

*Tsaile - Wheatfields Joint Farm Board and Water Users Association Meeting
Sunday, February 24, 2013 @ 10am
Wheatfields Chapter House, Wheatfields, AZ*

MEETING MINUTES

I. Order of Business

- a. Meeting called to order at 10:30 am.
- b. Roll Call: Lorena Eldridge, Lucinda Davis, and Dorthea Litson were all present.
- c. Invocation conducted by Lorena Eldridge
- d. Reviewed agenda by Dorthea Litson. No questions or comments were made. Lorena Eldridge explained, when the meeting move forward, and if someone once to add to the agenda that will be fine.

To accept the agenda:

Motioned by Lucinda Davis

Seconded by Laurinda Moore

Voting: 6 yes; 0 no; 0 abstained

Motion Carried

- e. Reading of last meeting Minutes, February 4, 2013, by Dorthea Litson. No questions or comments were made.

The meeting minutes was accepted as it was read:

Motioned by Frank Billy

Seconded by Laurinda Moore

Voting: 7yes; 0 no; 0 abstain

Motion Carried

f. Announcements

1. Chapter Planning Meeting, @ Wheatfields Chapter House, Friday, March 1, 2013 @1pm
2. Water User and Farm Board Work Session @ Land Grant Office, Dine' College, Saturday, March 2, 2013 – Amendment to WUA By – law @ 9am
3. Friday and Saturday, March 8 and 9, 2012, Finalize Strategic Plan, @ Land Grant Office 9am to 4pm daily
4. Annual Water Use Meeting @ Wheatfields Chapter House, Saturday, March 16, 2013 @ 9am

II. Reports

a. Farm Board

1. President, Lorena Eldridge:

She reported that she traveled to the New Mexico Organic Food Conference in Albuquerque, NM, and shared the things she learned:

- **Herbs** –There are many herbs used for cooking, and some are use for Azee'. These herbs have high content of PH BALANCE and use little water to grow. Some example of herbs known as azee' are tea, lavender, and a lot more...
- **Chile of New Mexico** – The presenter of this session shared that he owns a 1.2 acres farmland where he produces chili. His production is enough to make a living of off it. He is a 3rd generation farmer.
- **Digging Deep**: Soil is the important to plant therefore it is crucial to pay attention to it. There are ways to increase organic matter in soil when using cover crop known as Bio-Fumigant. An example, plants like mustard, broccolis, and radishes are

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harvest, then it can be water again and when it is moist it can be put back into the soil within a 6 hours window to increase organic matter. Also these same plants are used to remove bin – weed, including the wheat and rye family of plants.

- **Storage:** There are many ways people build storages for food. Some examples are as follow:
 - Cement wall: Concrete and cinder block walls which are build against the earth.
 - Slit Form: Old way where the storage has dirt floor.
 - Ferrite cement:
 - Old style: The earth is dug into where there are steps going into the earth.
- **Organization:** There are people in New Mexico who have organization like the Water Users. Their primary responsibilities were creating infrastructure of the farmland, but primarily for water storage, ground water usage, pump, etc. This organization history dates back to 1909, and they stated they have a huge voice in making changes particularly for water usage to the state and federal level.

The presenter who presented brought beets, carrots, winter squash, potatoes, garlic, etc. that were stored for winter. They were still in great shape. These presenters came from a town that has an elevation of 7,500ft.

She also stated that at the next meeting she can present her power point inform about the storages. Detail information about the herbs. Other information to share are about fruit trees and drought management.

2. Vice President, Lucinda Davis:

She reported about the Work session that was conducted with Tsaile- Wheatfields Chapter staff, officers, and other committees in Flagstaff, AZ on February 20 to 22, 2013. Outside facilitators were able to work with us.

She and Dorthea thought the session was going to be a place where all the committee members would share their work – goal and objectives, and bring that back together to from major goals and objective, but this did not happen.

However, we came up with a Mission and Vision Statement for the Chapter. There were goals and objectives pulled that the chapter will work on for the next three to five years.

The following priorities were shared by each committee:

- Chapter: Road
- Senior Citizen: Multipurpose Building, Senior Housing, and build an outside patio for the current citizen.
- Veterans: A Veterans building
- Farm Board: Build a local food system
- Water User: Create a water plan
- Partnership: It's very important to build partnership with Dine' College, and other universities.

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3. Secretary, Dorthea Litson:
 - a. Scheduled Work shop (5)
 - b. BIA – Russian Olive Report

She reported of the following:

Workshop – She continues to search for a facilitator that can teach the farmers of how to develop a conservation plan. She emailed Dennis Chandler and Richard Begay both of NRCS tribal liaison.

