

**Minutes of the Lower Niobrara Natural Resources
Board of Directors Meeting
February 2, 2026**

The meeting of the Lower Niobrara Natural Resources District was called to order by Chairman Lechtenberg at 2:01 P.M. at the Butte Community Center. Chairman Shane Lechtenberg called attention to the Open Meeting Law and statement of advertisement throughout our district.

Director's Present:

Shaun Higgins	Larry Baumeister	Randy Klawitter	Deb Hansen
Brett Fuchtman	Linda Hoffman	Chuck Zegers	Brian Kaczor
Karl Connell	Jack Engelhaupt	Brenda Wendt	Dwain Marcellus
Curt Morrow	Shane Lechtenberg		

Directors Absent: J.J. Pritchett, Don Holtgrew.

Staff Present: Wade Ellwanger Connie McCarthy Gary Richardson Brandon Fischer Britanie Brewster

Guests Present: Adam Nolan, Pablo Duarte Hernandez.

Approval of Agenda:

Motion was made to approve February 2, 2026, agenda by Engelhaupt and seconded by Zegers. **Aye:** Higgins, Randa, Baumeister, Klawitter, Hansen, Fuchtman, Hoffman, Zegers, Kaczor, Connell, Engelhaupt, Wendt, Marcellus, Morrow, Lechtenberg. **Nay:** None. **Abstain:** None. **Absent:** Pritchett, Holtgrew.

MOTION CARRIED

Approval of January 5, 2026, Minutes:

Motion was made to approve January 5, 2026, minutes by Hansen seconded by Baumeister **Aye:** Higgins, Randa, Baumeister, Klawitter, Hansen, Fuchtman, Hoffman, Kaczor, Connell, Engelhaupt, Wendt, Marcellus, Morrow, Lechtenberg. **Nay:** None. **Abstain:** Zegers. **Absent:** Pritchett, Holtgrew.

MOTION CARRIED

Approval of January 5, 2026, Meeting of the Whole Minutes:

Motion was made to approve January 5, 2026, Meeting of the Whole Minutes by Hansen seconded by Wendt. **Aye:** Higgins, Baumeister, Klawitter, Hansen, Fuchtman, Hoffman, Kaczor, Connell, Engelhaupt, Wendt, Marcellus, Morrow, Lechtenberg. **Nay:** None. **Abstain:** Randa, Zegers. **Absent:** Pritchett, Holtgrew.

MOTION CARRIED

Staff and Agency Reports:

Manager's Report: Ellwanger's report was mailed to the directors prior to the board meeting. Ellwanger stated the LNNRD will be holding a Personnel Committee Meeting on February 25, 2026. Reminded Directors the filing deadline for incumbents for the 2026 Elections is Tuesday February 17, 2026. He included the News Channel Nebraska(NCN) article regarding Nitrate Data from Middle Niobrara in the packet mailed to Directors prior to the meeting. Ellwanger reported that the LNNRD distributed \$94,851 through the 2025 Nitrogen Reduction Incentive Act (NIRIA) program, with \$115,000 planned for 2026. Funding for the 2025 NIRIA is split between LB1368 and Department of Water, Environment and Energy (DWEE). Funding for the 2026 NIRIA comes from the

Nebraska Corn Board and DWEE. Ellwanger stated the LNNRD is working with the State on a pilot program utilizing sensor infield technologies. Ellwanger also noted ongoing growing pains, frequently asked questions, and continual need for public outreach, attention to detail, professionalism and efficiency.

Programs Assistant Report: McCarthy's report was mailed to directors prior to the Board meeting. McCarthy reported she is currently working on tree plans, she currently has 13 from the LNNRD office, one from the NRCS in O'Neill, and four from the NRCS in Spencer. She attended the NARD conference in Lincoln where she was able to appear on Pure Nebraska. She stated she will be starting school visits next week.

Water Resources Report: Richardson's report was mailed to directors prior to the Board meeting. Richardson reported he was working on the final layout of the building, gave the projected time frame for materials from Morton. Richardson stated we are currently at 50% completion for Phase II reports. The Water Resources department has been helping producers to get access to the platform, reviewing and accepting reports.

Committee Reports and Recommendations:

Operations Committee Report:

Ellwanger reported the Operation Committee met at 12:45 on February 2, 2026, prior to the regular scheduled meeting. Discussion was held about changes to the by-laws, reducing committees from ten to six, defining official minutes or using the opening meeting act requirement of official minutes, and handling of approval of the treasurer reporting.

A building change order to insulate the shop was discussed but not recommended.

No Action Taken

NARD Association Report: Hansen reported the NARD board met last week during the NARD Legislative Conference in Lincoln. Discussion was held on the current legislation that may impact the NRD. Currently LB1072 introduced by Senator Arch regarding the sweeping of Nebraska Environmental Trust (NET) Fund and the Niobrara Council. Hansen explained what NET funds, the importance of those funds and how to submit a written testimony if you choose.

