

MINUTES

Nebraska Environmental Trust
Grants Committee Meeting
Thursday, December 8, 2022
1:30 p.m.

1. Call to Order

Chairman Davidson called the virtual, on-site meeting of the Grants Committee to order at 1:30 p.m. in LL Room 031 at 245 Fallbrook Blvd, Lincoln, Nebraska.

Advanced notice of the meeting was published in the Lincoln Journal Star on November 28, 2022. The agenda and documents to be considered at the meeting were provided. The Open Meetings Act was posted near the meeting room entrance and on the Nebraska Environmental Trust website.

Roll call was conducted, and a quorum was present.

Members present (6):

District I: Mr. Jeff Kanger, Lincoln. **District II:** Mr. Felix Davidson, Valley; Mr. Mark Quandahl, Omaha. **District III:** Josh Andersen, Edgar

State Agency Representatives: Jim Macy, Director, Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy; Mr. Tim McCoy, Director, Nebraska Game & Parks Commission

Staff present:

Mr. Karl Elmshaeuser, Executive Director; Ms. Holly Adams, Grants Administrator; Ms. Sandra Weaver, Administrative Specialist

2. Public Comment

None.

3. Approval of October 13, 2022, Grants Committee meeting minutes

Motion by Mr. McCoy, seconded by Mr. Macy, "I move to approve the October 13, 2022, Grants Committee meeting minutes."

Discussion: None.

Voting Aye: Kanger, Macy, McCoy, Quandahl, Davidson

Abstain: Andersen

Absent: None

5 Voted Aye. 1 Abstained. Motion carried.

4. Grants Committee recommendation for funding for 2023 Grant Applications that were previously deemed eligible by the NET Board at the November 3, 2022, meeting

a. Projects Scored and Sorted by Score by Process defined at September 22, 2022, meeting.

Executive Director Elmshaeuser provided a brief overview of the background for the grant application rating system. In the audits with the Nebraska Auditor of Public Accounts and Department of Administrative Services, one finding referred to Neb. Rev. Stat. § 81-15,175(2), which requires the Board to establish rating systems for ranking proposals that meet the Board's environmental categories and other criteria. Another finding referred to Title 137, Administrative Code, Chapter 8 – 002. The regulation states, "In deciding the assignment of points for each eligible project, the Committee shall do so in a manner which provides a fair comparison of

projects regardless of the cost. More expensive projects shall not receive additional points just because they are larger in scale.” The findings also noted the need for a clear methodology for the Grants Committee or the Board to use in determining how much financial assistance each project will receive. At the NET Board meeting on May 19, 2022, a motion was passed to approve the new project ranking systems for grant applications using a 10-question format that follows Title 137 and allows up to five points per question. On September 22, 2022, before reviewing any applications, the Grants Committee passed a motion to utilize Olympic scoring that provides an average of the aggregated scores to create a minimum funding line. Mr. Elmshaeuser noted the 2023 Final Rank Order list with all the scores for each project was provided in the December 8, 2022, meeting materials. The highest rating is 42.33, and the lowest rating is 20.83 after one application was withdrawn. The Olympic scoring line was determined after the top and bottom scores were removed, and the remaining scores were averaged.

Mr. Quandahl noted as part of the ongoing improvement process, further adjustments to ranking and scoring may be made in the future.

Motion by Mr. Davidson, seconded by Mr. Macy, “I move that the Grants Committee recommend funding to the full Board for years one, two, and three for grant applications 23-113, 23-131, 23-115, 23-136, 23-164, 23-122, 23-114, 23-156, 23-132, 23-171, 23-149, 23-142, 23-148, 23-140, 23-162, 23-166, 23-127, and 23-150.”

Discussion: None.

Voting Aye: Kanger, Macy, McCoy, Quandahl, Andersen, Davidson

Absent: None

6 Voted Aye. Motion carried.

Motion by Mr. Davidson, seconded by Mr. Macy, “I move that the Grants Committee recommend funding to the full Board for years one, two, and three for grant applications 23-138, 23-170, and 23-172.”

Discussion: None.

Voting Aye: Macy, Quandahl, Andersen, Kanger, Davidson

Abstain: McCoy

Absent: None

5 Voted Aye. 1 Abstained. Motion carried.

Motion by Mr. Davidson, seconded by Mr. McCoy, “I move that the Grants Committee recommend funding to the full Board for years one, two, and three for grant applications 23-117 and 23-153.”

Discussion: None.

Voting Aye: McCoy, Quandahl, Andersen, Kanger, Davidson

Abstain: Macy

Absent: None

5 Voted Aye. 1 Abstained. Motion carried.

Motion by Mr. McCoy, seconded by Mr. Davidson, “I move that grant applications with scores of 30 to 33.17 be advanced to the Board for funding.”

Discussion: In addition to the ineligibility determination for many grant applications, Mr. McCoy noted a close differential in ratings for eligible projects. In light of this, he asked the Committee to discuss the possibility of moving the additional projects forward to the Board for funding. Executive Director Elmshaeuser noted sufficient funds were available. Mr. Quandahl cautioned the Committee

that the Trust's lawsuit and audit findings called for some certainty in how the Grants Committee would evaluate the applications. He hesitated to change the path determined for scoring at the September 22, 2022, Grants Committee meeting. Executive Director Elmshaeuser clarified the average score out of 50 possible points was 30. In an internal review of the entered ratings, Olympic versus straight average scoring differed by one grant, and Olympic versus curved average scoring differed by two grants. The comparison indicated scoring was reasonably consistent within the Grants Committee. Mr. Macy reported leaning towards a "no" vote on the motion since he had not had sufficient time to consider whether he should abstain from more than three projects. Additionally, the full Board can decide whether to fund the additional projects in January. Mr. McCoy clarified that he would not need to abstain from any of the projects being considered.

Voting Aye: McCoy

Voting Nay: Kanger, Macy, Davidson

Abstain: Quandahl, Andersen

Absent: None

1 Voted Aye. 3 Voted Nay. 2 Abstained. Motion failed.

5. Next Meeting

The next Grants Committee meeting date has not been determined.

The Grants Committee will present its funding recommendations to the full Environmental Trust Board in January 2023.

6. Adjourn

Chairman Davidson adjourned the meeting at 2:00 p.m.

Karl L. Elmshaeuser, Executive Director