



## **Furnas Harlan Partnership Meeting**

### **March 18, 2005**

Board Members Present were: Dennis Wolzen, Oxford; Mike Eberle, Cambridge; Thomas Tomas, Orleans; Todd Eichenberger, Arapahoe; Ken Becker, Beaver City; Marcia Roberts, Harlan County Supervisors, Ken Johnson, Twin Valleys - Cambridge

Guests Present were: Corey tenBensel, Alma; Ed Newcomb, Cambridge; Gerald Meyerle, Holbrook; Bev Anderson, Community Action Partnership of Mid Nebraska – Kearney; Rosie Stockton, Cambridge; Kerri Sheldon, Alma; Sandy Lewis, Orleans; Sherry Arnett, Orleans; Tom Arnett, Orleans; Jay Hall, Beaver City; Lory Cappel, McCook; Mary Ann Lehmer, Orleans

Ken Johnson opened the meeting at 4:00. Roll Call was taken and it was determined that there was a quorum to hold the meeting. Minutes were approved as read. Added to the agenda under other was a discussion of the Little Blue Natural Resource District and the Harlan County Labor Basin Study. Additions were approved. Todd Eichenberger gave a treasurer's report with \$1,865.79 in checking with no bills to pay at this time.

Under unfinished business, Ken discussed the progress of the presentations that have been made to this point. Presentations have been to Beaver City, Hendley, and Orleans. The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, March 21, 2005. The meeting will be held in the basement of the Oxford city building. The presentation schedule is available upon request. Everyone was encouraged to attend. Support in large numbers is needed to show the boards the level of support that the group enjoys.

Rosie Stockton reported on the status of her grant project. She has not been able to make as much progress as she had hoped because of some of the other projects that she had been working on. She is working with Butler Library setting up a collection center. The resource center would allow the research of topics tapping into the private foundations across the country. These foundations are private and not tied to government restrictions. Discussion was entertained on whether to support the project. A letter will be written in support. A motion was made by Marcia and seconded by Tom to support the effort for 3 years at \$50 per year.

Discussion was held on filing for 501(c)3 status for the Partnership. Tom Patterson will have it ready to file in the next 30 days. Motion made by Mike and seconded by Tom to pursue setting up a foundation under this option.

Ken Becker reported on the Newspaper F/H Partnership promotion. He hasn't had much time to research this yet, but he would like to have articles ready by the time the group presents to the county representatives.

Under new business, the community and county resolution for funding was discussed. The contract was distributed for discussion. The document is open-ended and allows for flexibility for the community if unforeseen emergencies occur. Questions were asked as to whether an organization can contribute more to the Partnership than what was asked for. The consensus was that it would be welcomed and appreciated to help get this process going. Also, private donations could be accepted through the foundation or non-profit side of the organization. Ken would like to get as many of the community resolutions as possible.

Bev Anderson with the Community Action Partnership of Mid-Nebraska was there to discuss a proposal to write Housing Rehabilitation Grants for the Furnas-Harlan Partnership. Department of Economic Development Applications is due March 28 and is partly based on a first-come first-served basis. She will be submitting a

Flexible Investment Targeting Application to the State for the Grant. Community Action Partnership would be the grant administrator and take care of all of the paperwork and inspections. Typical allowances for this \$250,000 are 13% for fees. Fees will be deducted out of the total grant allocation.

Lori Cappel also discussed the self help program at USDA. People not qualifying for the rehabilitation grants may be able to apply through the Rural Development program. A minimum of 8 families need to apply as a group to qualify for this project. More information is needed.

Tom Tomas led discussion on ideas to clean up lots in towns and provide opportunities for those who would like to come back and build new homes in our communities. Volunteer work can be recruited to clean up lots that would be sold to a foundation to get property back into use and also help to expand the tax base in the communities. Tom, Marcia and Jim Cooley will research the opportunities with this program utilizing the Housing focus group.

Tom then led a discussion regarding Alternative Ag products. A distribution system was described that connects the local producer with a market for home raised goods via a distribution network that is based over the World Wide Web. The concept was developed and is being utilized in Oklahoma. Mark Hutchinson, UNL Food Processing Center, would like to get this distribution system set up in Nebraska. The Oklahoma organization had \$150,000 in sales last year. All products are environmentally friendly. The Oklahoma organization will let the group use the software at no charge provided that any upgrades are shared with the original group. A guest speaker on this topic will be secured for the May 19 Partnership Forum.

Labor studies were discussed. Beaver City utilized these studies during their employer recruitment session last month. Also, The Little Blue NRD is planning a Highway 4 project. Details were discussed on the project. No action was taken on these items.

Next meeting is schedule for April 21 at Beaver City.

Meeting adjourned at 6 p.m.

Sandwiches were served by the Orleans Chamber of Commerce.