



Meeting Minutes - May 17, 2023

The meeting of the commission was called to order by Chairman Lew Pence at 1:01 pm.

Present:

Commissioner

Dan Schaeffer – Minidoka County

Commission Members

Lew Pence – Chair - Gooding

Gale Kleinkopf – Vice Chair – Twin Falls

Bethany Muffley – Acting Ex Director

Dean Edgar – Cassia

Dan Suhr - Jerome

Arlen Morgan – Jerome P&Z

Duane Turner – Twin Falls P&Z (retired)

Agency

Aaron Travino – DEQ – Twin Falls

Ken Skinner – USGS – Boise

Prospective Member

Jason Parker – Tri Counties Nox Weed Dept

Lew asked if there were any changes or corrections to the minutes of the previous meeting. The minutes were approved with a motion was made by Duane Turner and seconded by Arlen Morgan. Duane also made a motion to approve the corrected minutes from February's meeting seconded by Arlen.

Lew asked Bethany Muffley for the bills since the last meeting. Bethany indicated that bills include her compensation of \$550.00 and milage along with mileage reimbursements for members who are present. Bethany also discussed an increase in the federal milage reimbursement rate to 65.5 cents.

Commissioner Schaeffer indicated that the counties all use the current federal rate as well. A motion was made and seconded (Duane and Arlen) to approve bills and milage at the current federal rate. Lew asked where the commission stood with current assessments. Bethany indicated that she believed that Lincoln, Twin Falls and Gooding counties were current and reported that invoices had been resent to counties after the April meeting. She will reach out to the Gooding Co Clerks office to see if any other Payments have come in by the next meeting.

Lew began reviewing April's action items and opened with the subject of rescheduling the public hearing on proposed changes to the Coordinated Water Resource Plan. Bethany mentioned that she modified the previous draft and changed the date to fall in line with June's regularly scheduled meeting on the 21st. Bethany indicated that if the narrative was agreeable, she would schedule to have it posted in the Times News. Lew asked if there were other locations where the notice would need to be posted and Bethany replied that copies of the proposed changes would need to be available at County Clerks offices or other public offices. Dan Suhr indicated that after January's meeting, copies had been made and commission members distributed them to county court houses. Copies were also given out to all commissioners in attendance at the April meeting. Commissioner Schaeffer mentioned that a plan would need to be available at the hearing. He also indicated that sending an email to respective County Clerk's office with a posting of the hearing to ask them to post it to their bulletin would be wise and that it will need to be at least 48 hours prior to the hearing date.

Bethany asked if the group would like to attend the WAG meeting that was set to start at 2pm. Lew asked if we should address why WAG is scheduling meeting times that conflict with our meetings. Dan and Aaron Travino indicated that their meeting dates are not set in stone and that they send out a public doodle poll to identify which dates work best for all. Lew suggested that we reach out to WAG (Amie Paris) and request that they do not schedule meetings that conflict with ours so we have the opportunity to attend.

Bethany relayed to the group that she is generating an agency contact list and was hoping to be able to reach out to everyone to help her generate a comprehensive list of current contacts. The group indicated they were agreeable in helping her generate this list.

Bethany discussed the ability to post water-related news articles on a social media platform for public and/or commission access. She also requested permission to generate a PowerPoint presentation as a visual representation of the Coordinated Water Resource Plan that could be used by herself and any other member to help express key points within the Plan. Gale Kleinkopf expressed that he didn't see a need to generate this kind of presentation and indicated that people have access to the Plan, and that the commission is continually updating that Plan. He didn't think that anyone on the commission would be wanting to deliver a presentation like this to people. Jason Parker indicated that a PowerPoint like this may be a beneficial resource that could be housed on the website, or even a social media platform as a visual representation of what the plan contains, especially when trying to reach the younger generations and people who may be consuming their information on a computer. Lew also expressed that he feels if anyone on the commission was asked to come and present on what the Plan is all about, that all of them could do that already, without having Bethany put a lot of effort into it. Bethany explained that the effort would not be an imposition to her and that when discussing the idea of reaching a younger audience, something like this could help because many in the younger generation need stimulation to keep them engaged. Duane commented that he is occasionally asked to go before Twin Falls P&Z and give a report and that a PowerPoint presentation would help him convey our messages.

