

**Logan County Commissioners Work Session
September 24, 2024**

Present: Mike Brownell, Joe McBride, Jerry Sonnenberg, Alan Samber, Diana Korbe, Debbie Unrein, Kristan Lange, Rick Fleharty, Craig Brownell, and Jennifer Crow.

Chairman Brownell called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS SESSION – Commissioner McBride moved to approve the minutes of September 17, 2024 as written. Commissioner Sonnenberg seconded, and the motion carried, 3-0.

REVISIONS TO THE WORK SESSION AGENDA – Chairman Brownell, added discussion on a federal BEADS grant from a CSU zoom meeting.

REVIEW AND APPROVE SCHEDULE OF COUNTY BILLS – The Board met with Kristan Lange to review the Logan County schedule of bills dated September 24, 2024. All bills were approved as presented.

LOWER SOUTH PLATTE WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT CHILDREN’S WATER FESTIVAL – Craig Brownell and Rick Fleharty of the Lower South Platte Water Conservancy District met with the Board to thank them for the access to the Logan County Fairgrounds last week for the Children’s Water Festival. Approximately 600 Fifth Grade students from the area from Weldon Valley to the west and as far as Julesburg to the east attended the event. The fairgrounds staff were really helpful. It was a good day for the event, as the weather was perfect. They are hoping to be able to do the event again next year.

The program used to be for grades 3-5 but now has expanded to all the schools in the district and is presented to grade 5 as water education is part of the curriculum for that grade. The program has been going on for over 25 years now. The Board suggested that the men lock in a date for next year as there has been a lot of interest in the Mitchek Events Center. They mentioned how good the acoustics were in the new building.

COUNTY HEALTH POOL RENEWAL – Diana Korbe met with the Board concerning renewal of the employee health insurance benefit. She reached out to other counties through her list-serve. She has only heard back from six counties, five of the six are staying with CHP. Chafee County is with CEBT. CEBT will not bid for Logan County because of our loss ratio.

Diana’s recommendation is to stay with CHP. The cost savings would help, but it would add additional stress to her department which is already going through the stress of changing software companies. If the choice was made to go with 39 North, employees would have to have Banner Health Care doctors which would require more educational meetings.

Commissioner Brownell suggested that the health insurance bid out again next year. It might be a better year for the transition. Diana said usually the process starts around July, they can’t start much earlier due to needing to know the claims experience.

Diana asked the Board what they would like to do about the employees on Medicare, leave it as is and grandfather those employees in or grant payments in lieu of - pay employees on Medicare a specific dollar amount vs. paying their county health insurance. Diana stated that some people say that Medicare pays better, because you don’t have all of the out-of-pocket expenses, but they do have the cost of the supplement. The highest amount currently paid to an employee is \$540 and the lowest amount paid is \$450.

If the County continues to pay the employee health care, dental and vision, the amount of the premium will be \$1,103.10. If the Board approves a payment in lieu of, they can go up to a certain dollar amount. The Board would need to determine what the amount of the payment will be. It should be a set dollar amount, regardless of what their premiums are, and they could go out and shop for a supplement. It must be established in the flex spending agreement. There will be around 20 employees who will reach the age of 65 in the year 2025. The grandfathered employees need to be considered as well, right now, the HR Department collects copies of employees' Social Security, and their premium amounts and keeps that on file because they are currently paying actual premiums, which they found out is incorrect.

Commissioner McBride moved to pay 100% of the employee health insurance premium and continue paying 65% of the family plan with the employee paying 35%. Commissioner Sonnenberg seconded the motion carried 3-0.

EMERGENCY MANAGER POSITION - Diana Korbe discussed the Emergency Manager position with the Board. Jerry Casebolt has accepted a position with the State Ag office. His last day will be October 23rd. There were four new positions created in the state. He will be covering the southwest. She asked the Board to take a look at the job description and let her know if there was anything that they wanted to add. The county will be impacted due to Jerry's help with the IT department, because he has helped tremendously in that area.

