



Meeting Minutes - June 21, 2023

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

Present:

Commissioners

Brent Reinke – Twin Falls County
Dan Schaeffer – Minidoka County

Commission Members

Lew Pence – Chair - Gooding
Gale Kleincopf – Vice Chair – Twin Falls
Bethany Muffley – Acting Ex Director
Duane Turner – Twin Falls P&Z (retired)
Dan Suhr - Jerome
Arlen Morgan – Jerome P&Z
Kerry McMurray - Cassia

Agency

Nicholas Howell – DEQ – Twin Falls

Prospective Member

Jason Parker – Tri Counties Nox Weed Dept

Lew Pence began the meeting at 1pm and started with around the room introduction of members and agency personnel in attendance.

Lew asked if there were any changes or corrections to the minutes of the previous meeting. The minutes were approved with a motion made by Gale Kleincopf and seconded by Dan Suhr.

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 requested reimbursement for the printing of materials at FedEx (\$78.55) and mailing of packets to 5 county clerks offices (\$48.25) containing the proposed plan changes for public access as explained in our public hearing notice. Bethany also explained that bills are expected to be received from the Times News and Camas Courier for public hearing notice, but she has not received them yet. A motion was made by Kerry McMurray and seconded Arlen Morgan to approve current bills and milage at the current federal rate.

Lew asked if there had been any correspondence since the previous meeting and Bethany relayed interactions back and forth with the Times News, Camas Courier, and county clerk's offices in relation to the public hearing. She also mentioned individuals who responded to the email requesting assistance to compile an agency, representative, organization, etc. personnel list that the commission can use to identify important contacts when questions arise.

Lew presented a letter he had received from the Idaho Conservation League (ICL). Lew explained that this letter was meant to request revenue to support a water quality improvement plan and he questioned if the ICL even understands who we are and that the Mid Snake RWRC has its own plan. Lew wondered if we as a commission should generate a response to them that explains our mission and introduces them to our updated plan and website. Arlen commented that it would be a good idea to generate some kind response and mentioned that when ICL came to talk with us in the past, they

seemed to be very anti-agriculture and anti-livestock. Lew went on to say that the ICL does need to be aware that there are a lot of uses of water in the region, and that we need to work with everyone. Dan Suhr indicated that ICL sits on the WAG committee, so they know what is going on in the Snake. He also expressed frustration with the ICL and mentioned that most of what they speak about as far as action appears to dovetail off the work of this commission. Duane Turner added that the commission has always had an issue with fostering public awareness of the work being done. Arlen continued that when ICL last spoke to them, the information presented was from 2017 data where flood events had occurred that facilitated spikes in the data and presented the situation as much worse than it actually was. Arlen also mentioned that a lot of work has been accomplished over the last 10 years between the Idaho State Department of Agriculture and cattle operations. Dan Suhr suggested that we draft a response to the ICL that acknowledges their existence and thanks them for helping us make the public aware. Lew indicated that he and Bethany would get something generated and send it out to the group for review before sending a response. Arlen mentioned that when ICL came to present, they had actually used his cattle operation as an example of a bad operation. When he asked them why, all they could tell him was that it was too big. On that note, Bethany mentioned that she had had a meeting with Mitch Vermeer at ISDA and he indicated he would be willing to present to the commission. Bethany asked if there is anything specific the group would like to hear about, and it was suggested that an update on current regulations and data tied to progress seen over the years since the regulations were enacted, what industry has been doing and what improvements are that the public doesn't know about. It was also commented that this kind of information may help us in our educational outreach effort as well.

Lew asked for a motion to open the public hearing for consideration of the updated coordinated water resource plan. Gale moved that the public hearing be opened, and Arlen seconded it. The motion was passed at 1:24pm. Lew asked if there were any public comments? Hearing none, a motion was made by Dan Suhr to close the comment session, Kerry seconded. The motion was passed, and the public hearing closed at 1:26pm.

Lew introduced Bethany Muffley as the next presenter, and she addressed the topic of Media Marketing in Natural Resources. Bethany discussed the power of using social media with branded content to reach a larger audience who may not get their information from traditional printed media sources. She presented it as a topic that could challenge the initial thoughts many might have about social media platforms like Facebook as being a negative force and explained that the main purpose is to use these kinds of platforms as a tool that will help direct the public to our website so they can access deeper educational content. She displayed graphs that indicated social media as a major contributor of website visits during the pandemic and went on to show that since we have come out of it, people are still using it as their main avenue to locate website content. Bethany also explained that on a website she manages, most people who were visiting it are doing so from cell phones and other smart devices. Platforms like Facebook and Instagram generate content that is easily navigated using smart phone, so she relayed to the group that she did some work on the website to help with our visibility on smart devices. She also introduced the Middle Snake Regional Water Resources Commission Facebook page, and many in the room navigated to the page to take a look around. Bethany explained that our Facebook page should be thought of as a tool and to know that the hope is that it will develop into a trusted page that the public, county and state representatives could access and use to find the information they are looking for. It is a way to promote our visibility to all of them and help to generate discussions based on the educational content we would be putting out. She told the group that the

Facebook page is in its infancy and currently, is only really highlighting water in the news articles that she finds via google search notification at this time.

