



Minutes – March 20, 2024

Meeting Date: March 20, 2024

Attendance:

Commissioners – Ex Committee (EC)

Brent Reinke – Twin Falls County
Ron Buhler – Gooding County
Nathan Schutte – Lincoln County

Commission Members

Lew Pence - Gooding
Roger Morley – Executive Director
Bethany Muffley – Executive Asst.
Duane Turner – Vice Chair TF P&Z (retired)
Kerry McMurray – Cassia P&Z
Arlen Morgan – Chair Jerome P&Z
Dean Edgar - Cassia

Agency/Other

Raphael Erickson – DEQ – Twin Falls
Nicholas Howell – DEQ – Twin Falls

Call to Order: Arlen Morgan - 1:00PM

Approve minutes of previous meeting: Lew Pence Motion, Duane Turner 2nd.

Approve bills: Member milage reimbursements, Roger Morley (\$750) , Bethany Muffley (\$490 – 24.5hrs @ \$20/hr). Lew motioned, Duane Turner 2nd.

Correspondence: Executive Director (ED) Roger Morley reported interactions with Northside Canal company discussing mission statements, Kasey Prestwich with the BLM as the point of contact in regards to Lava Ridge, the Executive Committee to discuss directives related to a Mid Snake RWRC educational training for county P&Z boards as well as receiving input on a commission statement letter in relation to the Lava Ridge Project that is proposed to being sent to Karen Keller with the BLM, and new elections for Chair and Vice Chair in WAG (Chair – Jason Brown, Vice Chair – Nathan Erickson). He went on to report that Tasha Owens from DEQ had reached out about grant opportunities, that he and Commissioner Reinke appeared as guests on Bill Colley News Radio Show discussing recharge and wind farms, and also at the West End Men’s Association in Buhl, and a discussion with Allen Hansten with questions about the water call. Allen indicated there was a breach in the 2016 Agreement between pumpers and the canal companies where the pumpers failed to do the reduction contained in the groundwater management plan. He continued with reporting current water storage percentages and flow rates and relayed that Northside Canal will begin releasing water next week. He also reached out to Nic Howell with DEQ in relation to future presentation topics. Nic indicated he would also reach out to IDWR to see if both DEQ and IDWR could give us overviews on water quality and quantity perspectives. Roger also reached out to Jay with Twin Falls Canal Company who reported they will start recharge efforts next week and will begin delivering water around April 15th.

Introductions were made around the room and discussion continued on with information related to potential commission members, along with current water storage levels.

Commission Buhler took the floor to deliver a thank you to Lew Pence for all his time and effort on the Commission. Lew thanked the group and indicated that water conservation will always be an issue and we need to get more members involved so that we can have a good group of people working together that can help protect our region.

The Lava Ridge opposition letter Roger generated on behalf of the commission was presented to the group for discussion. Duane offered that the situation with Lava Ridge is a political issue at this point because the government wants it. He indicated that we need to be strong willed in our opposition and to also to be diligent with our efforts to push our program here. Brent asked the group if any had been privy to what Mike Simpson has done in the last appropriation package? Brent distributed an explanation letter and relayed that Mike Simpson serves as the Chair for the Interior Subcommittee for Congress which oversees the budget for the Department of the Interior. The letter indicates that the money will be frozen until the end of September so they will not be able to proceed with Lava Ridge until after that (a copy of this letter is included below). Brent also relayed that the Secretary of the Interior has indicated that they will come to Idaho and meet with all parties involved in this. Brent indicated that they were expected to get an environmental impact statement submitted by May with a 30-day comment period, followed by a decision with another 30-day comment period, then followed by a decision. Brent also discussed a second letter (attached below) that outlines a proposed SWIP-N power project that would impact numerous historic properties (a copy of this letter is also included below). Brent informed the group of another project proposed by Great West that would be coming out of Oregon. Nathan indicated that the Simpson letter could set the precedence for public ground on how to address these types of proposals and relayed that there are two other wind projects waiting to see what happens with Lava Ridge – Taurus which would be between Gooding and Shoshone and another by Samon Falls. Brent made the statement that Lava Ridge is like the equivalent to Hoover Dam.

Roundtable Discussion:

Discussion related to a P&Z educational/information training relating to the plan and how it can be used was discussed. Duane relayed that he contacted Laura with Twin Falls P&Z who indicated that she is still getting the minutes and distributing them to the members. He suggested that instead of sending them all the items that are sent out to members, perhaps we should just be sending them the minutes to avoid them getting overloaded with too much information. The group went around the room providing input on the type of information they use, comments on how the plan is currently used, what could be included, and how it could be presented. Raphael Erickson Nic Howell with DEQ described how they review and respond with comment letters when requested by counties as well as the collection of the data and how it is presented on their website for transparency and public access. Raphael indicated that some counties are receptive to the information and some like to do their own thing, but indicated

that they are open to providing opportunities for education. Bethany requested information on how P&Z commission is trained to assist her in an understanding of how to best deliver our message to them. Roger indicated that he would try to get ahold of explanatory documents generated from Jerome County and get them to her. Roger proposed an idea of having a Commission fly sheet included into planning and zoning packages and explained what that would look like. Duane offered that he thought it was an excellent idea and suggested that including information which encourages P&Z to contact us with questions would be a value.

