

Northern Counties Land Use Coordinating Board

Thursday, May 2, 2013

Northome, MN

Call to Order: The meeting of the Northern Counties Land Use Coordinating Board was called to order by Chair Brian McBride at 9:35 a.m. with the following members in attendance:

NCLUB Member Counties Present:

Commissioner Garry Gamble, Cook County

Commissioner Jack Swanson, Roseau County

Commissioner Rich Sve, Lake County

Commissioner Brian McBride, Koochiching County

Commissioner Wade Pavleck, Koochiching County

Commissioner Steve Raukar, St. Louis County

Commissioner Mike Forsman, St. Louis County

Commissioner Don Jensen, Pennington County

Commissioner Skip Swanson, Pennington County

Others Present:

Todd Beckel, Lake of the Woods resident

Bob Lessard, Mn Dept. of Natural Resources

Craig Engwall, Mn Dept. of Natural Resources

Mark Jacobs, Aitkin County Land Commissioner

Bruce Cox, Clearwater County Land Commissioner

Administrative Actions

1. Discuss and approve agenda with the following additions:
 - a. Storm Water permits (Sve)
 - b. Beaver Trapping (Raukar)
 - m. Pavleck s. Gamble

2. Minutes of the March 7, 2013 Meeting approved.

m. Swanson s. Raukar

3. Financial Report and Bills:

Commissioner Raukar reported that the Land Use Conflict Account was at \$15,005.28 and the General Account held \$109,803.96. The following bills were approved for payment:

Minnesota Discovery Center:	\$	50.00
Doug Skrief	\$	1055.45
Room Rental	\$	55.00
Assoc. MN Counties	\$	129.50
Total	\$	1289.95

m. Forsman s. Jensen

Note: Commissioner Swanson urged Todd Beckel to submit his legislative expenses to NCLUB for reimbursement out of the Land Use Conflict Account.

4. Correspondence:

Received response letter from Governor Dayton's office regarding the NCLUB advocacy of Todd Beckel appointment to the citizens member position on the Board of Soil and Water Resources. Comm. Swanson indicated the need for greater lobbying effort on Todd's behalf. Mr. Beckel indicated that NCLUB should wait until after the legislative session. Commissioner Jensen noted that the appointment will be filled before June 30th. Forsman moved and Sve seconded a motion to contact Governor's Office. Chairman McBride directed secretary Chell to contact Governor's Office for status and advocacy of the Beckel nomination.

Discussion Issues:

1. Comm. McBride received notice this morning that Boise Cascade was reducing their labor force in International Falls and 267 jobs at the mill would be lost. This announcement came as a shock to the community and would have a social and economic impact not only to the employees and families working at Boise Cascade, but would be felt throughout the community and county.
2. Commissioner Pavleck commented favorably on the AMC conference generally, and the joint meeting with Con-Con Counties and the DNR Commissioner and staff. Wade indicated that it did not appear that new shore land legislation would be considered during this legislative session, but that some DNR staff continued to advocate legislative action this year. Comm Pavleck urged the NCLUB members to continue their oversight of this issue.
3. Commissioner Sve related the tragic events surrounding the death of a Lake County road and bridge maintenance employee. The employee died when the backhoe he was operating overturned and slid into a river during an attempt to remove an ice jam. He indicated that OSHA was meeting with with Lake County staff . Comm Sve was particularly impressed with the First Responders professional efforts at the site and urged members to review their county's safety procedures for similar operations. Sve acknowledged the assistance of staff from St. Louis County Public Works as they review the incident. Other commissioners commented on the frequency of this type of maintenance work and noted several similar accidents over the last decade involving MnDot, county, and private contractors throughout the state. Several commissioners commented on the hope that OSHA would provide assistance in developing safer operating procedures.
4. Commissioner Sve discussed MPCA storm water runoff permits required for new and/or currently operating gravel pits. Under new regulations, all pits in continuous or intermittent operation must have a storm water runoff permit whether or not there is documented runoff external to the site of operation. Lake County asked the MPCA for clarification of the rule and now must file permit applications for all 19 of their gravel sites. MPCA is apparently assessing fines against Lake County for operating without permits at the same time the county is assembling the permit applications. Sve suggested that other counties review their gravel operations for permits, since many counties, as Lake experienced, may not be aware of the required storm water runoff oversight for currently operating pits. Comm Gamble indicated that in attempting to comply with this new rule, county self-disclosure results in fines.
5. Commissioner Raukar identified the ongoing beaver dam flooding of timber land and public roads as a significant problem for county land and road managers. Inquiries to the DNR to extend the trapping season due to spring weather conditions were not helpful. Citing data from previous trapping extensions, the DNR indicated that season extensions were not effective in reducing beaver problems. Regional Director Craig Engwall suggested that both legislation and internal trapping rule flexibility could be developed for the next legislative session. Commissioner Forsman noted that St. Louis County Public Works can get removal permits as needed at a specific site, but the problem could be more effectively handled by encouraging

