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

September 2, 2026

A meeting of the Western Panhandle Regional Land Bank (WPRLB) Board was held in open session on September 2, 2026 at 1:00 p.m. in the Gering City Hall Conference Room, 1025 P Street, Gering, NE. Present were Board Members Nancy Garrett, Tony Kaufman, John Stinner and Sarah Flores. Absent: Gabe Ingram, Brady Shaul, Amy Newman. Also present were the following: Michelle Coolidge (Executive Director), Annie Folck and Karen Heins (Gering), and Annette Brower and Greg Robinson (Kimball).

1. **Call to Order and Roll Call**
   Board Chair Tony Kaufman called the meeting to order at 1:03 p.m. It was noted that a quorum of the WPRLB Board was present and business could be conducted.

2. **Open Meetings Act**
   Chair Kaufman reviewed the Nebraska Revised Statutes Chapter 84, Article 14, requiring by State Law, public bodies shall make available current copies of the Open Meetings Act available in the meeting room.

   Chair Kaufman also noted that agenda items may be moved up or down on the agenda at the discretion of the Chairperson. He further noted that additions may not be made to the agenda less than 24 hours before the beginning of the meeting unless they are considered under the appropriate section of the agenda and the Western Panhandle Regional Land Bank Board determines that the matter requires emergency action.

3. **Board reserves the right to enter into closed session if deemed necessary if the items on the agenda as per Section 84-1410 of the Nebraska Revised Statutes**
   Chair Kaufman stated the Board reserves the right to enter into closed session when appropriate, as required by Nebraska law, for any item on the agenda as per Section 84-1410 of the Nebraska Revised Statutes.

4. **Approval of Minutes of the August 5, 2026 WPRLB Board Meeting**

   A motion was made by Board Member Stinner to approve the minutes of the August 5, 2026 WPRLB Board meeting. Seconded by Board Member Flores. There was no discussion. The Secretary called the roll. "AYES": Stinner, Garrett, Flores and Kaufman. "NAYS": None. Abstain: None. Absent: Ingram, Shaul and Newman. Motion carried.

5. **Discussion and Possible Action on Contribution Commitments by Member Communities and Options for Meeting the Commitment**
   Executive Director Michelle Coolidge reported that she had attended a Kimball City Council meeting and provided an update on the status of the Land Bank. She explained that the City had been asked to finalize its contribution commitment so that it could be incorporated into the Land Bank's budget. Council Member Robinson and City Administrator Annette Brower were also present to provide information regarding Kimball's budget discussions.

   Ms. Coolidge stated that Kimball had discussed the possibility of using labor in lieu of a monetary contribution. She explained that staff time and other in-kind contributions, such as demolition work, could be considered as allowable contributions. She noted that the same approach would be available to Gering, but that the Board would need to determine whether an in-kind contribution could constitute a community's entire annual commitment.

   Ms. Brower reported that the Kimball City Council had approved a $50,000 contribution for the upcoming fiscal year, with the possibility of increasing the contribution in future years. She explained that the City was facing a particularly stringent budget year and therefore was unable to commit the $100,000 that had originally been contemplated. She indicated that future increases would be brought back to the Council and Mayor for consideration.

Ms. Coolidge clarified that the $50,000 commitment was for the upcoming fiscal year and was not a three-year commitment. She also explained that a concern expressed during the Kimball Council discussion was the desire to demonstrate the effectiveness of the Land Bank before committing additional funds. Ms. Coolidge noted that she had submitted a letter of intent to the U.S. Bank Foundation seeking an opportunity to apply for an operating grant available to new and emerging land banks, which could help offset some operating expenses.

The Board discussed how contributions from individual communities would be accounted for and how expenses would be allocated. Ms. Coolidge explained that the Land Bank could allocate general operating expenses based on each community's percentage of the total annual contribution. Expenses such as staff time, copying, and other general operating costs could be attributed proportionally to each community, unless additional funding was secured to offset those costs. She emphasized that the budget figures presented were preliminary and would be adjusted as additional information became available.