Bethany introduced business card templates to consider, and Roger requested to have name tags made when attending various meetings. These items will be placed on following meeting agendas as action items for a vote. Brent relayed to the group that he and Bethany were working on a potential flow chart for Commission organization and requested that it be placed on the next agenda. It was discovered that the Lava Ridge letter was not properly indicated on the agenda for a vote. Brent indicated that it could be dispensed to members as a poll via email and submitted as a matter of record at the next meeting.

Steve Hines mentioned that Gary Fornshell could be a good contact in regard to finding a way to tie into the aquaculture community. Gary had retired and was previously an aquaculture extension educator but still does some consulting. Jacob Bledsoe was reported as his replacement. Brent also mentioned that Robert Young with Riverence could all be a good contact.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:19PM with a motion by Lew and seconded by Kerry.

Respectfully Submitted

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

Bethany Muffley, Executive Assistant

Mike Simpson legislative rider. Grateful for Mike Simpson's leadership to secure a legislative rider to bar the use of appropriated funds during the remainder of federal fiscal year 2024 for Lava Ridge permitting. President Biden signed the Interior appropriations bill into law. BLM has non-appropriated funds provided by the company through cost recovery, which wouldn't be impacted by the rider.

Rep. Mike Simpson 's legislative rider (Sec. 441) in the Interior conference bill would bar the use of appropriated funds in Fiscal year 2024 (which runs through Sept. 30, 2024) to grant a right-of-way permit for the Lava Ridge wind project, unless or until certain conditions are met: analyze action alternatives designed to reduce impacts, consult with local officials and stakeholders, seek feedback regarding action alternatives, provide periodic reports to the Appropriations Committees and provide a briefing to the Committees. Here is the text of the rider:

(a) None of the funds made available by this Act may be obligated or expended for the purpose of granting, issuing, or renewing a right-of-way under section 501 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1761) for the Lava Ridge Wind Project, unless or until the Secretary of the Interior, acting through the Bureau of Land Management, has analyzed, in consultation with local elected officials and stakeholders, action alternatives designed to reduce impacts to wildlife, cultural resources, transportation, hunting, wetlands and the connected surface and ground waters. The Secretary shall complete such consultations, and seek feedback regarding action alternatives, not later than September 30, 2024, and no funds made available in this Act shall be used for granting, issuing, or renewing a right of-way under section 501 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1761) for the Lava Ridge Wind Project while such consultations and efforts are ongoing.

(b) Prior to granting, issuing, or renewing a right of-way under section 501 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1761) for the Lava Ridge Wind Project, the Secretary shall periodically report to the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations on the status of consultations required under subsection (a) and, once such consultations are complete, provide a briefing to the Committees on the action alternatives and the feedback of local elected officials and stakeholders.

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Dear Ms. Jefferies:

As a member of the Twin Falls County Historic Preservation Commission (TFCHPC) who has been involved since 2021 with the Lava Ridge Energy Project as an Idaho RAC Subcommittee member and participant in the BLM's Section 106 meetings representing the TFCHPC, I am hoping you can provide some information to me and the TFCHPC commissioners about the SWIP-N transportation line.

About 50+ miles of the planned SWIP-N project that traverses Twin Falls County from the Snake River Canyon to the Nevada line would impact numerous historic properties, including National Register sites, through direct and indirect effects; *i.e.*, the Stricker Ranch and Rock Creek Store, the Oregon Trail, Salmon Dam, and the Toano Freight Road. Also significant are the Pre-Contact sites throughout the areas in the Shoshone Basin and the South Hills. Additionally, a project to create a Snake River Canyon Historic Mining District of placer mining sites from the 19th century to the Depression Era is scheduled to begin in April. The transmission line will cross the canyon in an area with many documented Chinese mining sites, resulting in potential degradation of the historic integrity of those sites.

I understand that LS Power Development originally requested a Notice to Proceed (NTP) in 2010, but failed to meet all the requirements set by the BLM at that time, allowing an updated Programmatic Agreement (PA) to expire in 2020. Since then, the Elko Office of the BLM and LS Power have been coordinating efforts to meet the federal standards necessary to receive a NTP. The TFCHPC has great concerns about the county's cultural resources and would appreciate receiving an update on the status of the historic properties survey to date.

We also feel public hearings are warranted about SWIP-N, especially since there will be many impacts on public and private lands with the construction of such a large 500kV transmission line(s). and the lack of public input in about three decades. After all, much has changed demographically and technically in these 30 years that the residents of Twin Falls County should have a right to address. Such hearings could bring a much-needed understanding about SWIP-N to affected property owners and county citizens.

Thank you, Ms. Jefferies, I appreciate your consideration of the TFCHPC's concerns.

Respectfully,

Shauna Robinson