BIA visit on several issues, but will talk about two here in her report. The Russian olive project will need a supporting resolution from the Tsaile – Wheatfields Chapter.

To fix the map and collect data of which belong to whom, we will need to write a letter to request for a time to meet with them.

There were no actions that evolve from the Farm Board members report, and it was accepted as it was dialogued:

Motioned by Frank Billy

Seconded by Laurinda Moore

Voting: 11 yes; 0 no; 0 abstained

Motion Carried

- b. Water Users
 - a. Short Tem Goal Report
 - b. Financial Policy

Dorthea Litson reminded the farmers that Water Users are planning to change the focus from irrigation water to all water issues with the Community of Tsaile – Wheatfields – Blackrock. As result, there short term goals are to Amend the By – Laws, Create a Financial Policy, and find a limit liability insurance.

Currently, Dorthea Litson spoke with Jackie Franck, First Nation Grant, to request for trainer to help us with setting up software and training for the use of software. Jackie stated they are will to, but to call her when all the equipments and software have arrived. They will also find someone to help us establish a financial policy.

- c. Land Grant Office, Dine’ College

1. Designing a Seeding Workshop, Thursday – Saturday, April 4, 5, 6, 2013

Dorthea Litson reported that Land Grant Office Staff and Dine’ Policy Institute staff are working on a workshop in April. The focus of the workshop is learning to collect and save seeds of crops that the farmers are growing. They are in the process of planning with Native Seedling Company out of Tucson, AZ.

Comments, Questions, and Suggestions:

Lorena Eldridge: What is the status of purchasing the laptop and software?

Dorthea Litson replied the secretary and treasurer of the Water User have not purchased the items.

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Lorena Eldridge: She was responsible for searching about the liability insurance for the Water Users. Currently, she found that the Navajo Nation does not provide insurance to other only for the Nation. The Water User will need to purchase one for the organization. She looked into some prices, but she asks questions like, "What is the value of the assets? What is the amount of employee it has?"

In addition for amending the by-laws, she invited Mr. Notah and Mr. Martin Duncan to help with the amendment and possibly provide history of the Water Users.

She still needs to invite Jack Utter too.

Dorthea Litson: She explained that one of the things we added to the chapters plans are about what to do with the 90 farmlands that are idling. We need to work it to make it a productive farmland. Of the 90 idle farms, there are about 30 that are considered quit titles. The others are to create more RMUs within the community if we really want to create a local food system.

Frank Billy:

He thinks there are too many laws being created, but he is optimistic that we can move forth. He is also concerned about the limited interest that the farmers have about their farming. He is wondering about how we can talk to the farmers, so they can be more involved.

Lorena Eldridge:

She commented that she is not sure of how to bring the farmers to attend the meeting.

Bennie Litson:

He compared 60 years ago to now. Today we continue to think we can "wait." It is very important for all, farmers, to get themselves involved. It is important to support the Water Users and Farm Board as they plan and talk about:

1. Water Development
2. Enforce the laws that already exist.
3. Workshops they sponsor are very important.

Another, is that for us ranchers that don't want to be involved need to be because at the national level they are now requiring that we have a good record of the vaccination we use for our cattle, and if we don't we cannot sell them at all. (This is coming to us very soon, and need to be prepared for it) Water is VERY IMPORTANT! We need to plan for it in terms of how we can conserve it!

There was not action taken from the report, but accepted the dialogue of the report:

Motioned by Bennie Litson

Seconded by Frank Billy

Voting: 10 yes; 0 no; 1 abstain

Motion Carried

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III. Old Business

a. LUP – Transfer, Relinquishment, Sublease, Probate

1. Lucinda Chee

Dorthea Litson shared that she visited with BIA staff regarding this matter. They stated, “From a legal stand point this Land Use Permit that Lucinda Chee has belong to nobody; therefore, anyone can claim it. It is now considered a quiet title. Secondly, in the Farm Board policies it states, there shall be no home site lease established in a Farmland.”

The first steps for Lucinda Chee is to claim the Land Use Permit. Secondly, she can then work on establishing a home site lease with her children.

Here Dorthea explained to the people about the difference of what probate and quit titles are. Probate is 5 years from that date of the owner deceased. The family member can fill to claim the LUP in court. One can represent themselves if it is not in dispute, but it is disputed then one has to hire lawyer. Quit title is 6 years or more from the date of the owners deceased. The family member or anyone can apply for this land to claim. Here a lawyer will be needed.

