

Logan County Commissioners Work Session

June 20, 2023

Present: Jerry Sonnenberg, Joe McBride, Mike Brownell, Alan Samber, Kevin Blankenship, Jerry Casebolt, Kristan Lange, Debbie Unrein, Sonya Hutchison, Valerie Hibbert, Tom Kiel, Don Masin, Robert Schell, Brett Powell, Trae Miller, Rob Quint, Jeff Rice, and Jennifer Crow.

Chairman Sonnenberg called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS SESSION – Commissioner Brownell moved to approve the minutes of June 6, 2023. Commissioner McBride seconded, and the motion carried, 3-0.

REVISIONS TO WORK SESSION AGENDA – None.

REVIEW AND APPROVE SCHEDULE OF COUNTY BILLS – Kristan Lange met with the Board to review the Logan County schedule of bills dated June 20, 2023. The Board approved all bills as presented.

REVIEW BUSINESS MEETING AGENDA – Chairman Sonnenberg noted that the Intergovernmental Agreement with the City of Sterling has changes to Section two and Section six.

SONYA HUTCHISON STATEMENT – Sonya Hutchison came before the Board to read a statement that she had prepared concerning the county’s use of Dominion voting machines and early voting in elections. She then read a letter to the editor of the Journal-Advocate which she stated was not published. In her letter she stated that she does not believe that Joe Biden won the 2020 election and believes it was stolen from President Trump by the use of early voting and voting machines where algorithms can be easily manipulated to change the outcome of an election. She has stated so to Pam Bacon on a few occasions “with no response from her”.

County Commissioners “fund” the Dominion voting machines. She believes that we must go to a single-day election model with verified legal voters, one day voting, no rigged voting machines, very little absentee voting, only for military or very legitimate, documented excuses, and the counting being overseen by the military, community members, and both parties and it must be transparent to all so that we have confidence in the election process.

Ms. Hutchison went on to state that she was recalled from the Merino school board last fall and blamed Vonnie Sonnenberg for organizing the movement against her. She believes that she was recalled because she actively spoke out against the rigged voting machines to Pam Bacon. Hutchison states that she got on the school board to fight against the Covid-19 unconstitutional mandates. She did not support the mandates and President Trump and acknowledges Jesus Christ as her Lord and Savior. She urged those that agree with her letter to contact Jerry Sonnenberg through the Commissioners website and demand to have the rigged voting machines and return to a single-day election system. She then quoted Romans 8:31 “If God is for us, who can be against us.”

Commissioner Sonnenberg responded to Ms. Hutchison by saying that she had stated that she had no response from Pam Bacon, yet she said she spoke with Pam in person. Ms. Hutchison said she did start talking to her the day after the 2020 election or shortly after and then wrote a letter explaining about the Dominion systems that are located in Colorado.

Commissioner Sonnenberg discussed the voting process in Colorado which includes early voting, absentee voting, and mail in ballots and was all done by the legislature. The county has nothing to say about that other than to follow the state. The cost is paid by the Secretary of State.

Commissioner Sonnenberg addressed the algorithms that Ms. Hutchison alleges can be switched through USP plugs or by someone remotely. Logan County voting machines are not connected to the internet. Commissioner Sonnenberg then read through several paragraphs describing the testing that the County Clerk must do for each voting machine:

Rule 11, County Clerk must perform the hardware diagnostic test and a logic and accuracy test before each election and each device that will be used in the election including spare or backup devices and must include the following, all input and output devices, communication port system, printer system, screen displays, boot performance and initializations, display a firmware software hash value when possible confirmation that screen displays are functioning, date, time calibration system, scanner calibration.

“The election official must seal each device upon successful completion of the test and retain documentation of the seal information. Logan County Clerk's Office conducts office test and public test 11.3.2. The county clerk must conduct a public logic inaccuracy test. The county clerk must prepare a test deck of ballots that include every ballot style and where applicable precinct. The counting test deck must include a sufficient number of test ballots to mark every vote position for every contest and allow for situations where a contest permits an electorate to vote for two or more positions and include over votes and under votes for each contest. The county test deck must include ballots printed from a ballot on demand printer and must include commercially vendor printed ballots. The county clerk must convene a testing board of one registered elector from each of the major political parties. Testing board members must be registered to vote in the county and be sworn in as election judges. The County Clerk must provide at least 25 ballots that are clearly marked, and test ballots of each testing board member testing members must mark their test ballots following the instructions printed on the ballots to retain a record of their tally. The testing board members must test the ballots on each type of device and each type of ballot including audio ballots. The county clerk testing board must observe a tabulation of all these test ballots, compare the tabulation with previously retained records of the test vote count. The county clerk must reset the public counter to zero on all devices.

