



LOWER PLATTE SOUTH natural resources district

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Agenda Item #7

Memorandum

Date: April 10, 2024

To: Executive Subcommittee members

From: Mike Sousek, General Manager

RE: Executive Subcommittee Meeting Minutes

The Executive Subcommittee met at 12:00pm on Monday, April 8, 2024, at the NRD Office Large Conference room in Lincoln. Subcommittee members present included Dave Landis, Bob Andersen, Deb Eagan, Tom Green, and Lisa Lewis. Director Chelsea Johnson was absent. Legal counsel for the district attended. NRD staff members included Dave Potter, Chris Barber and me.

The first item on the agenda was a brief discussion on the various places we have the district financials posted. After a brief discussion, staff were tasked with reviewing our abilities to keep current financial documents active on the website for up to 12 months. Staff will report back in May on the possibility.

The second item on the agenda dealt with the 2025 NRCS Operation Agreement. This agreement covers the utilization of District funds to accelerate technical assistance and assist providing secretarial assistance to the county level NRCS offices in the district. Other than the dates, no changes have been made to last year's agreement. **It was recommended by Director Eagan, seconded by Director Anderson to recommend the Board of Directors approve the 2025 Operational Agreement between LPSNRD and USDA/NRCS. See attached Operation Agreement document. Motion passed unanimously.**

Corey Wasserburger provided two updates on district matters. The first update dealt with our continued effort to complete our Gapp Park project. Efforts to communicate with the contractors bonding company have been unsuccessful with no response being received. The second matter dealt with a Lohmeier complaint being filed with the courts. This matter has been in the works for multiple years and our insurance company has activated legal counsel coverage.

Four policy changes were taken up one at a time for consideration.

- Personnel Policy #10: Termination of Employment. Language in this policy needed to change to better reflect actual conditions and requirements of providing health insurance options to employees retiring from the district. **It was recommended by Director Lewis, seconded by**

Director Eagan to recommend to the Board to adopt Personnel Policy #10 as presented. See attached Personnel Policy #10. Motion passed unanimously.

- Personnel Policy #13: Pay Period. Staff proposed recommended changes to this policy. Management has identified process improvements that will alleviate opportunities dealing with human error in keeping two accounting systems for annual leave and sick leave balances. This policy change will allow us to operate under one centralized system (Quickbooks) and provide acute information to district employees in real time. **It was recommended by Director Eagan, seconded by Director Andersen to recommend to the Board to adopt Personnel Policy #13 as presented. See attached Personnel Policy #13. Motion passed unanimously.**
- Personnel Policy #36: Employee Wellness Program. Changes were made to this policy to strike a line out that is no longer relevant or being practiced. **It was recommended by Director Green, seconded by Director Andersen to recommend to the Board to adopt Personnel Policy #36 as presented. See attached Personnel Policy #36. Motion passed unanimously.**
- Operating Policy G-8: No Smoking or Alcohol Consumption. Changes were made to operating policy G-8 to incorporate alcohol consumption and intoxication which were not present previously. **It was recommended by Director Green, seconded by Director Lewis to recommend to the Board to adopt Operating Policy G-8 as presented. See attached Operating Policy G-8. Motion passed unanimously.**

Next on the agenda was the annual cost of living adjustment to salaries. The committee reviewed the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data as it related to the consumer price index for all urban consumers in the Midwest. From February 2023 to February 2024, the consumer price index increased by 2.75%. **It was recommended by Director Green, seconded by Director Lewis to recommend to the Board to approve a 2.75% cost of living adjustment to salaries for all classifications of employees that will take effect on July 1, 2024. Motion passed unanimously.**

Chair Landis brought it to the attention of the executive committee that he had been in conversations with Tara Tesmer Paulson with Rembolt Ludtke LLP and discussed training opportunities. The cost for in-person training, which included an all-staff session, and a management session was in the range of \$3,000. **It was recommended by Director Andersen, seconded by Director Green to recommend to the Board that the General Manager execute a contract with Rembolt Ludtke LLP for training purposes. Motion passed unanimously.**

Meeting was adjourned at 1:22 PM

MJS

cc: Donna Reid, Chris Barber, Dave Potter

2025 OPERATIONAL AGREEMENT
between the
LOWER PLATTE SOUTH NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT
and the
NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

This Agreement covers the utilization of District funds to accelerate technical assistance and assist providing secretarial assistance to the county level Service (Natural Resources Conservation Service) offices in the District. The general intent for how these funds are to be utilized is outlined in the Memorandum of Agreement dated January 28, 2020.

The District will employ a secretary for both Lancaster and Cass County Service Field Offices. The District will coordinate the employment of secretaries in Butler, Otoe, Saunders, and Seward County Service Field Offices with neighboring Districts. The secretary will be employed for the purpose of receptionist, telephone operation, and clerical duties, including preparation of materials for mailing, filing, and record keeping.

The District will employ occasional technicians for each of the six county Service Field Offices. These technicians will assist with work that directly results in the design, layout, inspection, and certification of soil and water conservation practices in the District, and the paperwork directly related to the installation of these practices. Occasional technicians may also be hired for special natural resource projects at the direction of the General Manager.