private trapping and season extensions when necessary. Comm McBride and Director Engwall agreed that the decline in the number of trappers and poor prices were also major factors in resolving the problem.

6. State Issues:

PILT: Commissioner Pavleck congratulated Todd Beckel for his effective representation of county interests during the Payment In Lieu of Taxes policy debates at the Capitol this spring. The final bill which was packaged within the Omnibus Tax Bill was as good an outcome as could be anticipated. Wade indicated that the bill should be fiscally stable for the long term. Mr. Beckel acknowledged the work of Senator Skoe in guiding the debate and ensuring the interests of northern counties were addressed.

Intermediate Auction Timber Sales: Commissioner McBride indicated that a bill has been introduced by Sen Tomassoni to which the ACL is opposed. Brian stated that Koochiching County was opposed to some provisions regarding the inflexibility of some of the provisions, but understood the position of St. Louis County. Commissioner Raukar suggested that the intermediate logging provisions were gaining traction perhaps due to the declining number of smaller logging operations. He anticipated that new legislation would address number of employees, number of bid awards, greater latitude for the counties and a leveling of the playing field with regard to state forest management practices.

Clearwater County Land Commissioner Bruce Cox stated that the Minnesota Association of Land Commissioners have worked on this issue for the last 10 years. He is anticipating that proposed legislation will resolve some of these problems and give the counties authority to set the terms and conditions for timber sales that reflect local conditions and markets, citing the Saxhaug amendment as an example of greater county discretion.

Comm Raukar commented that he encouraged the land commissioners to support the concept of customizing timber sales in situations where the highest bid does not necessarily meet the needs of the local economy and community. Commissioner McBride extended his thanks to St. Louis County for initiating the legislative action and stated that with 13 counties offering timber sales spreading across the whole state, it is essential to give counties the authority to set the terms of their individual county sales.

Other Issues:

Molpus Woodland Group: Comm McBride reflected concern regarding the potential closure of significant portions of the 286, 000 acres Molpus owns in Minnesota. Not only could this initiative reduce access for the recreational public: hunters, snowmobilers and others, the closures will prevent access to other public and private lands where easements do not exist and could really affect the state's forest road system. Bob Lessard indicated that Molpus will move forward with land closures.

Minnesota Power/Manitoba Hydro: Commissioner Swanson wants affected counties to be aware of the proposed powerline and its affect on property taxes. The 500 MW line may generated \$0-50,000/mile in tax revenue and will be depreciated at 13% per year.

Other announcements:

The NCLUB Board acknowledged the recent death of former Pine County commissioner and legislator Doug Carlson. Board members shared memories and stories of Doug's public life and the work he did on behalf of local government and natural resource management.

Director Craig Engwall announced his appointment to the International Joint Commission.

Next Meeting for NCLUB: due to a conflict in schedules, NCLUB will meet on Thursday, June 13th. The following meeting will be on July 11 as planned.

Adjournment moved by Swanson and seconded by Forsman.