

MEMORANDUM

TO: Programs, Projects and Operations Subcommittee

FROM: Justin Novak/Kyle Winn

SUBJECT: Purchase of additional land at Blair F.O.

DATE: January 5, 2021

The NRD has an opportunity to purchase approximately 1.8 acres for \$100,000 from the City of Blair, located directly west of the office on Wilbur St. The Blair F.O. office has experienced tremendous growth over the last few years with the NRCS, FSA, NRD field staff and Washington Co. Rural water all hiring additional staff. We are looking at the current and future needs of our office, and the expansion of our facility is a big part of that. The parking lots are full of employee vehicles, NRCS trucks, UTV trailers along with inside the office as well, leaving little room for much else.

Washington Co. Rural Water has exploded over the last couple of years with new customers being added every week. The biggest need is for Washington Co. Rural Water, which does not have a shop to work out of like their counterparts in Thurston and Dakota County. Currently, any time a repair is needed, or meter pit is installed the work must be contracted out, due to the limitations of space for equipment and supplies. The pump house that feeds System #1 is the main storage facility for the meter pits, and the garage in Blair houses minimal supplies for everything else. There is a huge deficiency in the operation of the systems by not having adequate supplies and equipment for everyday needs and repair. Kyle Winn has expressed interest in acquiring a mini-excavator and bobcat for emergency repairs and meter pit installation, just like the northern water systems have. The NRD does not have anywhere to store the equipment and stock all the different size pipe, fittings, meter pits and other materials that are needed for this.

Another very important need is a tree cooler for the Conservation Tree Program that is administered out of the Blair F.O. The NRD originally planned a cooler to be built inside the building but was removed to accommodate more staff. When the trees are picked up from the Lower Elkhorn NRD tree cooler, they are left in the garage for days, sometimes a week before they are picked up by the customers in Blair. The Papio NRD does not have an adequate tree cooler to run the Conservation Tree Program if our partnership was to ever change with the Lower Elkhorn NRD.

There is a multitude of reasons why the Papio NRD should look at the expansion of the Blair F.O. and acquiring the property is the most important step. The plan is to eventually build a shop for the Rural Water and a tree cooler, but that comes with time. Our chance to purchase this property is once in a lifetime opportunity and once it's gone, we are forever land locked.

It is staff's recommendation that the Subcommittee recommend to the Board that the General Manager be authorized to execute the proposed purchase agreement with the City of Blair for the purchase of 1.8 acres in the amount of \$100,000.00, contingent upon no reported issues from the environmental investigation, and changes deemed necessary by the General Manager and approval as to form by District Legal Counsel.