THE OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS OF
THE WESTERN NEBRASKA REGIONAL
LAND BANK BOARD MEETING

March 9, 2026

A meeting of the Western Nebraska Regional Land Bank (WNRLB) Board was held in open session on March 9, 2026 at 10:00 a.m. in the Gering City Hall Conference Room, 1025 P Street, Gering, NE and via Zoom teleconference. Present were Board Members Sarah Flores, Nancy Garrett, Tony Kaufman, Brady Shaul, John Stinner. Absent: Gabe Ingram and Amy Newman. Also present were the following: Pat Heath (Gering City Administrator), Annette Brower (Kimball City Administrator), Annie Folck (Gering City Engineer), and Karen Heins (Gering Admin Support).

1. **Call to Order and Roll Call**
   Board Chair Tony Kaufman called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m. It was noted that a quorum of the WNRLB Board was present and business could be conducted.

2. **Open Meetings Act**
   Chairman 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. **Approval of Minutes of the December 9, 2025 WRNLB Board Meeting**

   A motion was made by Board Member Stinner to approve the minutes of the December 9, 2025 WRNLB Board meeting. Seconded by Board Member Shaul. There was no discussion. The Secretary called the roll. "AYES": Garrett, Kaufman, Shaul, Stinner and Flores. "NAYS": None. Abstain: None. Absent: Ingram and Newman. Motion carried.

4. **Approval of Minutes of the February 4, 2026 WRNLB Board Meeting**

   A motion was made by Board Member Stinner to approve the minutes of the February 4, 2026 WRNLB Board meeting. Seconded by Board Member Shaul. There was no discussion. The Secretary called the roll. "AYES": Garrett, Kaufman, Shaul, Stinner and Flores. "NAYS": None. Abstain: None. Absent: Ingram and Newman. Motion carried.

5. **Discussion and Recommendation of Alternative Land Bank Name**
   City Engineer Annie Folck reported that Michelle Coolidge had submitted the previously discussed list of potential names for the Land Bank but that none had been approved. She explained that three additional names had then been submitted that were similar to those previously discussed. "Western Plains Land Bank" was denied due to being too similar to existing names. However, the Secretary of State's office indicated that two names would be acceptable: "Western Panhandle Regional Land Bank" and "Oregon Trail Regional Land

Bank." Ms. Folck noted that other names could still be proposed and submitted if the Board wished, but those two had received letters indicating they were sufficiently distinct from existing entities.

Ms. Folck reminded the group of the list of submissions that had been denied, including "Land Bank of Western Nebraska," "Greater Nebraska Land Bank," and "Panhandle of Western Nebraska." Board members discussed the remaining options. It was clarified that "Western Plains Regional Land Bank" had also been denied, leaving "Oregon Trail Regional Land Bank" and "Western Panhandle Regional Land Bank" as the only names currently indicated as acceptable.

Ms. Folck commented that developing a name that represented the region was challenging, noting that options referencing the North Platte Valley would not accurately include Kimball. Board members discussed the two remaining options, noting that while "Western Panhandle Regional Land Bank" was lengthy, it was geographically descriptive. Ms. Folck also added that including "Western Nebraska" would likely result in another denial due to similarity with existing entities. Ms. Flores suggested incorporating words such as "renewal" or "prairie renewal" into a name, and Ms. Folck added "urban renewal".

Ms. Folck continued that the Board could either select one of the two names that had already been green-lighted or develop another list of potential names and use one of the approved names as a backup if needed. At the Board's request, she again read the two approved options aloud: "Western Panhandle Regional Land Bank" and "Oregon Trail Regional Land Bank."

After further discussion, Board member Stinner commented that the first option was likely the most descriptive for the organization and noted that the name could be changed in the future if additional partners joined.

Before proceeding, Ms. Folck read the Secretary of State's disclaimer stating that the name availability notice was only a courtesy service and not a guarantee of acceptance for filing, explaining that the name would ultimately be confirmed once formally accepted.

Board Member Stinner moved to recommend "Western Panhandle Regional Land Bank" as the official name of the organization. Seconded by Board Member Shaul. There was no further discussion. The Secretary called the roll. "AYES": Garrett, Kaufman, Shaul, Stinner and Flores. "NAYS": None. Abstain: None. Absent: Ingram and Newman. Motion carried.

6. **Next Steps**

   a. **Discussion of Board Member Terms**

   Ms. Folck explained that when establishing a new board, it is typical to stagger the initial terms so that the entire board does not need to be replaced at the same time when terms expire. She noted that the Bylaws provide for three-year terms, but for the initial appointments the terms would be staggered so that one member would serve an initial one-year term, two members would serve initial two-year terms, and three members would serve initial three-year terms. She clarified that members whose initial terms were shorter could still be reappointed, and the intent was to retain members as long as possible.

Ms. Folck also stated that no decision needed to be made during the meeting but asked Board members to email Karen with their preference for an initial one-, two-, or three-year term so the assignments could be arranged accordingly.

Chair Kaufman indicated he was willing to serve the one-year initial term but would be willing to serve a different term if needed. Board members Stinner and Garrett also indicated they would serve a one-year term. Board member Shaul stated he would serve a two-year term, and Ms. Flores indicated she would serve a one-year term. Members who were absent will be considered to serve three-year terms.

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.

   There were no citizen comments.

8. **Adjourn**
   Before the Chair called for a formal motion to adjourn, next steps were clarified. Board member Stinner asked whether, if the name were approved, it would then go to the city councils. Ms. Folck explained that each City Council would need to ratify the name change, after which the paperwork would be filed with the Secretary of State. She stated that once those filings were completed and the necessary documentation was submitted to the IRS, the organization would be ready to proceed. At that point, the ARPA funds that had been set aside could be transferred into the account, allowing the Board to establish a budget and begin working on properties.

   Board member Stinner further asked whether the board would then be able to also consider Michelle Coolidge serving as Executive Director. Ms. Folck confirmed that was the plan but noted their attorney had advised them not to take any action committing funds until all paperwork was finalized, as doing so could delay the process by several years.

   Chair Kaufman stated that once the ARPA funds were deposited, the Board could begin discussions with the private sector and property owners to secure additional funding, prioritize properties, and move forward with projects. Ms. Folck agreed, adding that the Board could also begin writing grants and would then be ready to move forward. Chair Kaufman suggested that the Board might be ready to proceed by the end of March. Ms. Folck responded that the attorney had indicated the IRS approval process typically takes a couple of months after paperwork is submitted, so it could take slightly longer.

   Chair Kaufman asked whether the Board could begin prioritizing properties in the meantime. Ms. Folck stated that reviewing and prioritizing properties would be acceptable as long as no funds were spent. Board members agreed that it would be beneficial to begin identifying and reviewing properties so the Board could act once approvals were received.

Ms. Folck stated that a few properties had already been identified for Gering. She asked Annette Brower to also compile a list of any properties they may have in mind for Kimball so a list could be prepared for the Board to review at the next meeting. Ms. Brower indicated she would do so.

The discussion concluded as there were no further comments.

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

Meeting adjourned at 10:19 a.m.

Tony Kaufman, Chairman

ATTEST:

Karen Heins, Administrative Secretary