The Board then discussed due diligence and environmental investigations for properties being considered for Land Bank projects. A question was raised regarding an asbestos survey for a church property in Kimball. Ms. Coolidge explained that the investigation had not yet been completed because the community's participation and contribution were still being determined. She noted that Gering had been conducting preliminary work to determine potential expenses before referring properties to the Land Bank and suggested that Kimball could follow a similar process.

It was clarified that environmental investigations could potentially be conducted through Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy (NDEE) programs at no cost to the community or Land Bank. The Board discussed whether such preliminary investigative work should be performed by the member communities or the Land Bank and recognized the need to establish clear protocols or guardrails so that Land Bank resources would not be consumed by due diligence on properties that ultimately may not become Land Bank projects.

Ms. Brower explained that Kimball had experience working with environmental programs to address environmental and abatement issues and could potentially conduct some of this work internally. She stated that Kimball had several properties that could potentially qualify for Land Bank consideration. Regarding the church property, she explained that it was already among the City's priority abatement issues and that the City was considering taking ownership of the property.

The Board discussed the potential volume of properties that may ultimately be referred by member communities and the importance of establishing a clear prioritization process. Members also noted the value of demonstrating the Land Bank's process through initial projects as the program becomes established in Kimball.

Ms. Coolidge also reported that Kimball had discussed contributing vacant lots as an in-kind contribution. She explained that the City had several vacant lots that could potentially be transferred to the Land Bank, with the Land Bank selling the lots and returning the proceeds to the program. She stated that Kimball remained interested in moving forward and that the $50,000 commitment provided a basis for beginning the next steps.

Chair Kaufman stated that, with Kimball's commitment in place, the member communities should proceed with establishing their respective processes for identifying properties. He recalled that the original plan was for each community to develop its own process, either through a committee or the City Council, and provide the Land Bank Board with a list of properties for consideration and prioritization.

Ms. Folck explained that Gering was keeping its process simple, with two potential referral routes: properties could be referred directly by staff or through the Property Review Team (PRT). She anticipated that most properties would be referred directly by staff, while the PRT would focus more on code enforcement issues and assisting occupied properties with identifying resources for repairs. Vacant properties would generally be considered more appropriate for Land Bank referral. Ms. Folck offered to provide Ms. Brower with a copy of

its procedures. The Board agreed that establishing clear and straightforward procedures for property referrals would be important as the Land Bank moves forward.

The discussion then turned to fundraising. Board members discussed meeting with local banks and other potential contributors, including developers, to seek additional financial support for the Land Bank. Chair Kaufman agreed to begin arranging meetings with banks for the week following Board Member Stinner's return from travel. It was also suggested that they could travel to Kimball to assist with presentations to potential contributors if needed.

Ms. Folck offered to provide the Land Bank with a list and photographs of properties that were over the target threshold, which could be useful in presentations to potential funders. Ms. Coolidge also noted that updated Land Bank contact information and materials could be provided to the Board members for use in outreach to local banks, developers, and other potential contributors.

6. **Review of Draft Budget for FY2027**

Executive Director Michelle Coolidge presented the preliminary budget and explained that revisions had been made in response to questions raised by the Kimball City Council regarding how its contribution would benefit Kimball. She stated that the budget would reflect contributions and expenses on a percentage basis and that the $50,000 contribution from Kimball would be incorporated into the budget.

Ms. Coolidge explained that the budget was intended as a projection of anticipated revenues and expenditures for the upcoming year. Actual year-to-date figures and variances would be used to determine whether additional revenue would need to be secured. She noted that the budget was preliminary and that additional revisions would be made in preparation for consideration of final approval in October.

Ms. Coolidge stated that the Land Bank was not currently required to submit its budget to the State and that there was no established deadline for doing so. She also discussed various budget categories and noted that routine office supplies and similar expenses would generally be covered through her contract unless a significant project-specific expense arose.

Ms. Folck noted that the $25,000 listed in the budget under Gering was not intended to represent a cash contribution from the City. Ms. Coolidge clarified that the amount represented donations or grants that could be attributed to or used for projects in Gering. She agreed to revise the budget language to make this distinction clear. She also confirmed that Gering's contribution for the upcoming year would be provided in-kind through staff labor and equipment, with no direct cash contribution from the City.

