Lumberjack RC&D Council, Inc.

Minutes – Executive Committee 10/15/2026, The Curran Building Community Room, 315 S Oneida Ave, Rhinelander.

Present: Bill Bialecki, Wayne Plant, Bob Mott, Steve Heimerman

Excused: Arlyn Tober

Staff Present: Tracy Beckman, Coleman Kaiser, Derek Thorn

Call to Order - The meeting was called to order at 10:02am by Bill Bialecki.

Approve Agenda – Motion by Mott/Plant to approve the agenda as presented. Motin Carried.

FIA Updates – Kaiser gave his quarterly update. Heimerman asked for a chart showing each Forest Inventory Class over the last five years. Kaiser will get the P&L from Beckman and create the report.

Update on Investment Account: Both Mott & Bialecki have completed their required paperwork and now we're waiting to hear when the Schwab account will be open.

Employee Performance Reviews – D. Thorn's review was handed out. Members reviewed the form and asked questions. His official review with the FLOW Steering committee is on 10/19/26. Motion by Bialecki/Heimerman to go forward with the content of the review, pending approval from the FLOW Steering Committee. Motion Carried.

Project Proposal Review – there were six projects submitted by the deadline and they all met the initial criteria to be considered by the full council. Members discussed the policy changes approved at the April council meeting that are now in effect and will be implemented for the first time at the 10/28 meeting. Members refreshed their memories about the new ranking system which requires each eligible voting-member in attendance, to rank projects from their most favorite (#1) to their least favorite (#6). Once that's done, an average will be calculated. Those with over 50% of council member support will be funded and those with less will not.

Lumberjack Strategic Planning Discussion – Members talked about the 10/1 meeting with the members of TIP/WHIP/FLOW and how they were asked to try and help offset administrative costs of their programs that Lumberjack is absorbing. To try to help with that, Derek, Brianna and Janelle have been talking and identified some goals they'd like to pursue.

1) Built Longevity by searching out alternative funding sources such as offering fee for service agreements for D.A.S.H. services now that we have two certified divers on staff, look for other grants (a spreadsheet is being built by TIP) and check foundations/corporations/community funds, etc.
2) Strengthen Partnerships by sharing projects, highlighting one-another's work and take the lead collaboratively with education & outreach
3) Create regional projects and outreach
4) Use the above to stabilize the coordinator positions
5) Do a better job of engaging those at the leadership level in our counties, at the USFS, WDNR, and other conservation partners.

Beckman explained these have all been discussed and fit squarely within a strategy of Lumberjack taking the lead to create connectivity in our region. She explained how everything we do has a connection to something else we do, whether on the landscape or in the classroom – we can connect the two and then bring in other benefits such as health, wellness and quality of life. She expressed the desire to finish the strategic plan so staff can put their heads together and start implementing the plan. Thorn went on to explain more of their ideas for communications and many of those align with the Lumberjack Communications Plan that is being worked on by the Nicolet College work study student. Some of those ideas are podcasts, regional conferences, youtube channel and more social media presence.

Executive committee members have feelings both ways, one way of looking is that we must make money and reduce costs to continue our work. There were other strong opinions that we are most certainly not broke and things don't have to feel so urgent. We could define the strategy and then make it happen. Others felt there is a middle ground where we simultaneously find ways to make more money & reduce costs, while implementing a new strategy. Beckman reiterated that getting the coordinators' heads together will be invaluable for strategy and funding. This prompted a discussion by the Executive Committee about how we can reduce our cost burden to keep funding our conservation work. Ideas were to dissolve the grant program and use the funds for our sponsored agencies, provide counties a dividend at the end of the year and create a more regional approach with our sponsored agencies (having them work together on projects or share tech staff.) In all, lots of ideas were shared and members felt that we are working our way forward.

Review/Approve Council Meeting Agenda – Members reviewed, edited and then approved the council meeting agenda.

Bialecki adjourned the meeting at 12:45pm