THE OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS OF
THE WESTERN NEBRASKA REGIONAL
LAND BANK BOARD MEETING
February 4, 2026

A meeting of the Western Nebraska Regional Land Bank (WNRLB) Board was held in open session on February 4, 2026 at 1:00 p.m. in the Gering City Hall Conference Room, 1025 P Street, Gering, NE and via Zoom teleconference. Present were Board Members Nancy Garrett, Tony Kaufman, Amy Newman, Brady Shaul, John Stinner. Absent: Gabe Ingram. Also present were the following: Sarah Flores (CAPWN), Michelle Coolidge (BB Associates), Pat Heath (Gering City Administrator), Annie Folck (Gering City Engineer), Karen Heins (Gering Admin Support), and Megan Barhafer (Panhandle Public Health District).

1. **Call to Order and Roll Call**
   Board Member Tony Kaufman called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. It was noted that a quorum of the WNRLB Board was present and business could be conducted.

2. **Open Meetings Act**
   Kaufman reviewed the Nebraska Revised Statutes Chapter 84, Article 14, which requires at least one copy of the Open Meetings Act be posted in the meeting room. Notice of the meeting was given in advance thereof by publication in the Star Herald, the designated method of giving notice. Availability of the agenda was communicated in advance to the Media and Board Members. All proceedings hereafter were taken while the meeting was open to the attendance of the public.

3. **Discuss and Consider Signing and Filing Articles of Incorporation for Western Nebraska Regional Land Bank**

Annie Folck reported that staff/legal counsel had planned to proceed with execution of the Articles of Incorporation; however, a complication arose during submission to the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State's office advised that the proposed name, *Western Nebraska Regional Land Bank*, was too similar to three existing entities—two land banks in eastern Nebraska and Western Nebraska Bank. As a result, staff was informed that the entity must either change its name or obtain waivers from the similarly named entities.

Ms. Folck explained that waivers were obtained from the other land banks without issue, but Western Nebraska Bank declined to sign a waiver, citing its investment in its brand and concern over name similarity. Because of this, staff concluded that a new name would be required before incorporation could proceed.

Staff recommended identifying several alternative names and then verifying availability with the Secretary of State through legal counsel prior to final selection. It was noted that progress on financial accounts, contracts, and other operational matters could not move forward until the naming issue was resolved.

Board members discussed possible alternative names, including *Greater Nebraska Land Bank, Panhandle of Western Nebraska Land Bank, Land Bank of Western Nebraska*, and *Oregon Trail Land Bank*. It was noted that multiple names could be submitted for review to improve efficiency.

After discussion, the Board expressed a preference to avoid delaying progress by waiting until the next regularly scheduled meeting. Consensus was reached to prioritize name options and allow staff to proceed once availability was confirmed. The Board agreed on the following order of preference:

1. **Land Bank of Western Nebraska**
2. **Greater Nebraska Land Bank**
3. **Oregon Trail Land Bank**
4. **Panhandle of Western Nebraska Land Bank** (if all other options were unavailable)

Board Member Stinner moved to prioritize the above list of names and authorize staff to proceed with name verification and incorporation efforts accordingly. It was seconded by Board Member Shaul. On roll call vote, the following voted "AYE": Garrett, Kaufman, Newman, Shaul, and Stinner. "NAYS": None. Abstain: None. Absent: Ingram.

4. Discuss and Consider Authorizing Attorney to File Tax Exemption Forms with IRS

Staff confirmed that, once a name was finalized, legal counsel could file the required IRS tax exemption forms. The Chair then entertained a motion to authorize the action.

Board member Stinner moved to authorize the attorney to file the tax exemption forms with the IRS upon final determination of the entity name. It was seconded by Board member Shaul. On roll call vote, the following voted "AYE": Garrett, Kaufman, Newman, Shaul, and Stinner. "NAYS": None. Abstain: Newman. Absent: Ingram.

5. Review and Adopt Conflict of Interest Policy

Michelle Coolidge presented a revised Conflict of Interest Policy, based on a template from the Omaha Municipal Land Bank and aligned with current statutory requirements. She noted that the policy had been reviewed by legal counsel and would be updated once the finalized entity name was determined. The policy is intended to supplement the bylaws and applies to both board members and staff.

The Chair asked if there were any questions or concerns regarding the policy. No substantive issues were raised, and discussion indicated that the policy was reasonable and appropriately scoped.

Board member Stinner moved to adopt the Conflict of Interest Policy as presented. It was seconded by Board member Shaul. On roll call vote, the following voted "AYE": Garrett, Kaufman, Newman, Shaul, and Stinner. "NAYS": None. Abstain: None. Absent: Ingram.

6. Next Steps

Staff outlined next steps, including finalizing the entity name, updating interlocal agreements as needed, and advancing items through the respective city council agendas. The next meeting date was left to be determined based on progress, with the possibility that a March meeting may not be necessary if no action items are ready. Board members were advised to keep their calendars open pending further notice.

7. **Open Comment:** Discussion or action by the Western Nebraska Regional Land Bank Board regarding unscheduled business will not take place. This section is for citizen comment only.

During open comments, Michelle Coolidge provided an update on legislative activity related to land banks, including ongoing discussions with state legislators and the Urban Affairs Committee regarding potential statutory changes. Topics included board residency requirements and flexibility in property holding timelines, particularly as they affect rural communities. Ms. Coolidge indicated she would continue to monitor developments and keep the Board informed.

Ms. Coolidge also noted that the she had been invited to present at a housing conference scheduled for April 10. The presentation would focus on land banks generally and highlight the progress of the Western Nebraska effort. The Chair expressed hope that the entity name would be finalized prior to the conference to support branding and outreach efforts.

The discussion concluded as there were no further comments.

8. Adjourn

Following additional informal discussion, the Chair called for a formal motion to adjourn. A motion was made, seconded, and approved by roll call vote. The meeting was adjourned, and the Chair thanked members for their time.

> **Motion to adjourn was made by Board Member Stinner and it was seconded by Board Member Kaufman. There was no discussion. On roll call vote, the following voted "AYE": Garrett, Kaufman, Newman, Shaul, and Stinner. "NAYS": None. Abstain: None. Absent: Ingram.**

Meeting adjourned at 1:21 p.m.

Tony Kaufman, Chairman

ATTEST:

Karen Heins, Administrative Secretary