The Board discussed the appropriate allocation of personnel expenses between the participating communities. It was noted that if one-third of staff time was anticipated to be dedicated to a particular community, the personnel allocation should reflect that percentage. Ms. Coolidge agreed to make the necessary adjustments.

The Board then discussed how revenue from donations, grants, and other outside sources should be categorized. Chair Kaufman suggested using broader categories for non-municipal revenue rather than attributing every donation or grant to a specific community. He noted that donations could come from banks, philanthropic organizations, regional entities, or other private sources, and that some contributors may operate in both communities or have a broader regional focus. The Board agreed that keeping these revenues in more general categories would avoid creating expectations that particular outside funds were designated for a specific community.

The Board recognized that revenues directly associated with a specific community, such as property tax revenue or proceeds from the sale of a property located in Gering or Kimball, could appropriately be attributed to that community. Grants and other general donations, however, would not necessarily need to be divided between the communities.

Board members also discussed the difficulty of maintaining an exact financial balance between the communities because property values, demolition costs, and other project expenses would vary. It was suggested that the more appropriate measure of whether each community was benefiting from the Land Bank

would be the number and distribution of projects being undertaken in each community rather than an exact dollar-for-dollar allocation of expenses.

The Board discussed the importance of ensuring that both participating communities receive meaningful benefit from the Land Bank. Members noted that housing needs and other community priorities would also be considered as projects are developed.

Ms. Coolidge agreed to continue refining the preliminary budget, incorporating the $50,000 Kimball contribution, adjusting personnel allocations, and clarifying the treatment of donations and grants. The Board indicated that the revised budget would be brought forward for further discussion and anticipated final approval in October.

7. Discussion and Possible Action on Proposed WPRLB Policies

a. Financial Management Policy

b. General Operating Policy

Discussion of Financial Management Policy:

Ms. Coolidge reported that she had met with Gering staff and revised the proposed Financial Management Policy to clarify financial responsibilities, bill payment and check request procedures, expenditure approval thresholds, and internal controls. The policy maintains Board oversight while allowing reasonable administrative flexibility and separation of duties appropriate for a small organization.

The Board discussed expenditure and purchasing thresholds and the difficulty of obtaining three actual quotes for some projects. Members agreed that the policy should require an effort to contact at least three vendors and document those efforts rather than require three responses. The Board indicated the following approval structure:

- Under $2,500: Executive Director may authorize.
- $2,500–$50,000: Prior Board approval required, with an effort to obtain three quotes. If prior approval is not obtained, the expenditure may be approved by the Executive Director, Board Chair, and Treasurer, with all three approvals required.
- $50,000 and over: Board review and approval, with competitive bidding requirements at the applicable threshold.

The Board also discussed approval of expenditures between regular meetings, noting that the full Board could not take formal action by email or telephone due to Open Meetings Act requirements. The policy will provide for designated approval by the Executive Director, Board Chair and Treasurer, with the Vice-Chair or another Board member serving as an alternate when necessary. Checks will require two signatures.

The Board reviewed payment procedures, including use of a distribution request form to document approvals and provide a clear record to the accounting services provider. Payments are generally expected to be processed twice monthly. The policy will also require approval by the Executive Director, Board Chair, and Treasurer to provide oversight without requiring the full Board to meet for each expenditure. No individual may approve a payment that provides a direct financial benefit to that individual.

Financial reporting provisions were reviewed, including monthly income statements, balance sheets, and check registers. Reports will be provided to the Board through meeting packets or electronically when necessary. The Board also discussed statutory reporting requirements and State Auditor requirements, including the need to verify the applicable audit threshold and file an audit waiver when required.

Ms. Coolidge will incorporate the Board's changes and provide a redlined version of the revised policy for review prior to the next meeting. No formal action was taken on the policy.

Discussion of General Operating Policy:

Ms. Coolidge presented the proposed General Operating Policy, which consolidates recommended land bank policies into a single, high-level document. The policy addresses Board and Executive Director authority,

property acquisition and disposition, property stewardship, procurement, depository agreements, public engagement, appeals, and future policy amendments.

