



OIL PUMPJACKS operate in Williams county in September 2024. A North Dakota agency is ending public notices of oil and gas lease auction in local newspapers. photo | Kyle Martin ND Monitor

Transparency a concern as ND agency ends oil lease auction notices in newspapers

Jacob Orledge
North Dakota Monitor

The North Dakota agency responsible for managing state-owned minerals is changing how it keeps the public informed, prompting concerns about a lack of transparency. The Department of Trust Lands is moving ahead with plans to stop publishing notices in local newspapers of oil and gas lease auctions after a lawmaker's attempt to delay the rule change was defeated in an interim legislative meeting. Rep. Don Longmuir, R-Stanley, made the motion in Thursday's meeting because he fears the change will result in less transparency for communities in his district, which includes a significant slice of the state's oil field. "That's the one thing we always hear so much about, is transparency. Well, transparency is letting as many people know in as many ways as you can," Longmuir said.

The Department of Trust Lands is responsible for managing state-owned lands and minerals. The agency plans to continue posting digital notices of lease auctions on its website and through Efficient Markets, the company that runs the process for the state, to ensure potential bidders are aware. Ending these notices in local newspapers will save the agency time and money, Land Commissioner Joseph Heringer said. "We have a specific target market here, and the target market is oil and gas companies who will develop the leases," Heringer said. "The goal is to get as many of those so you can get the most bids and the highest bids." Opponents of the change said public notices should not be viewed as advertising for industry. Local communities, mineral owners, landowners and others all benefit from knowing if state-owned mineral acres in their area have been nominated for an upcoming lease auction, said Cecile Wehrman, executive director of the North Dakota Newspaper

Association. "This belongs to the people of North Dakota and while it's the state government's job to manage these things, it's in all of our interest how that's managed," said Wehrman. "To have the minimum requirement that they let us know when that's happening is a very small ask." She said this action is part of a trend of agencies attempting to eliminate requirements to publish public notices of government activity in local newspapers in recent years. "If this same provision would have gone before the full Legislature, I do not believe it would have been successful," Wehrman said. But the Department of Trust Lands' obligation to publish public notices was in the agency's administrative rules, not state law, and required the consent of the interim Administrative Rules Committee, not the full Legislature. "This situation with the land board is unfortunate."

SEE TRANSPARENCY | PAGE 5

ACDC welcomes new staff, reviews finances and advances bowling alley plans

Ronda Fink
adamscountyrecord@gspublishing.net

Adams County Development Corporation board members: Josh Ranum, county representative Dusty Laufer, city representative Michele Gaylord, City of Reeder representative Dalton Mellmer, vice-president Dorothy Becker, president Nicole Sott and Trevor Wolff were present at the regularly scheduled meeting on March 18, along

with secretary/treasurer and executive director Rebecca Ferderer and newly hired office coordinator Mirandi Bakken. Missing board members were county representative Kevin Pagel and student director Samantha Salazar. Nicole called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. with the first order of business being to introduce new office staff Mirandi Bakken. Mirandi will become full time on April 1.

The agenda and financial reports, along with February's board meeting minutes were approved. The monthly balance sheet declares \$220,437.90 in the checking and \$77,314.14 in various other accounts. Expenses for the quarter included \$6,319.41 for the bowling alley which was mostly utilities and taxes; Community Promotion Office \$3,650.00; memberships and sponsorships in the amount of

\$1,375.00; \$2,985.44 in microgrants, \$500.00 to the ND Community Foundation; \$122.95 for postage, banking fees, secretary of state filing fees and miscellaneous; professional and legal fees of \$140.00; office salaries and insurance of \$7,236.62 and the final expense to Small Business Development Corporation Support (SBDC) for \$5,000.00. Next on the agenda was discussion on a financial audit. Last

month Josh Ranum contacted Nathan Stadheim about doing a financial audit of ACDC's books. Nathan is not licensed to do a formal and complete audit, but he is willing to do a reconciliation audit for the years that have not been completed by Haley Evans. With a reconciliation audit he will check entries to make sure they are in the proper accounts and they balance. Rebecca

SEE ACDC | PAGE 4