Wendt asked why at times there are opposing recommendations from individual NRD's and the NARD Board. Wade explained why and how to represent the NRD or NARD recommendations based on who you are testify for.

West Knox Rural Water Report: Ebel's report was mailed to directors prior to the Board meeting. Ellwanger stated the advisory board met on January 22, 2026, there was no quorum. No action was taken.

Acknowledge Receipt of West Knox Rural Water minutes:

Motion was made to acknowledge receipt of WKRW Minutes by Wendt seconded by Randa. **Aye:** Randa, Baumeister, Klawitter, Hansen, Fuchtmann, Hoffman, Zegers, Engelhaupt, Wendt, Marcellus, Morrow, Lechtenberg. **Nay:** None. **Abstain:** Higgins, Connell. **Absent:** Pritchett, Holtgrew.

MOTION CARRIED

BGMA Coordinator Report: Ellwanger reported they have hired Marcus Blunk as BGMA Coordinator, and he started on January 5, 2026 he will be in he office on Thursday for the BGMA meeting.

BGMA Extension Educator: Pablo Duarte Hernandez

Hernandez began his position with the BGMA in October and currently works out of the Lower Elkhorn NRD office in Norfolk. Hernandez is interested in working with the LNNRD for on farm trials and would like a LNNRD board member or producer to participate in the UNL Master Irrigator Program.

Agency Reports:

Natural Resources Conservation Service: Nolan's report was handed out in the meeting packet. Nolan reported are currently working on fiscal year 2026 application, with 61 EQIP applications, 6 CSP applications. Staff Has been busy working with landowners on fiscal year 2026 applications, certifying and planning NSWCP projects.

Niobrara Council: Connell reported they met on January 15, 2026, the next meeting is scheduled for February 19, 2026, at 1:40pm.

NE RC&D Report: No Report

NC RC&D Report: Connell reported they met on January 14, 2026, the next meeting is scheduled for February 19, 2026, at 1:00pm.

Friends of the Missouri: No Meeting Held.

Missouri Sedimentation Action Coalition: No Meeting held.

Additional Business:

Signature Card:

Discussion was held on changing the signature card held at Butte State Bank to reflect current office changes. The LNNRD is currently in compliance with LNNRD by laws no action taken.

NSWCP Activities:

McCarthy reported she has three contracts for approval 2442, 2443, 2444, and three contracts for extension 2409, 2426, 2429.

A motion was made to approve contract 2442, 2443, 2444 by Randa seconded by Klawitter. **Aye:** Higgins, Randa, Baumeister, Klawitter, Hansen, Futchman Hoffman, Zegers, Kaczor, Connell, Engelhaupt, Wendt, Marcellus, Morrow, Lechtenberg. **Nay:** None. **Abstain:** None. **Absent:** Pritchett, Holtgrew.

MOTION CARRIED

A motion was made to extend contract 2409,2426, 2429 by Randa seconded by Wendt. **Aye:** Higgins, Randa, Baumeister, Klawitter, Hansen, Fuchtmann, Zegers, Kaczor, Connell, Engelhaupt, Wendt, Marcellus, Morrow, Lechtenberg. **Nay:** Hoffman. **Abstain:** None. **Absent:** Pritchett, Holtgrew.

MOTION CARRIED

Treasurer Report:

Approval of Treasurer Report:

A motion was made to approve February 2, 2026, treasurer's report by Marcellus seconded by Hoffman. **Aye:** Randa, Baumeister, Hansen, Fuchtman, Zegers, Kaczor, Engelhaupt, Wendt, Marcellus, Morrow, Lechtenberg. **Nay:** Connell. **Abstain:** Higgins, Klawitter, Hoffman. **Absent:** Pritchett, Holtgrew.

MOTION CARRIED

Public Comment:

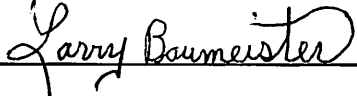
Adam Nolan: Discussed NSWCP programs, promoted through the NRCS.

Randy Klawitter: About the erosion and sedimentation progress with Rudloff.

Excused absent Directors: Pritchett, Holtgrew.

Chairman Shane Lechtenberg declared the meeting adjourned at 3:36 P.M.

I, the undersigned Secretary of the Lower Niobrara Natural Resources District, hereby certify the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the proceedings had and done by the Board of Directors on February 2, 2026, that all subjects included in the foregoing proceedings were contained in the agenda for at least twenty-four hours prior to the meeting. The minutes of the Chairman and Board of Directors were in written form and available for public inspection within ten working days and prior to the next convened meeting of said body. All news media requesting notification of the time and place of said meeting and the subjects to be discussed at said meeting were notified.



Larry Baumeister, Secretary