The Board discussed property acquisition and disposition provisions, including the flexibility to use an appropriate property valuation method based on the circumstances rather than requiring a full appraisal in every case. Members expressed a preference for greater Board oversight of property dispositions while the Land Bank becomes established and agreed that property dispositions should initially come before the full Board rather than relying on a dollar threshold for Executive Director authority.

The Board also discussed depository agreements for properties held for extended periods and recommended that the provisions be reviewed with legal counsel. Questions regarding tax sales, former property owner equity, and costs incurred by the Land Bank in acquiring and improving properties were identified for further review to ensure the policy reflects current Nebraska law.

The Board agreed to wait for a revised version before taking formal action. Ms. Coolidge will incorporate the discussed changes, consult with legal counsel as appropriate, and provide a redlined version for Board review prior to the next meeting.

8. **Discussion and Possible Action on Securing Domain and Web Landing Page for WPRLB**
Ms. Coolidge presented a proposal to establish a basic web landing page for the Land Bank. She noted that once the Land Bank has an inventory, state requirements will require the inventory to be publicly accessible online. The proposed site would be a simple one-page website providing the Land Bank's inventory, meeting information, contact information, and other basic public information, with links accessible from both member communities.

Ms. Coolidge presented a proposal through Squarespace for approximately $199 as a one-time cost, along with a separate domain registration estimated at approximately $100 for three years with additional security features. She noted that establishing a Land Bank-specific domain and email address would provide continuity if staff changes occur.

Board members discussed the proposal and confirmed that the website would not be used to process payments. It was noted that avoiding payment processing would allow the Land Bank to use a basic, lower-cost website without the additional security requirements associated with online financial transactions. The Board supported moving forward with establishing the web landing page.

A motion was made by Board Member Stinner to approve securing a domain and web landing page for WPRLB. Seconded by Board Member Garrett. There was no discussion. The Secretary called the roll. "AYES": Stinner, Flores, Garrett and Kaufman. "NAYS": None. Abstain: None. Absent: Ingram, Shaul and Newman. Motion carried.

9. **Standing Items:**
   a. **Financial Report**
   The Board reviewed the first iteration of the Land Bank's financial reports, including a balance sheet and income statement prepared by the accounting provider. The reports reflected the initial deposit and payment of the Executive Director's first two invoices. Board members discussed whether contributions from the City of Gering and City of Kimball should continue to be tracked separately. Members agreed that maintaining the separate accounting, particularly during the initial stages of the Land Bank, would help establish transparency and credibility with member communities. It was also requested that the community associated with each reimbursement or distribution request be clearly identified on the applicable form so the accounting provider would not have to determine the appropriate allocation.

   b. **Property Identification**
   There were no properties to report at this time.

   c. **Property Status Report**
   No property status was presented at this time.

d. Executive Director Report

Ms. Coolidge presented her Executive Director report for August, which summarized her work during the month, including attendance at the Kimball City Council meeting, continued development of the Land Bank's policies, and other activities detailed in the supporting documentation.

She also reported that a letter of intent had been submitted to U.S. Bank seeking a potential $25,000 operating grant and that, following confirmation of Kimball's participation, the Land Bank could begin taking steps related to properties in Kimball.

The Board discussed next steps for identifying and referring Kimball properties. Members emphasized that the City of Kimball should work through its own local process to evaluate and prioritize properties before referring them to the Land Bank Board. Gering offered to share its procedures and experience with Kimball. The Board expressed a preference for communities to conduct as much initial vetting as possible before submitting properties for Board consideration.

The Board discussed the potential for the Land Bank to acquire properties in poor condition, demolish structures, and return the properties to productive use as vacant lots. Members indicated that Kimball should develop a prioritized list of potential properties, including properties that may provide opportunities for relatively straightforward initial projects. Kimball representatives noted that its health, building inspection, and code enforcement processes were already being used to develop a preliminary list of properties.

Board members emphasized the value of completing a few relatively simple projects early in the Land Bank's operations to demonstrate the process and educate member communities and the public regarding the Land Bank's purpose and capabilities.

e. Next Meeting: October 7, 2026, 1:00 p.m.

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

No public comments were received.

11. Adjourn

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

Meeting adjourned at 2:20 p.m.

Tony Kaufman, Chair

ATTEST:

Karen Heins, Administrative Secretary