

Board of County Commissioners of Lincoln County
Agenda for April 27, 2017

9:00 Call to order and Pledge of Allegiance

9:00 Troy McCue, Lincoln County Economic Development Corporation Executive Director, to discuss strategic planning for Lincoln County

1. Approve the minutes from the April 25, 2017, meeting
2. Review the monthly management report from the First National Bank Omaha
3. Old business
4. New business
5. Approve payroll and expense vouchers

The Board of Lincoln County Commissioners met at 9:00 a.m. on April 27, 2017. The following attended: Chairman Doug Stone, Commissioners Ed Schiffers and Steve Burgess, County Administrator Gary Ensign, and Clerk to the Board Corinne M. Lengel.

Chairman Stone called the meeting to order and asked Mr. Ensign to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

Economic Development Corporation Executive Director Troy McCue and Vista Volunteer James Russell met with the Board to discuss strategic planning for Lincoln County. John LaBorde and Tim Brown also attended the discussion.

Mr. Russell stated he wanted to get input on the expansion and direction the county is moving in. He had several questions regarding features of a healthy county, the county's tangible goals, county strengths, possible improvements to make the county more attractive, and any projects the county may be currently working on. He also asked if the commissioners had given any thought to a mission and/or vision statement for the county. Mr. Stone responded that he wants to be respectful toward spending county funds and providing quality services to Lincoln County citizens, as well as being mindful of respecting private property. Encouraging private, commercial, and agricultural enterprise and a healthy environment were also main concerns.

Mr. Russell commented that his observations of the county in the six weeks he's been here are of clean air and the openness of undeveloped land, which he sees as an avenue for future development and success. He asked the commissioners for their opinion on what makes a healthy county, and the responses were fresh air, a strong economy, retention of youth, and a friendly, relaxed atmosphere. As for tangible goals, the Board agreed that more fairgrounds improvements in regard to upgrading the livestock buildings is a priority.

Mr. LaBorde brought up the roundhouse, stating that it is up to the commissioners to figure out what they are going to use it for. His opinion was that the historical aspect of the roundhouse should be completed soon and they could have it up and running by next spring. Mr. Russell said there seems to be a need for art and culture in the county and the roundhouse is on everyone's mind.

He asked if there were any plans to make the county more attractive, adding that several of the towns have discussed blight removal. Mr. Stone said the county did adopt a nuisance ordinance about a year ago, and Mr. Burgess added that there may be available funding through COG, if they wanted to check into that.

When asked about strengths or key achievements in the county, Mr. Schiffers felt the wind towers and oil wells have been great financial strengths, even though many people don't like the looks of them. Mr. Burgess said Lincoln County is a strong agricultural community but commodity prices often drive the economy.

Mr. Russell brought up crop diversification and whether or not there is much interest in the county regarding that. Although a few farmers have experimented with chickpeas and other crops, the issue lies in shipping costs, as those crops must be sent quite a distance for sale. Mr. McCue put in that the rail system needs to be put into use more; however, the problem with that is that the railroads find it difficult to ship one carload of a specialty crop without contaminating it with whatever crop they customarily ship. He added that they need to encourage agri-business enterprise, and Mr. Burgess agreed that they need to get more farmers involved in raising diverse crops. Mr. McCue felt the desire is there; there is no means for sales and distribution. Mr. Stone said that there has been interest in the southern portion of the county to raise hemp, and Tim Brown spoke up to say that while Farm Bureau encourages the growing of hemp, they do not support marijuana, so there is a fine line between the two. He added that he is heavily involved in legislature and there are several bills out regarding water and pesticides where growing hemp and marijuana are concerned. Mr. Russell put in that farmers are concerned with the fact that the DEA can seize property, and Mr. Burgess said that there are state permits available that allow growing hemp. He added that hemp can also be used for making rope and other clothing and textiles, but then they are competing with cotton growers. Mr. Brown said that he has personally looked into growing other crops such as lavender. Mr. Burgess stated that the main problem with growing diverse crops is the lack of water and not necessarily the climate.

The group also discussed the fact that the county is a county of aging residents and what to do to encourage young people to return to the community. Mr. Burgess said that although retirees don't spend a lot of money as they seem to need less than younger people, they do require more services, such as healthcare. John LaBorde added that people also look at recreational opportunities when they move to a new community, and Lincoln County really doesn't have many of those.

Mr. Russell said that there has been discussion around the county regarding a recreational facility/center. He commented that the secret to it succeeding would be to combine it with healthcare and features such as therapy pools that would bring in the older people as well. He added that another option for retirees would be to develop an occupational training facility where they could teach young people about their trades.

Mr. Stone said one of the issues with getting younger people into the Karval community and that area is that property is priced too high for them to be able to obtain it. They simply cannot compete with big buyers who come in from other states.

The group also briefly discussed the banking climate, aquaponics—which is something Mr. Russell is extremely interested in—and recycling. Mr. McCue said he's been told that there is a wind tower blade recycler somewhere in west Texas, but he would like to see it in person to find out if it is actually real. He added that the wind tower blades are going to become an epic problem if the county doesn't address what to do with them, and Mr. Russell commented that he sees it as an excellent opportunity.

Before the discussion ended, Mr. Schifferns said he would like to make sure that the county's history is preserved.

At 10:00 a.m., Weed Coordinator Wayne Shade stopped in to discuss bids on a new weed truck. He'd received three quotes: one for a Ford, one for a Dodge, and one for a Chevy. Although the Ford seemed to be the most expensive, he stated it is the only company that makes an extended cab that would fit the county's needs. Dodge will either sell a single cab or a 4-door crew cab, which would be approximately two-to-three feet longer than the current truck. Chevy has nothing over a one ton truck. Mr. Schifferns asked if the Ford has the same engine as the truck he has now, since they had so many problems with it. Mr. Shade said it does, but he was told they have improved it. He added that Ford had offered between \$15,000 and \$19,000 for a trade-in on his 2012 truck, but they hadn't seen it. Dodge did see it and offered \$25,000 for a trade-in. The Ford would cost \$55,819 fully equipped, including the box. The Dodge would be \$45,201, but they would have to pay roughly \$2,400 more for the bumper and running boards, and an additional \$6,105 for the box. Mr. Shade said that both come with 100,000 mile warranties on the engine. Mr. Schifferns said he would lean more toward the Dodge, simply because of the problems Mr. Shade has had with the engine in his 2012. Mr. Shade called Spradley Ford in Greeley to ask about the engine but had to leave a message. He said he would stop back in the following day if he heard from anyone.

Mr. Burgess made a motion to approve the minutes from the meeting held on April 25, 2017, as submitted. Mr. Schifferns seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

The Board reviewed the monthly management report from the First National Bank of Omaha, and then discussed changing the meeting on May 18, due to a scheduling conflict. Since there are already appointments on the calendar for that day, the group agreed to finish by noon.

Lastly, Mr. Burgess said he'd checked with a local body shop and they can put a console in the Dodge for about \$100 if they want to do so.

The Board approved the April 2017 payroll and several expense vouchers for the month, and then, with no other business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned until 9:00 a.m. on April 28, 2017.

Corinne M. Lengel, Clerk to the Board

Doug Stone, Chairman