

**Bear Lake County Commissioners' Special Meeting  
January 24, 2025  
Commissioners' Chambers – Paris, Idaho**

The Board of Bear Lake County Commissioners met for a special meeting at 9:00 a.m. Friday, January 24, 2025, in the Commissioners' Chambers in Paris, Idaho. Video access to the meeting also was available via Zoom. Members present were Board Chairman Rex L. Payne, Commissioner Wynn S. Olsen, Commissioner Alan P. Eborn, and Amy Bishop, Clerk of the Board. Also in attendance were Deputy Clerk Paul Christiansen, County Superintendent Todd Boehme and various members of the public.

County Attorney Adam McKenzie was excused from the meeting due to another obligation.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA – ACTION ITEM**

**MOTION:** Commissioner Olsen made a motion to approve the agenda for the January 24, 2025, special meeting. The motion received a second from Commissioner Eborn. The motion carried.

**LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR BAYER / P4 PRODUCTION MINE**

Trent Clark, representing CM Consulting for Bayer USA, came before the Board to inform them the Bureau of Land Management currently is holding a session in which public comment can be filed, either in support of or against the revised mine environmental impact statement (EIS) for the proposed Caldwell Canyon Mine in Caribou County.

P4 Production LLC – a subsidiary of Bayer USA – acquired the mine from Monsanto six years ago with the intent of permitting it for extraction and use of the largest phosphate deposit in Southeast Idaho, which originally had been discovered in the 1930s. This mine and the high-grade ore within have been held in reserve until economical conditions were correct to open what will be a generational mine that will keep the area supplied with phosphate ore and will supply steady jobs to the local workforce for 20 to 30 years to come, Clark said.

The Caldwell Canyon Mine actually is entering its second set of approvals, Clark said. Work on the mine started some ten years ago when the area was owned by Monsanto, and in 2019 the federal government signed off on the planned mine. At that point, the mine went through the steps to receive approvals for the draft and final environmental impact statements. However, a year into development, the Western Watersheds Project and other environmental protection groups sued on the grounds that the federal government had not taken into account the impact that the mine would have on local sage grouse habitat and populations, he said.

In June 2023, U.S. District Judge B. Lynn Winmill issued a decision that agreed with the conservation groups, saying federal land managers in the Trump administration did not in part properly consider the mine's impact on those birds – which have seen an 80 percent population decline since 1965. This decision mandated that P4 Production, as the applicant, would have to start over with its work to develop the EIS for the Caldwell Canyon Mine. Now – after spending \$100 million in permitting work and \$7 million in settlements paid to those conservation groups – the revised mine EIS has been submitted

by P4 Production and the public comment period is open, Clark said.

The commissioners should be aware that many families rely on the income that is generated by phosphate mining and the supporting industries in Southeast Idaho, he said. A large percentage of that workforce resides in Bear Lake County, and the public comment period will be very important to aid the mine in moving forward with the permitting process. Additionally, Clark reminded the commissioners that few companies would choose to make a substantial investment, make no progress in a decade and continue to do what it takes to move forward.

Because of the many jobs which will be brought by the Caldwell Canyon Mine, Commissioner Olsen said he believed the county should support Caldwell Canyon Mine and its revised EIS. Commissioner Eborn echoed those thoughts.

Commissioner Payne said Bear Lake County is dependent on the jobs brought by the phosphate and mining industry. Without those jobs, the county would be deeply – and negatively – affected, he said. Because of that, he advised the Board should submit a letter of support for the Caldwell Canyon Mine's revised EIS.

**MOTION: Commissioner Olsen made a motion for Bear Lake County to support and submit a letter of support for the Caldwell Canyon Revised Mine Environmental Impact Statement. The motion received a second from Commissioner Eborn. The motion carried.**

#### **PUBLIC SURPLUS ITEMS – EXTENSION OFFICE PARCEL DELIVERY BOX**

Kari Ure, educator for the University of Idaho Extension in Bear Lake County, came before the Board to discuss an item which her office no longer had a use for and believed could be sold online by the county via the governmental public surplus website. She reported her office had a large parcel delivery box that originally had been purchased with the intent for installation outside the extension office. However, the box had been bought before Ure's time with the office and never had been used, she said.

The parcel box – a yellow metal delivery hatch measuring 36 inches high by 20.5 inches wide by 15 inches deep – could still be mounted outside the office and could be bolted to the cement. However, Ure said she did not believe it would take much to dismantle it from the footings.

Deputy Clerk Paul Christiansen, who has been assigned to listing, sale and required publications of the county's public surplus items, reported to the Board that the value of the item was estimated to be more than the \$250 threshold at which point Idaho statute dictates the sale of an item must be noticed and published. He asked the commissioners for their approval to add the extension office parcel box to the county's public surplus listings and to publish and notice the item as required.

Commissioner Payne asked if his fellow commissioners believed any of the county's other departments would have a use for the parcel box. After some discussion, it was determined it would be best to list the parcel box for sale.

**MOTION: Commissioner Eborn made a motion to add the parcel delivery box – belonging to the University of Idaho Extension at Bear Lake County – to the county's public surplus items list and to**

approve the necessary publication and advertising. The motion received a second from Commissioner Olsen. The motion carried.

#### **PERSONNEL WAGES**

The Board of County Commissioners had included on the special meeting agenda discussion of and action on two personnel wage decisions. The affected positions included the Bear Lake County Road and Bridge Crew Manager and the records clerk for the Bear Lake County Clerk's Office.

