

EASTERN PLAINS RC&D AREA, Inc.
QUARTERLY COUNCIL MEETING
July 22, 2009

The Eastern Plains RC&D Area, Inc. quarterly council meeting was held July 22, 2009, at the Senior Center in Wolf Point. Those present were:

Dixie Berwick, Town of Culbertson & Bainville; Jason Rittal, EPEDC; Ray Trumpower; Kathy Green, City of Glendive; Stark Ickes, Treasure County; David Pratt, NRCS; and Pam Berwick, Eastern Plains RC&D; Gary McDonald, Roosevelt County; Jim Shanks, Roosevelt County; Steve Olson, Montana Department of Labor and Industry; Jerry Jimison, City of Glendive; Dennis Bratlien, Sheridan Electric; Linda Twitchell, Great Northern Development; Willie Bernard, Daniels County Conservation District; Richard Rice, City of Plentywood; Vickie Delger, Roosevelt County.

CALL TO ORDER, INTRODUCTIONS:

Chairman Dixie Berwick called the meeting to order and meeting participants introduced themselves.

AGENDA

Gary McDonald moved to approve the agenda as distributed. Ray Trumpower seconded the motion. All present voted Aye. Motion carried.

MINUTES AND TREASURER'S REPORT

Stark Ickes moved to approve the April 15, 2009 minutes. Jim Shanks seconded the motion. All present voted Aye. Motion carried.

Stark Ickes moved to approve the treasurer's report as presented. Jim Shanks seconded the motion. All present voted Aye. Motion carried.

INTERIM COORDINATOR'S REPORT

Mike Brady, four week acting coordinator, reported upon arrival he visited with Mickey and Dixie to assess the priorities of his stay. One of the things Mike has addressed includes reformatting the Annual Plan to be more format-friendly as well as adding a time budget. The NRCS POINTS reporting system has been updated by bringing old projects up to date as well as adding new projects. The POINTS system is used for the national budget and it's important to have as much information in the system as possible. In addition, Mike reported the Area Plan will be due April 2010, he mentioned the MSU Extension may be a good source of information in development of the plan. Mike has an Ag-Open meeting set for Thursday at 10:00 in the RC&D office.

Other issues include Pam being unable to access the server. The only way to have her on the USDA server is to pay approximately \$3000 a year. There is the possibility to be able to set up usage of a printer without server access but nothing more. Mike was able to attend an Eastern Ag Research Tour, found it interesting. Mike visited with Paul Finnicum about the Fort Kipp Irrigation project. He stated it seems to be moving along and that \$4,500 of the Potato grant through DNRC will be used for the Ag-Open. After reviewing project files Mike is going to try to get ahold of Jerry Bergman about feed-lot idea and safflower business. There is a possibility of an online food co-op as a statewide initiative. Mike was contacted by N-SAVE, a commercial company that does energy audits. It trains people for \$250/person and that person in turn conducts the audit for N-SAVE and receives some of the profit. Kathy was concerned the audit would result in fines. Mike stated it's only meant to be helpful for producers.

NEW COORDINATOR INTRODUCTION

Bob Nansel introduced himself; he's excited to get back to Montana after spending five years in Oregon. While in Oregon he spent some time with NRCS as a temporary employee and spent his last few years there working with a conservation district. He spent his first day going through files and the second day was busy with Mike and getting his computer going. He also was finding the project files interesting to read through and is looking forward to the Ag-Open. Also found some of the irrigation projects of Eastern Plains to be similar to those that he has worked on in Oregon. Bob thinks there is a good opportunity to fill another desk of the office with a VISTA volunteer and plans to check into that soon. Jerry Jimison mentioned there is a lot of funding for VISITAs at this time. Ray Trumpower is one of the contact people for the program in the Sidney area.

EASTERN PLAINS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

Carter County has a USDA application pending that is looking good for purchase of a new road grader. CDBG Disaster fund are under review for infrastructure repair reimbursement for roads and also for the purchase of a new loader. USDA Disaster Funds Application for the Town of Ekalaka for an emergency generator for the water system.

Prairie County has a pending USDA application for the purchase of three road maintenance vehicles and one Sheriff's vehicle. Evelyn Cameron Heritage Inc. has received its corporate status and is currently requesting non-profit designation as well as submission of a TIIP Grant.

Fallon County's North Baker Water and Sewer District EDA application has been reviewed and is pending committee vote. Dawson County's flood map has been drafted and there will be a meeting with Miles City representatives to discuss their actions through the process. Also, an appropriation request for engineering has been submitted.

Wibaux Count Transfer Station has elected to not pursue funding.

In the EDD area there is a USDA Revolving Loan Fund pending through the stimulus package as well as an EDA revolving loan fund application that Jim Atchison is working on. USDA Wind Monitoring Application was not funded. EDA Additional funding awarded to Eastern Plains EDD. Each of the counties contributed \$1,000 in match for a total additional fund of \$20,000 and we are currently advertising for a part-time employee.