Commissioner Brent Reinke commented that Southern Idaho Tourism has been very successful in using social media to highlight desirable destinations, and now some of those areas are being over visited. Jason Parker asked if we should reach out to them to help promote our Facebook page. Bethany responded that maybe we are not ready for that just yet. Her hope is that over the winter months when things slowdown that many of the commission's outreach materials can be rebranded, reprinted and be able to generate appealing content on our social media pages. She indicated that once we have our product fine-tuned, then we would be ready to reach other groups to help promote our page. Gale expressed concerns that he would not want to see the traditional outreach generated by the commission replaced with online media. Bethany responded that online media would not be replacing any of those kinds of items, it would be enhancing them to help support our goal of reaching that larger audience. Arlen mentioned that pamphlets would also be good to produce so they could be taken back to Planning and Zoning offices for distribution. Lew indicated that it is very beneficial to build up an audience and that it is important for the whole community to be aware of what we all need to do, and where protection is needed. He feels the group has always strived to get education out to the public, but that we haven't been able to do it to the extent it needs to get done. Lew recalled a comment that Bethany had made at May's meeting in relation to the history portion of the plan in relation to not having that kind of history presented to her in primary school because it would have made her passionate about local water issues. Lew expressed that if we could just put something simple together for the kids to understand early on, that could be a real benefit. Commissioner Dan Schaeffer suggested an avenue to pursue on this point and mentioned reaching out to 4-H, FFA, Junior High and High School kids to help educate them on the subject so that they would have a basis of understanding when they move up into the real world. The group expressed that reaching teachers with this kind of a local subject could be highly valuable.

Lew moved the discussion on to new and old business. Dan Suhr asked Commissioner Schaeffer if his presence indicates Minidoka as having a desire to rejoin the commission as a partner county. Commissioner Schaeffer indicated that the county is currently having that discussion. Dan Suhr indicated that it would be a good thing to know so that we can add Minidoka back into the plan before it goes to print. Commissioner Schaeffer indicated he would let us know by the next meeting.

Bethany mentioned that she had questions on which counties were current with their assessments and indicated that Twin Falls, Gooding, and Lincoln Counties were the only counties she found as current. She indicated that Lincoln may have paid twice, and also asked for guidance on how to go about reaching out to counties who had not yet paid. Jason referenced contacting clerk's offices. Commissioner Reinke mentioned that all counties were currently working on budgets, and that they are due by the end of June indicating that will need to know this information soon. Bethany also introduced a draft budget for 2023-2024 and distributed to the group for review. Commissioner Reinke mentioned that moving forward, we may want to look into increasing the amount that each county pay based on the producing of outreach materials discussed. Bethany asked how the Commission went about getting this proposed budget to counties and Brent indicated that Bob and Lew would come to each county and make the request for funds before the end of June, and the commissioners would then sign a document pledging those funds. He said many groups operate like this and they usually come in by the end of March and first of June. Bethany indicated that she had found those documents and asked if it would be ok to email them to the

commissioners for consideration. Brent and Dan indicated that that would be ok as they understand that her time is such that she would not be able to visit counties to have that facetime discussion.

Duane offered a comment that his daughter is Superintendent of Schools for the Valley and that she is a highly effective grant writer that understands there are educational dollars available to those who know how to find them. He offered this as a future strategy to use if additional funds are needed for projects.

Lew requested a motion to approve the budget as written or include Minidoka at this time. Gale indicated to approve the budget as is and that we can amend it later if Minidoka decides to join. The motion was made by Dan Suhr to approve the budget and Gale seconded it.

Bethany asked the group if they wanted to discuss the recent supreme court decision in the Sacketts vs EPA case. Bethany briefly explained her understanding of the situation and introduced differing public perceptions. Lew mentioned that perhaps we should hear from someone at DEQ after the dust settles from this decision when they have a better understanding of the impacts this decisions may have.

Lew asked how many copies needed to be printed of the updated plan and how to go about distributing it. Bethany indicated she found information on the last order from a printer out of Jerome, and she thought there were 40 or 50 copies made. Commissioner Reinke asked when the economic section was last updated, and Lew indicated it was updated in 2022 by Steve Hines. Lew directed Bethany to check with the printers and maybe think about ordering 50-75 copies. Commissioner Reinke requested that a year to be listed on the Plan.

Dan Suhr asked that we find out the length of term each commission member has served and when they were assigned. He also indicated that he does not wish to serve another term. Dan suggested that a list of these appointments be generated with term information so the executive committee and Bethany know when appointments of representatives will need to be made. Bethany indicated she found a few of the documents indicating this information but she hadn't found one for everyone.

Commissioner Reinke Brent mentioned to the group that Paul Arrington and the Strawman he generated in relation to domestic wells. There is a deadline for feedback on this documents and Commissioner Reinke indicated he would send a copy of the strawman to Bethany so she can distribute it to the rest of the group. He reported that part of it is looking at density, septic systems, etc. He also said that as a state, we need to get an understanding of what authority the Department of Water Resources has, and what needs to happen. He thinks it is wise to stay up to speed on this subject. Commissioner Reinke also mentioned the Magic Valley Land Trust group as a good one to interact with and that they may be able to relay some good educational information. He went on to explain that this group develops land trusts, and they already have 11 sites up and down the Snake River. Their goal is to conserve land for agriculture, and we may see more people wanting to do that. Commissioner Reinke indicated that they may have an interesting topic for us. He also mentioned Nate Francisco who is the Executive Director and CEO of Southern Idaho Solid Waste and is also on the Citizens Oversight Committee for INL could be a great person to talk to as far as future topics. He indicated that solid waste has a huge project coming up down the road that will be the first of its kind and that protecting the aquifer is at the center.

Lew asked for any other business and Commissioner Reinke relayed that Paul Arrington is having a water college in September in Boise that he will get us the information on. Hearing no additional business to

discuss, Dan Suhr gave the motion to adjourn, and Gale 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)