duluth may need the 800 megahertz, noted Comm. Swanson, while small counties will encounter problems for its volunteer services reliant on pagers. DNR Conservation and the State Patrol will need towers. Placement of towers on county land may provide some local control. Comm. Pavleck asked if the Board would like to have a presentation by Tom Lehman of LightSquared Company; he will discuss with Comm. Hanson a presentation to a joint meeting of Northern Counties and the Joint Powers Board. Comm. Swanson recommended that Brandon Abley, technical support for the statewide Radio Board, also attend, perhaps at the December joint meeting during AMC.

5. Furloughing of county employees Comm. Swanson asked if other counties at the table were planning on furloughing county employees in the face of the loss of state dollars due to the State government shutdown. Comm. Pavleck noted that it is to wait and see for the next ten days. Counties may not be impacted as greatly as some have predicted in lieu of the determination by a judge on essential services. Comm. Dahlberg argued that cuts in the percentage of funding would reflect current voter desires. Comm. Beckel related that the Lake of the Woods Social Services Director had mentioned only the cutting of daycare. Comm. Sobanja added that Cook County had elected to dip into reserves to pay county workers for two weeks and then revisit the matter, including reimbursement. Comm. Jensen said that Pennington had not taken any action, though the Personnel Director was meeting with the Welfare Director and that everything was on the table. Discussion on the opportunities and challenges of reduced funding, the political environment and the complexity of funding followed.

STATE

1. Forest Capital Payments Agreements in which Forest Capital would continue to pay taxes on land put into easement under Forests for the Future may be challenged legislatively by the company, reported Comm. Beckel. Blandin may be pursuing the same tactic.

2. Mitigation Correspondence Draft The Board will bring the draft letter requested by the Board to the Joint Powers Board for discussion on July 25.

NCLUCB

1. Next meetings of NCLUCB The next meeting will be held on July 25 in Bemidji. The Board will meet with the Consolidated Conservation Natural Resources Joint Powers Board at the government center. No August meeting will be held. The September 1 meeting *may* be held in Chisholm.

Adjournment at 11:15 a.m. by the Chair

Next meeting July 25, 2011, 10:00 a.m. Beltrami Administrative Building, Bemidji, Minnesota

Respectfully submitted by Douglas Skrief, Administrator