

MINUTES OF THE EMERGENCY DROUGHT COMMISSION MEETING OCTOBER 31, 2013

NOTICE OF THIS MEETING WAS FILED WITH THE SECRETARY OF STATE ON November 7, 2013 2013.

The Emergency Drought Commission met at 4:00 PM, October 31, 2013, in the Board Room of the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry, 2800 N Lincoln Blvd, Oklahoma City, OK 73105. A notice of the meeting was filed with the Secretary of State and at the Agriculture Building 24 hours prior to the meeting.

Members present: Jim Reese, Secretary of Agriculture; Mike Thralls, Executive Director of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission; and J. D. Strong, Executive Director of the Oklahoma Water Resources Board.

Absent: None.

Others present: Robert Toole, Conservation Commission, and Shawn Leopard.

A quorum of the Commission was present.

Agenda

At the time of the posting of the Agenda, the following applications had been received:

City of Altus, OK
Town of Blair, OK
Town of Tipton, OK
Jackson County Water Corporation, Warren, OK
Oklahoma Conservation Commission for Greer, Harmon, Jackson, Texas,
and Tillman County Conservation Districts.
Oklahoma Agriculture Experiment Station, Goodwell and Altus, OK

Additional applications from the City of Guymon, City of Hollis, and the Harmon Water Corporation were distributed and Blair submitted additional documents to their original application.

Chairman Reese asked J.D. Strong to talk about the applications from Altus, Blair, Tipton and Jackson County Water Corporation. Mr. Strong reported that as far as he could tell at this point, Jackson County Water Corporation is a nonprofit organization and not a public entity. OWRB will contact them to see if they have articles of incorporation as a public entity; if not, then the application would be disqualified.

Mr. Strong stated that his staff has looked at the applications from Altus, Tipton and Blair and agree that all are within the heart of the drought and have dire needs for water. OWRB ran it through their preliminary analysis and ranking steps that they do on

public water supplies that apply for their emergency drought grants. Altus received the highest ranking, followed by Tipton and then Blair. Mr. Strong's staff will follow up with each group and go over their submitted application and ask each entity if they could do something for less money. With the dollar amounts requested in the applications, it is a matter of how much they are able to fund themselves and how much of the grant money they will require to make the project happen.

Mr. Reese asked Mr. Strong and Mr. Thralls to see if their agencies, OWRB and Conservation Commission respectively, had funds available that could compliment funds awarded through the Emergency Drought Commission.

Mr. Thralls introduced Robert Toole, Conservation Commission, who prepared the Oklahoma Conservation Commission application for Greer, Harmon, Jackson, Texas and Tillman County Conservation Districts. The application is for \$300,000.00 and would be a cost-sharing program where it would allow the local Conservation District to set the cost-share rate up to a maximum of 75% and a maximum of \$10,000.00 per individual applicant.

Mr. Thralls said the practices that would be eligible would be those that address water situations plus grass re-establishment. There is a backlog of getting a water driller, which lends itself to a 24-month period and also for the re-establishment of grass. If at the end of the 24-month period any if there were any funds unexpended, they would be returned to the Emergency Drought Fund.

Mr. Thralls said they have a commitment from USDA and NRCS to provide technical assistance on all these practices at no charge to the state. He said it would be at least 60 days before they would have people that were ready to have their practice put in place.

Mr. Reese asked Mr. Thralls if the Conservation Commission's Cost-Share program would have funds available to assist with the ponds. Mr. Thralls stated that they had allocated approximately 1.1 million dollars to the 87 Conservation Districts and that these 5 conservation districts received a total of \$73,350.00.

Mr. Reese stated that this is a drought relief program and there needs to be some money available to go to producers through a conservation program. There needs to be some certainty that there is money available or they may not waste their time applying.

Mr. Thralls stated that the sign-up could probably be completed in 45-90 days and Performance Agreements could be signed within 90 days.

Mr. Strong said he would follow up with the public water providers to see if they received money within the next month or so, how long would it take them to actually begin drilling wells and laying lines.

Mr. Reese called on Shawn Lepard to discuss his application from the Agriculture Experiment Station. Mr. Lepard said this represents the Panhandle Irrigation Association. The association has worked with OSU this past year about what can be

done to improve irrigation efficiency and this is one of the proposals they came up with. Most of the irrigators in the Panhandle are in Texas County and Jackson County is with the Lugert-Altus Irrigation District. This project would involve research on drip irrigation in these two counties.

Mr. Lepard said that Texas County doesn't have a group to do cost-share, but Lugert-Altus has committed to \$20,000.00 to help pay for this. He feels that this research is a good idea and that research has helped reduce water usage in the Panhandle by almost 60 percent in the last 30 years. Mr. Reese asked how specifically this would help remediate the current drought.

Mr. Strong stated that from the irrigator's perspective, the re-establishment of grass is the most important thing. It was suggested that the Commission hold on to this request as it is not a drought emergency.

Public Comments

Mr. Lepard distributed to the Commission a proposal from the City of Guymon. They completed a Panhandle Water Plan last year that identified different things that each of the entities needed to be doing. The City of Guymon has reached out to the regional communities to see what they need; so far they have only heard from two communities who have more long-term needs. However, there is a need for regional fire suppression and there is no ready source for water. He stated that the idea was to create a water source out of Sunset Lake, which is where they are also looking at doing a water re-use project.

Mr. Lepard said that there were four different proposals in this application and three different engineering firms proposing them. The first is a waste treatment plan identifying how they can reduce the usage from the consumers so the plant can use water re-use. Also included in the proposal is the drilling a water well and an upgrade to the booster pump station in Guymon. Mr. Reese asked Mr. Strong to assess this new application.

Future Meetings

A motion was made by Mr. Thralls, seconded by Mr. Strong, to hold the next meeting on Friday, November 8, 2013 at 2:30 p.m. in the Board Room of the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry.

Those voting aye: Mr. Reese, Mr. Strong, Mr. Thralls. No: None Abstentions: None. The motion passed.

Adjournment

Mr. Strong moved, Mr. Thralls seconded, that the meeting be adjourned at 5:17 p.m...

Those voting aye: Mr. Reese, Mr. Strong, Mr. Thralls. No: None Abstentions: None.
The motion passed.

By _____
Chairman

ATTEST: _____
Executive Secretary