Commissioner McBride said that Jerry did have a couple of people in mind that he thought might be good in the position. What they talked about was getting someone hired so that he can help train the new person. Chairman Brownell commented in his own personal experience as a volunteer fireman and on the rural fire board, Casebolt has done the best job of all of the County Emergency Managers, as far as his previous contact with the rural fire boards and coordinating with those outside agencies and being an asset for them in the county.

Diana discussed the panel for interviews for the position. After discussion, it was decided that the Sheriff, the Board of Commissioners and Jerry Casebolt would be the interview panel.

WORKERS COMPENSATION INSURANCE – Commissioner Sonnenberg noted that Russell Adels reached out concerning the County's worker's compensation insurance and asked if the Board would like to talk about a proposal this year. He told him maybe next year. The Board agreed.

2025 BUDGET - Debbie Unrein met with the Board and distributed notebooks with departments budget requests. Peggy Michaels put out the assessed value as of August 23rd. There will be decisions coming down from the State that will affect that. Those numbers will not be known until the end of November. The way it looks right now with the budget requests, there will be about 7 mills to cut right now, amounting to a couple of million dollars. Road and Bridge is asking for nine mills. Last year Road and Bridge had grants. They are still spending just as much but have no grants coming in to offset some of that. He isn't really asking for that much equipment, but he is asking for more graders to lease.

Commissioner Brownell discussed the last road grader lease. They are leased for seven years. If they start going over on their hours, are they going to start charging \$130 per hour for every hour that they are over on the lease? What do we do when we start hitting that upper limit? Commissioner Sonnenberg commented that he is not sold on the leases at all. Chairman Brownell remembered that Jeff Reeves liked the leases because of the extended warranty, but he did not see any extended warranty discussed in the lease. Commissioner Sonnenberg noted that the only purpose for a lease is to be able to utilize the entire lease amount as a tax deduction. As a county, we don't have that.

Alan Samber questioned whether these leases are structured as lease purchase agreements where the county can opt to purchase the machines as some of the leases have been. These are called lease agreements, but really, they are just renting the equipment.

Debbie budgeted a 10% increase for the health insurance and also budgeted as if every employee takes the single plan. There is no way to know who will take the family plan. This will allow for a small savings since there is only a 9% increase on the health insurance.

BEADS GRANT – Chairman Brownell discussed a zoom meeting he sat in on yesterday, concerning a BEADS grant. This grant runs through CSU and comes from the infrastructure bill. Out of that, Colorado received \$826 million from the feds to try to improve broadband internet in rural areas.

Chairman Brownell signed to allow Neo Connect, which is a consulting firm that does design and engineering work for broadband networks and fiber optics through CSU. They've done a survey map of the areas in Logan County that would be eligible for these grants. It doesn't cost the county anything. We won't have to handle any funds, they go straight to an internet service provider, for example, Kentec has fiber optic through the Town of Iliff.

What they have to do to be eligible for this grant is provide over 100 x 20 MBPS internet. They prefer fiber optic going to each house in that district. In town, that would probably be cost effective, but they can do it over a cell tower. Neo Connect will do all of the engineering and design of this system. It won't cost the ISP anything that comes through the grant from the feds. All we would have to do as a county is provide a letter of support to the internet service providers saying that we are in favor of them providing this service to residents of Logan County. Neo Connect would like to meet with the Board next week, if possible. Commissioner Brownell will let them know that the Board can meet with them via Zoom on Wednesday at 11 a.m. from their individual offices. The grants are due October 28th.

Debbie will ask Jim Yahn if he would like to attend the budget meetings. The Board asked her to prepare a 2025 budget request notebook for him.

Debbie asked about the body scanner for the Sheriff's Office. It was not requested in the Sheriff's budget. Alan Samber said that the Sales and Use Tax funds could cover the purchase as it is equipping the facility if they wanted to budget for it there. Chairman Brownell visited with Jared Harty about this. They had been trying to get a grant for the body scanner last year. Chairman Brownell stated that they do need the scanner, as contraband has been brought into the jail by employees. Another necessary item is the server for the security cameras which is maxed out. Rick did budget for that in 2025. The cost is over \$100,000. The body scanner will be over \$140,000.

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 9:47 a.m.