The Service DC (District Conservationist) will be responsible for planning when these occasional technicians are to be utilized and they will conduct all interviews and recommend hiring such personnel. Occasional technicians will be limited to less than 40 working hours/week, not be eligible for benefits, and will be paid monthly an hourly wage between \$16.00/hour to \$26.00/hour, depending on their capabilities, job duties, and experience.

The District budgeted funds for 1,000 hours of occasional technical assistance to the Service for FY 2024. These hours are allocated to each of the Service Field Offices in the following manner:

Butler County	50 hours
Cass County	500 hours
Lancaster County	300 hours
Otoe County	50 hours
Saunders County	50 hours
Seward County	50 hours

The District will employ one full-time technician to work out of the Cass County Service Offices and two full-time technicians to work out of the Lancaster County Service Office. The District will be solely responsible for the decisions concerning the employment status of these employees. The District will coordinate the employment of full-time technicians in the Butler, Otoe, Saunders, and Seward County Field Offices with neighboring Districts.

The full-time technicians will work out of the Cass and Lancaster County Service Offices. The NRD's policy concerning the prioritized jobs on which these employees are to work are as follows:

1. Design, layout, inspection, and certification of soil and water conservation practices in the District and the paperwork directly related to the installation of these practices. Promote non-structural conservation practices such as cover crops, buffer strips, reduced tillage, etc.
2. Special projects and programs of the District as directed by the NRD General Manager. These special projects and programs may require work District-wide.
3. General office support as needed at the NRCS Office.

All District employees will only be available to work on jobs that are consistent with District policy. District technical employees are to be available to assist with conservation practice design and layout without regard to whether cost-share assistance is to be provided.

This Agreement will remain in effect until July 1, 2025, or until succeeded by another Operational Agreement, and is subject to all the terms and conditions of the Memorandum of Agreement as identified above. This Agreement may be modified or terminated at any time by mutual consent of the parties hereto or may be terminated by either party by giving thirty (30) days notice in writing to the other party.

LOWER PLATTE SOUTH NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT

_____	_____
General Manager	Date

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE, USDA

_____	_____
State Conservationist	Date

Personnel Policy No. 10: TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT

Employees who voluntarily leave the services of the District are expected to give the District two (2) weeks advance notice in writing. The General Manager shall give thirty (30) days advance notice to the Board of Directors upon voluntary termination of employment.

An employee who is discharged or voluntarily leaves their employment forfeits all employee rights to District benefits except for their accrued wage, vacation time, and any benefits that may be vested in the District's Retirement Plan or Deferred Compensation Plan. Such employee and their family may also be entitled to a continuation of the District's health benefits (COBRA) at the employee's cost, depending on the specific provisions of the District's health insurance policy.

An employee who is released from their employment because of lack of work or for any reason other than the fault of the employee, will be entitled to two (2) weeks advance notice in writing or, if no advance notice is given, two (2) weeks pay in lieu of such advance notice.

~~Upon retirement a former employee may continue the health coverage, paying the full premium to the District.~~

~~If an individual employee retires and at the time of retirement is over 59 years old upon retirement and has worked for the District for at least five (5) years, they are the retired employee -eligible for may elect to continue to receive health insurance through the District, including health insurance for eligible family members of the retired employee. Such health insurance shall be retiree health benefits. This entails the same health insurance that is available to active employees of the District. coverage as active employees, with-~~ The retired employee shall be solely responsible for the premium costs associated with such insurance, including an additional 3% fee. Retired employees a shall be responsible for paying the premium directly to Mid-America Benefits the health insurance provider.

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Personnel Policy No. 13: PAY PERIOD

The pay period for all employees is ~~once per month at the end of each month. Each employee shall receive his or her check on or before the last working day of each month.~~ once every two weeks biweekly beginning July 24, 2024.

Employees are required to furnish the District with all payroll information requested, including but not limited to withholding, social security and FICA taxes.

The District will advise employees of any material changes in the preparation of the payroll.

~~Employees may request direct deposit of their paychecks with the banking institution of their choice. Employee pay will be~~ directly deposited into the bank account they select with their preferred banking institution.

The District is required by Federal and State laws to make certain deductions from your earnings. Other payroll deductions may be made in accordance with employee benefits programs. The records of the deductions shall be shown on or will accompany the paycheck. Deductions shall include, but not be limited to:

- Social Security (FICA)
- Medicare Portion of FICA (MEDFICA)
- Federal Withholding Tax
- State Withholding Tax
- Retirement Program
- Health and Life Insurance

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- Medicare Portion of FICA (MEDFICA)
- Federal Withholding Tax
- State Withholding Tax
- Retirement Program
- Health and Life Insurance

Personnel Policy No. 36: EMPLOYEE WELLNESS PROGRAM

The District encourages employees to practice healthy lifestyles and will sponsor a wellness program. A wellness committee, designated by the General Manager, will develop, and distribute informational materials and will organize activities and workshop with speakers on various topics, such as nutrition, exercise, CPR, First Aid, etc., which are normally held over the noon hour. ~~The District will hold a membership in Workwell.~~

The employees may participate in these activities at their option, except for CPR, First Aid, and other safety programs that may be mandatory.

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G-8: NO SMOKING or ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

1. Smoking is prohibited in all District buildings, vehicles, and the properties on which the office and maintenance buildings are located. "NO SMOKING" signs shall be posted.
2. Alcohol being consumed or intoxication from alcohol is prohibited in all District buildings, vehicles, and the properties on which the office and maintenance building are located.

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