Bethany reported that a draft of next year's budget will need to be completed by June 30th and she indicated that she would dive into last year's information to see about generating a draft for 2023-2024. She also commented to the group that she is starting to see that the Executive Director (ED) duties, which include the role of director, secretary, and treasurer, does require a good amount of time. She was wondering if the duties of the ED could be considered the tasks of two people and questioned the possibility of having secretarial duties assigned out to free up the ED's time for fostering important relationships. Lew indicated that this would be a question to ask the Executive Committee since the Executive Director is appointed by them. Bethany believed that the Executive Committee is trying to have a meeting just before next month's meeting and she would bring it up to them then.

Lew continued through the list of action items and addressed the idea of hosting a commission event to invite state and local representatives as well as generating pertinent letters to legislators and agencies which express commission concerns. Lew also mentioned that there are many legislators and representatives that are knowledgeable about the commission's cause. He then opened a question to the group about reaching out and introducing ourselves to new legislators so we can start asking them questions to help bring awareness on water quality and quantity issues in the region. He asked if there was interest in coordinating a meeting with our state legislators and have them attend one of our monthly meetings where we can introduce ourselves and show them our outreach website and videos.

Commissioner Schaeffer commented that on the last election, Idaho had the highest legislative turnover the state has seen. He mentioned that he deals with three freshman legislators in his area and relayed that he will bring them in to talk about various issues. He also commented that they are like a sponge drawing everything in. Commissioner Schaeffer expressed that bringing freshmen legislators in for a meeting could be a value.

Gale expressed that we as a commission need somebody to come in and talk with us about the domestic well numbers. He suggested that Brian Olmstead might be able to come back and deliver some information on that and also indicated that Brian sees the number of domestic wells as a concern. He feels it important for the commission to be educated on the subject by professionals before delivering the subject to anyone else. Dan Suhr expressed that the domestic well issue is one that is not going to be solved because when people move into an area, they need water, and you aren't going to stop people from drinking. He also explained that when you start talking about domestic, you are talking about making a lot of mad voters. Lew commented that he has no argument with Dan's assessment, however, there is only so much water, so somehow it needs to be addressed. Duane asked a question on how much one can legally irrigate with a domestic well and Dan responded ½ acre. Duane went on to comment that there are many subdivisions that are using water on land areas that size and expressed that there is no doubt they are abusing the amount of water they can use in a domestic well. He also asked if there is any way to legally regulate that? Dan and Duane indicated that new subdivisions are required to use surface water, but individual landowners don't. Dan went on to explain that the only way to regulate would be to organize them into a domestic well user organization and then they would hire someone to monitor meters. Arlen commented that he didn't know if we should be putting ourselves outside of the water quality area to address quantity. Bethany added that because the subject of quantity has been dominating the news lately, it may be a subject to pay attention to since everyone is currently talking about it. Dan went on to explain the history of adjudication on pumpers and the mitigation that occurred after. He indicated that it worked, and our area has curtailed its use down to a point where we are ok, but there may be a few half dozen "bad eggs". He also indicated that pumpers in Eastern Idaho didn't want to mitigate, and that is why they are in trouble right now. Dean commented that enforcement to all these different aspects is the biggest issue that is out there. He said there is not enough money, manpower, or actual authority to go out and enforce.

Lew steered the group back to the original question on if we want to try to put a meeting together to talk to state legislators or come up with some kind of a bulletin we would feel comfortable with that would direct them to information on the website. Duane expressed that he believes we would get more benefit out of a meeting with legislators than we would with public hearings. Dan suggested that maybe we should only invite 3 or 4 of them at a time to have more of a one-on-one type of experience where we can actually converse and get to know them instead of it being in a large group setting. The group discussed it further and decided that it would be best to invite all legislators from the 5-county area because we don't want to exclude anyone, and it may also be good to give a reminder to those who already know about our purpose. Dan went on to suggest that we could schedule during a few of our regularly scheduled meetings and conduct it in a way where we can all fire questions back and forth to each other. Bethany asked a question about how the structure of the meeting topic should take place. Dean suggested that we could have our main points listed down and have them broken up into topics that cover water quality, domestic wells, irrigation, etc., so that a presentation of information to the legislators can be all encompassing and be able to navigate them to a conclusion. Duane indicated that