Commissioner Sonnenberg stated: “I'm not going to read the whole thing. What I'm going to tell you is I'm very proud of the work that Pam Bacon does here, and the county election. Transparent, she is transparent, and you have access online to those tests. The machines are used by a number of different counties as well. I'm convinced that Pam does a good job, and we are balanced in that there is no corruption or fraud here in Logan County.”

Commissioner Sonnenberg addressed Ms. Hutchison's slanderous remark about his wife, Vonnie Sonnenberg. He asked for documentation from Ms. Hutchison concerning the recall.

Commissioner Sonnenberg stated that Mrs. Sonnenberg had nothing to do with Ms. Hutchison's recall. Why would she attack Ms. Hutchison with a recall? Ms. Hutchison stated that Mrs. Sonnenberg was directing the people in the crowd to speak. She feels that she was being recalled because as a school board member, she spoke out against the unconstitutional mandates and against the sexualized surveys.

Pam Bacon addressed the no response comment from Ms. Hutchison because she did respond to Ms. Hutchison. They talked in Walmart for some time about election matters. Ms. Hutchison continued to discuss her ideas about a single day election vs. mail ballot election and the costs she believes should be less expensive than mailing the ballots to every voter.

Pam explained that the county cannot go against state law has said that our elections will be. They would all be violating their oaths of office.

Ms. Hutchison was advised to contact her state senator or state representative if she wants to initiate a change in the state election process.

NORTHEASTERN COLORADO REVOLVING LOAN FUND – Valerie Hibbert met with the Board and gave a brief background on the Northeastern Colorado Revolving Loan Fund. The fund is a nonprofit organization that has been in operation since 1988 and serves the six counties of northeastern Colorado, providing small business loans. The fund does not compete with banks so if a project comes in and a bank could loan the funds, she will refer the client to a bank. But if there is a gap that the project needs to be filled, the fund can help fill the gap.

To date, the fund has loaned over \$31 million of which almost \$11 million has been loaned in Logan County. There are 14 business loan funds in the rural parts of the state. Northeastern Colorado Revolving Loan Fund is part of a consortium that allows access to state and federal funds. Ms. Hibbert is here today because she is filing an application for a Community Development Block Grant to provide an additional source of funding for the revolving loan fund. Those are HUD funds that filter down from HUD to the Office of Economic Development and international trade to the revolving loan fund.

The documents the Board will be signing today are all standard HUD documents that are required to be signed in order for Logan County to participate. Ms. Hibbert is in hopes that Yuma County is going to be the lead county and fiscal agent for the funds. After all the counties sign on, there will be advertising in each county's local newspaper and a public hearing in Yuma County for citizen comments.

There are 141 different businesses in Logan County that have received loans. The largest number of loans have been in Logan County. Job creation and retention is a key factor. The fund has helped with the creation and/or retention of 784 different jobs in Logan County.

Alan Samber commented that the Board must sign a resolution against the use of excessive force by law enforcement officers. In order to get HUD money, the Board also has to sign a residential anti-displacement and relocation assistance plan to ensure that low and moderate

income persons' housing is not adversely affected by any action taken by the government receiving CDBG funds.

Ms. Hibbert noted that the excessive force resolution has been signed before by the county. This is her ninth CDBG application. The last one was submitted in 2016. The policy talks about excessive force will not be used against non-violent protests. In the past the sheriff has signed a letter stating that excessive force will not be used on non-violent protesters. Commissioner Sonnenberg asked Sheriff Powell if he would have a problem with the Board adopting the policy. Sheriff Powell answered that he would not have a problem with the policy.

COMMISSIONERS PROCEEDINGS FOR MAY 2023 – Commissioner McBride moved to approve the Commissioners Proceedings for the month of May 2023. Commissioner Brownell seconded and the motion carried 3-0.

POSSIBLE MOU WITH THE CITY OF STERLING FOR HERITAGE CENTER/REC CENTER/COMBINATION – Commissioner Brownell updated the Board on his workshop meeting with the USDA. Three groups have come together to look into the possibility of renovating the City of Sterling Recreation Center. The county recently signed an MOU with CSU and CU Denver for the Heritage Center plans. He has visited with Greg Etl. He did not want to look further at future projects before bringing them to the Board to see if the Board would want to look at the possibility of combining forces with the City of Sterling on the Rec Center renovation or possibly new construction of either facility or new construction of a joint facility.

Commissioner McBride is interested in a joint facility, with an indoor walking track. It may be a better addition to the Rec Center, or they might have some type of agreement for use. It may be better to build a walking track to be shared for all ages. The agreement with DOLA and CU might have to be redone. There also is a better likelihood of getting grant funding on a joint effort.

FEMA- nothing new to share.

Commissioner Brownell moved to adjourn, Commissioner McBride seconded, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:42 a.m.