FIRST TIME HOME BUYER EDUCATION INSTRUCTOR/BIO-PRODUCT INNOVATION CENTER

Pam reported that the First-Time Homebuyer Education has been very popular and the classes have been filling up the last few months. As more lenders continue to require the class the attendance will become mandatory. The First-Time Homebuyer tax credit also has been an encouraging factor for both home ownership and education.

Pam also reported that the BPIC program has been busy getting ready for the Ag-Open. The program has been changed for the next year to only house 4 centers in the state and Eastern Plains chose to opt out. Bruce Smith in Glendive submitted an application and Eastern Plains plans to support his center.

BUDGET

The FY09 budget was reviewed. Stark Ickes moved to approve the budget and Linda Twitchel seconded the motion. All present voted aye. Motion carried.

LOAN LOSS ALLOWANCE

Mike stated he looked into the policies of the Headwaters RC&D but found Headwater's doesn't have just one policy in place it varies from client to client. Additional research will be required before a decision is made. Linda noted that the accountant set up the policy for GNDC and that the policy can be in any form as long as it's realistic. Jim bases SEMDC 's upon the clients situation. Loan committee is a great place to look as well.

AREA REPORTS

Jim Shanks reported that in the Culbertson area Basin Electric is putting in a \$100 million heat pump generator. The county multi-use/library building will be completed soon. At Poplar the airport will soon be upgraded and replaced. Dry-Prairie Rural Water is building a new building. Two hospitals in Wolf Point and Poplar were upgraded. A&S Tribal Industries in Poplar is opening its doors again to produce solar panels and fiber-optic cable. That re-opening will potentially create 350 new jobs.

Stark Ickes said the Treasure County Conservation District has some river projects. EQUIP isn't keeping up with the high demand to upgrade from a flood system to sprinkler irrigation. The chamber hosted a breakfast fly-in that was very popular. The fair in August went well and he noted the 4-H mothers all seemed happy! Ray gave some updates on the NCOG and what they have been up to.

David Pratt from NRCS stated Joyce has been out quite a bit already visiting about half of the offices around the state. She seems to be very hands on. NRCS offices are wrapping up conservation contracts. Many policies have been changed so it has been difficult. Also, between 30-40% of the EQUIP contracts for the state are within the 16 county area.

Steve Olson reported he has been very busy since the last meeting as unemployment is on the rise. Oil field lay-offs have been longer term which helps folks seeking experienced workers. The Governors Inter-Agency Rapid Response helps small business owners who were impacted by the fires by offering support both emotionally and financially. There will be 3 opportunity fairs held in the area to help improve people's situations. The WIRED program was successful in that it helped 1,100 people receive training in Eastern and Central Montana for various opportunities.

Richard Rice stated the divisional swim meet was held in Plentywood which brought 400 swimmers to the area and the County Fair is coming up. The Westby Grain Terminal will have an open house on August 10 to mark the completion and opening of the 10 million dollar project. Also, a pea and lentil cleaning and bagging facility broke ground in Plentywood recently.

Jerry and Kathy talked about the happenings in Glendive. Bids are coming in on different water/drain lines. Stimulus money is helping pay for that. The usual 4-5 blocks that get curb/gutter replacement are getting done as well as a few more for a total 16. The Hospital in Glendive is getting renovated to hold more ER staff and will also have the facilities to treat mental health as well. The Skateboarder Foundation for park in the current park is raising money. The TransCanada pipe line will go 41 miles through Glendive; there will be a housing shortage. The FEMA floodplain map proposed 1/2 of Glendive included and there are issues about who will pay for the study.

Linda at GNDC noted that Jason has been elected to the MEDA board and offered congratulations to him on that. A feasibility study is in the works for a shared use kitchen in Glasgow. Instead of doing BPIC again, Linda also decided to support Bruce Smith in his efforts as well. She also said they assisted Fort Peck Tribes with A&S Tribal Industries to remodel and submitted a grant for equipment. The number of employees for A&S Industries depends upon marketing and transportation of the goods. Housing plans are in the works for Daniels County and Jordan for rehab.

William stated up in Scobey the Fair will be the first week in August. There are some new houses going up and the rain has been fair in July.

Dennis Bratlien of Sheridan Electric talked about the wind turbine that was put up between Culbertson and Froid for demonstration and educational purposes with the Roosevelt CD and Sheridan CD. Sheridan Electric is buying 100% of the power from the turbine.

Jim and Gary noted the ASRWSS has stimulous money to finish up 3rd stages of the plant and pipeline to Wolf Point and Poplar. It will take approximately two years to complete that with the potential to pipeline to Brockton if any funds remain.

Dixie reported in Culbertson the airport overlay would be done this summer and a new grain elevator was to be build south of Culbertson.

Stark moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Jim. All present voted Aye. Motion carried.