one of the advantages our commission has over others is that we are being educated and informed by professionals from a variety of disciplines. We don't have to focus on just feed lots or subdivisions, or irrigation, we get to learn about it all. Duane suggested it would be beneficial if we were able to put what we have learned into a presentation with high points, then deliver it to legislators and ask about their opinions on the information. He also went on to say that we have a lot of advantages because we hear from a lot of organizations and people. Bethany wondered if we needed to organize a meeting to be able to sit down and compile these thoughts, as well as organize future presenters for meetings. Lew indicated that his knowledge is pretty average about water quality and quantity, and he would hate to have some legislators come in and give us the third degree about current situations. Dan offered that the knowledge we have in this group, we use to give direction, or make recommendations to other bodies. We are not a lawmaking group, or a legislative agency, we are a steering group so he doesn't think anyone would ever expect facts and figures from us. Arlen suggested that Ken Skinner be invited to come in for topics. Dan continued with the thought that he doesn't think we need to express an exact knowledge, we need to just be able to relay the general concepts of what we are trying to do, and that we need to continue moving forward on water quality and quantity awareness and be able to inform legislators on the kinds of tools that are available from state agencies to help other agencies and so on. Bethany asked if this means that our main focus is on education and outreach. Dean offered that this group is helping to facilitate interaction back and forth. Arlen also added that he thinks it would be good for any of these new legislators to come in and just see what we are doing as a means to get the door open so they know where to get information from and we know who to talk to and so on. Dan asked Bethany if all that information was enough to give her a good starting point? She indicated yes and asked if it was ok with the group that she begin generating a PowerPoint presentation to start getting all those thoughts organized. She also expressed wanting to tie in the commissions videos as clips to be able to express points on where we came from, and how we are continuing to move into the future. Dan suggested that two separate meetings be held, one in September and one in October, to get two separate sets of legislators to come in. Lew commented that the plan could be a really good way to guide us in what we want to talk about because it has all our main points. He expressed that we wouldn't need to go through the topics verbatim, but we should address agriculture particularly in relation to concerns of use and how it contributes to water quality and quantity. Dan also suggested talking about domestic water use as well. Dan motioned to set up a meeting with legislators before the legislative session of next year and Dean seconded it.

Lew moved forward with the next action items of addressing radionuclides and pharmaceutical contamination in more detail and indicated that these are topics we have never really had much information presented to us on. He says we have a really good sense of ag, dairy and aquaculture as potential causes for contamination, but we have never gotten a good sense of radioactive material threats from INL. Lew indicated that we have heard from some of the environmental groups about how INL manages the site, and he remembers taking an actual tour of the facility and suggested that maybe we should do that again. He also indicated that we have never talked much about pharmaceuticals in the water and was not sure who we could get to educate us on that. Bethany asked if the group had heard about the Oliver Stone documentary called Nuclear Now which was about nuclear energy, and that one of the scientist from INL was featured in it. The news reported that this documentary was being played in select Eastern Idaho theaters, and it seemed as though the research and activities of the INL were being presented in a positive light. Duane relayed that we have had someone on an INL oversight citizens type group come in and deliver a presentation to us, but that was a long time ago. He indicated

that it was refreshing to know there are concerned citizens out there we can talk to who have looked around the facility, rather than getting a report from an INL representative. Aaron relayed to the group that the oversight program is a DEQ program and Bethany indicated that she would reach out to them to see about getting someone to come over and talk to us.

Bethany then went on to ask about the types of groups or agencies that the commission would like to hear from and they indicated any that have missions which correlate to water quantity and/or quality. Lew did mention that we have had presentations from some of the environmental groups, and that the commission does like to know what they think and observe, however, the commission does not seek to push their agendas. Arlen and Dan indicated that many of their agendas appear to be aimed at eliminating agriculture and dairy operations. Bethany thanked them for this insight and relayed that she would start working on getting presenters lined up. She also mentioned that the new option we now have to host virtual presentations may get us more speakers willing to talk.

Dan offered a statement about the commissioners meeting last month and suggested that it would be advantageous for this commission and the executive committee (commissioners) to meet at least once a year so that everyone knows who the players are. He said that they had never really done that before and that it's something that needs to be done because we work for them. Lew agreed to the valuable of this suggestion.

Lew recommended that we move on to Bethany's planned presentation relating to outreach in natural resources. The meeting was running long so she indicated that it could easily be delivered at the next meeting, or we could hold that presentation as a place filler in the event that no speaker is scheduled, there is a cancellation, etc. With that, Dan Suhr gave the motion to adjourn, and Arlen Morgan seconded it. The meeting was adjourned at 2:25pm.

Respectfully Submitted

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bethany Muffley', written in a cursive style.

Bethany Muffley, Executive Director (Acting)