#### **ROAD AND BRIDGE CREW MANAGER**

Clerk Amy Bishop reminded the Board that it had expressed interest in changing the wage for the existing position of Road and Bridge Crew Manager, which recently had been filled by Scott Wells. The Board needed to determine how much of a wage increase it wanted to award to that position and also needed to determine if it wanted to keep Wells' longevity pay incentive in place. The Board also needed to decide if it wanted to keep the crew manager position as an hourly job – which would allow Wells to receive comp time – or if it preferred to designate that as a salaried position, she said.

Because of the responsibility and duties associated with managing the county road crew, Commissioner Olsen said the position probably called for an increase of \$4 or \$5 per hour above what is made by the regular crewmembers. He factored a \$4 an hour increase would amount to just \$640 more per month, not including the longevity pay on top of that.

Commissioner Payne agreed, adding the position includes the added duties of directing and facilitating a department's workers and goes beyond simply managing day-to-day items.

A good supervisor will either make or break a department, Commissioner Eborn said. Additionally, if a supervisor is put on salary, it becomes easy for that individual to walk away from duties that may take extra time beyond the regular workday. Instead, if a leader is on an hourly wage, if their work is being accounted for and they are being compensated fairly, they are more likely to stay working with the crew to ensure the work gets done properly and in a timely manner, he said.

Commissioner Olsen said Wells had been serving in the crew manager position on a trial basis and had conducted himself well.

County Superintendent Todd Boehme also felt Wells had proven he was capable to serve in the crew manager position. While Wells' promotion does leave a void in the road crew, Boehme said he was in the position of filling that vacancy.

**MOTION: Commissioner Olsen made a motion to advance Scott Wells to the position of Bear Lake County Road and Bridge Crew Manager, with an hourly wage increase of \$4 above the crew wage rate and a continuation of his longevity pay. The motion received a second from Commissioner Eborn. The motion carried.**

#### **RECORDS CLERK**

Next, Clerk Amy Bishop reported she was able to hire Cindy Garner – who previously had served as Bear Lake County Clerk – to fill the part-time records clerk position that had been approved for her office. While the Board had not yet set a wage for that position, Bishop suggested it follow the regular county base wage of \$24.22.

**MOTION: Commissioner Eborn made a motion to accept Cindy Garner as the Bear Lake County Clerk's Office records clerk with a wage of \$24.22 per hour. The motion received a second from Commissioner Olsen. The motion carried.**

#### **COMMISSIONER ASSIGNMENTS – SNOWMOBILE PROGRAM**

Commissioner Eborn advised the Board that he had requested a section be placed on the agenda so he could speak to his fellow commissioners about his assignment as the Board contact to work with the county snowmobile program. Since receiving the assignment at the Board's last regular meeting, held January 13, Commissioner Eborn had become aware of something he now said he wanted to bring to the Board's attention.

Given his past history working with that program, Commissioner Eborn had requested to assist with it. However, he remembered that when he retired from the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, he had been training Ryan Larsen to take his place. However, Larsen had been hired by the Bear Lake County Sheriff's Office and, because of that loss, the parks and recreation department had decided to give up the program because there was no employee who could take over those snowmobile duties.

The program then had been turned over to the sheriff's office and Larsen took over the administration of it through his duties as a deputy, Commissioner Eborn said. Because of this, and based on the Board request that had been made of the sheriff at that time, the sheriff was given presiding power over that program.

The county now needs to determine what it wants to do with that program going forward, Commissioner Eborn said. Additionally, he said, Larsen had informed him that during his tenure with the sheriff's office, he had a difficult time dedicating himself to the snowmobile program's needs.

Whereas the county now is looking for someone to oversee that program, the Board also needs to decide if the position should be left with the sheriff's office or if it wants to designate a dedicated employee to be its administrator, Commissioner Eborn said. Additionally, Sheriff Bart Heslington has advised Commissioner Eborn that he had only taken over the program because he did not want to leave the county in a lurch. If another individual could take over those duties, it actually might help Heslington's department, he said.

Commissioner Payne requested discussion and action on the snowmobile program administration duties be added to the agenda for the Board's next regular meeting, set for February 10.

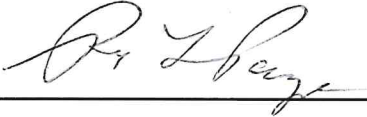
If the Board chose, advertising for this open administration job position could be done in conjunction with the open county emergency manager and fairgrounds position, Commissioner Olsen said.

Concerning other potential commissioner assignments, Clerk Amy Bishop advised the county had received from a couple of ditch companies notice of some scheduled meetings and happenings. These ditch companies were ones that the county has been involved with in the past. Historically, Commissioner Payne had attended those meetings and had been the commissioner who served as the Board's point of contact in related matters. She advised if the commissioners wanted to discuss or vote on this matter, it could be added to the February regular meeting agenda.

Commissioner Payne clarified he had taken part in those ditch company matters because they had impacted the Bear Lake County Airport – to which he had been assigned. He advised another of those ditch company notices is related to happenings with the City of Paris, he said.

**MOTION: Commissioner Olsen made a motion to adjourn the Bear Lake Board of County Commissioners Special Meeting. The motion received a second from Commissioner Eborn. The motion carried.**

The commissioners' meeting adjourned at 9:29 a.m.



Rex L. Payne, Chairman

2/10/25

Date Approved

ATTEST:



Amy Bishop, Clerk