Dorthea called Lucinda back to let her know of her finding. Lucinda had asked her to see if her children can put their trailer where she once parked her trailer that used to have a home site lease.

Dorthea asked her to come to today’s meeting to talk further about it.

Dorthea Litson also let the people know that BIA office staff shared that it is important for the Farmer to have a conservation plan when they request for land or relinquish or transfer, etc. She shared the conservation outline. It was as follow:

- I. Introduction
 - A. History
 - B. Goals and Objectives
- II. Farmland Description
 - A. Location
 - B. Climate
 - C. Topography and Elevation
- III. Farmland Management Plan
 - A. Record Keeping
 - B. Marketing
- IV. Farmland Conservation Plan
 - A. Farming Method and Control
 - B. Conservation Practices
 - C. Fire Prevention Practices
 - D. Drought Management Plan

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- V. Natural Resource Plan
 - A. Wildlife Management
 - B. Special Use Permit
- VI. Farmland Monitoring
- VII. Agreement and Signatures
- VIII. Appendix
 - a. Map of Proposed Conservation Plan

Home site is taken care of by the Navajo Nation. BIA not longer takes care of that. In the near future BIA will be phasing it. The Tribe will be handling all things.

Lorena Eldridge: She let Lucinda Chee know that it would be hard for the Farm Board to support her plan at this time. However, she recommended the following:

- a. She needs to work re-establish her Land Use Permit
- b. Work with the Land Administration office to gather more information about home site lease. The office is located on the south of President's office in Window Rock. She will need to talk to Caroline Dell, Ray Joe, Susanna Enos.
- c. To talk with Thomas Litson, grazing representative of Tsaile - Wheatfields community.

Lucinda Chee: She explained further that she had a home site for where her house trailer was once parked, but was taken back. She re-established her home where her father lived; she renovated the house. She was told she can't have both.

Lorena Eldridge: She stated, "The home that Lucinda Chee now lives in was built prior to 1980 there it does not need a home site lease."

Dorthea Litson: She stated, "A light bulb has come on for her. Since her late father's Land Use Permit is considered to belong to anyone, she should apply for the land. In there she can add here conservation plan and stated how she want to redistribute her land and state there is piece she want for home stead for her children."

The finally recommendation made on this case was as follow:

- a. *Apply for the land. Add the conservation plan, and stated how she want here land redistributed.*
- b. *Once that is approved, she can work with the grazing official to establish the home site lease for her children.*
- c. *In the meantime, she will need to work with Land Administration to gather more information.*

To accept the final recommendation for Lucinda Chee:

Motioned by Dorthea Litson

Seconded by Kenneth Sorrell

Voting: 10 yes, 0 no; 1 abstained

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2. Evelyn Litzin – request for assistance to collect inventory
Dorthea Litson explained that she wrote to Lyndon Chee. He responded that the materials for this sublease land were purchased when he used to work for the Navajo Department of Agriculture. He is not sure if the inventory is still there. Where he currently works they keep record for only three years.

Laurinda Moore stated the sublease agreement was from 2000 to 2010 between the late Mr. Emerson Goldtooth and her and her aunt. However, Mr. Goldtooth passed away in 2007 or 2008.

Lorena Eldridge: She recommended the following:

1. This coming Spring the old irrigation system can be re-established
2. Power of Attorney for more projects
3. Lucinda Davis can write a letter to the Department of Agriculture to request if the inventory list is still there.

Laurinda Moore was asked about how she thought about the recommendation, but the following is what she agreed on:

1. Lucinda Davis to write a letter to Navajo Nation Department of Agriculture
2. This coming Spring to re-establish the old irrigation system
3. Power of Attorney for more projects.

The action taken was regarding what Laurinda Moore agreed to which is mentioned above:

Motioned by Dorthea Litson

Seconded by Frank Billy

Voting: 11 yes; 0 no; 0 abstained

Motion Carried

IV. New Business

No item listed.

V. Other

None listed

VI. Conclusion

- a. Next agenda items were as follow: Lucinda Chee, Consultant for workshop, Russian Olive, WUA new officers, Computer and software status, and insurance, Revise the Water Masters budget.
- b. Next meeting date scheduled for Monday, March 11, 2013 at 4pm Wheatfield Chapter Hse.
- c. *Adjournment at 1:45pm*

To accept adjournment:

Motioned by Bennie Litson

Seconded by Kenneth Sorrell

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Motion Carried.