

Minutes of the
Lower Elkhorn Natural Resources District
Committee of the Whole
Thursday, October 8, 2026 – 7:00 p.m.
Lower Elkhorn NRD
1508 Square Turn Blvd, Norfolk, Nebraska

1. Chairman Matt Steffen informed the Board and those attending of the Publication of Meeting Notice in the Norfolk Daily News on October 2, 2026, and of the Nebraska Open Meetings Act information posted on the wall.

Directors in attendance were Jerry Alleman, Mark Burenheide, Scott Clausen, Mike Fleer, Andy Hrabanek, Lee Klein, Gary Loftis, Jay Reikofski, Matt Steffen, Melissa Temple, and Anthony Wisnieski. Jim Aschoff, Roger Gustafson, Chad Korth, and Kris Loberg were absent from the meeting.

2. Public Comment – There were no comments from the public at this time.

3. Projects and Programs

- a. Report and update regarding the Request for Proposals for the Maple Creek and North Fork Elkhorn River WFPOs – Assistant General Manager Curt Becker informed the Board that two proposals were received for each WFPO project. Proposals for the North Fork Elkhorn WFPO project were received from JEO and WSP. Proposals for the Maple Creek WFPO project were received from Houston Engineering and WSP. The selection committee met prior to the Committee of the Whole meeting and have ranked JEO and Houston Engineering as the first choices. When the full scopes for each project are available, they will be brought to the Board for a vote.
- b. Report and update regarding the completion of projects and improvements at the Pilger and Maskenthine Recreation Areas – General Manager Brian Brucker updated the Board on the ribbon cutting ceremony at the Pilger Recreation Area for the pavilion donated by Len Dickinson and Jule Goeller. Additional funding may be available from them for future projects. The mural has been completed by Adam Boggs on the storage container at the Maskenthine Mountain Bike Trail. Bruckner also discussed a previous grant proposal he discovered from 2005 that would have established a crushed limestone trail around Maskenthine Lake. Staff will explore future opportunities for grant funding to see if it is possible to revisit the idea.
- c. Tree Planter Machine Bids – Natural Resources Technician Todd Stewart reported on the bids received for a new tree planter machine. Bids were received from four companies, however, one did not meet the specifications. The machine from Trees Are Us from Hemingford, NE is in use by multiple NRDs who are all happy with it. It was also the lowest bid received. Staff recommend purchasing the machine from Trees Are Us.

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Recommended Motion: To accept the bid from Trees Are Us for the purchase of a tree planting machine in the amount of \$9,500.

4. Water Resources

- a. An updated review of old and new water quality data collected in the District – Water Resources Manager Doug Hallum presented an update of the PowerPoint reviewing the District's water quality data through the decades after additional tests were discovered, for a total of about 9600 samples. Key takeaways include: there are significant nitrate concerns across the District, but some areas that might be improving slightly; additional areas probably meet Phase 2 Area criteria; awareness/education like in the WHPAs may make a positive difference; our data is imperfect; but if we manage N thoughtfully to minimize time in the soil profile, we should be OK.
- b. Nebraska Environmental Trust projects update: "Groundwater for Public Health" and "Observing Water and Nutrient Mobility in the Vadose Zone" – Water Resources Manager Doug Hallum provided an update on both projects. Groundwater for Public Health is in the middle of year three and the plan is to request an additional year. The goal was to collect samples from 5% of the registered wells, or 561 wells. Samples have been collected from 424 wells. Over 7,000 surveys requesting participation have been sent out throughout the project.

The Observing Water and Nutrient Mobility in the Vadose Zone project has had two of the four test holes drilled and logged. Training and logging for Nutrient Magnetic Resonance has been completed in one of the test holes, with the other to be completed tomorrow.

5. Administrative

- a. Report on the 2026 Annual NRD Conference and NARD Executive Director Announcement – Director Gary Loftis provided an update of the resolutions brought forward. All three resolutions passed. The next NARD meeting will be November 8th and 9th. He reported that NARD Executive Director Dean Edson announced he will be retiring at the end of the year. Directors Melissa Temple and Andy Hrabanek also reported on their attendance. General Manager Brian Bruckner added additional comments.
- b. General Manager Evaluation – Board Chairman Matt Steffen reported that evaluations were received from 8 Directors and 12 staff. All evaluations were outstanding, very good, and good. The executive board approved the increase to the General Manager's salary as outlined in his contract.

The meeting adjourned at 8:14 p.m.

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