

Story County Conservation Board
Monday, December 3, 2012
Story County Conservation Center, McFarland Park

68525952. Chair J. Pease called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

MEMBERS

Jim Pease – present

Ted Tedesco – present

Joyce Hornstein – present

Sandy Opstvedt – present

Allen Weber – present

Wayne Clinton - present (ex-officio)

STAFF

Mike Cox

Jolene Van Waus

Joseph Kooiker

Tyler Kelley

GUESTS

None

68525953. INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Chair Pease welcomed staff members Kooiker and Kelley.

3. REVIEW OF AGENDA AND HANDOUTS

The IRVM update was moved ahead in the meeting prior to the action items.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION by Tedesco, SECOND by Hornstein, to approve the minutes of the November 20, 2012 meeting. MCU.

5. APPROVAL OF CLAIMS AND RECEIPTS

MOTION by Tedesco, SECOND by Optsvedt, to approve all claims and receipts as submitted. MCU.

6. FINANCIAL REPORTS AND UPDATES

Board members commented on high overtime and general maintenance expenses.

7. SCHEDULE OF UPCOMING EVENTS/MEETINGS

Pease noted upcoming O.W.L.S. program, holiday closures, and the current photo display. The board will have a meeting with staff about the strategic plan on the afternoon of January 7 followed by the regular January meeting. Director Cox will confirm meeting times closer to that date. Pease also reminded board members of a public meeting re: the Dakins Lake Expansion project at Zearing on Wednesday, December 5 at 5:00 p.m.

8. COMMUNICATIONS

There were no written communications. Weber shared that Todd Burras is leaving the *Ames Tribune*.

9. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

10. INTEGRATED ROADSIDE VEGETATION MANAGEMENT UPDATE

Roadside Biologist gave a PowerPoint presentation on IRVM's activities over the past year:

- The fall 2011 seed harvest produced 2031 pounds of bulk seed resulting in 133 pounds of pure seed. This was used on the Jennett Heritage Area planting. The fall 2012 harvest was affected by dry weather (seed didn't fill out) and totaled 440 pounds.
- A mild winter and a dry spring allowed Secondary Roads maintenance crews to repair more roads than planned. IRVM seeded 48.75 acres of roadsides in FY12 and 21 acres to date in FY13. The hydroseeder was utilized to go over stabilizer seeding done by Secondary Roads. Fall seasonal staff was hired to keep up with these seeding projects.
- Spraying for Canada thistles is reduced due to use of Roundup Ready. Six weed complaints were received in 2012.
- A contractor was hired to perform brush control in Howard, Warren, Lincoln, Sherman, and parts of Richland townships. SCC staff applied about 1,000 gallons of brush mix over 7.5 center line miles.
- Seven sites (20.5 acres) in the right-of-way were burned during the 2012 prescribed fire season--mainly in the fall.
- Several miles of first-year and established plantings were mowed to reduce weed pressure.
- Eight landowners planted 112 acres of native grass/forbs using IRVM's equipment in FY12. IRVM custom planted another 14 acres. To date in FY13, three landowners have planted 29.5 acres of native grass/forbs.
- Equipment maintenance and repairs were completed on the boom mower, hydroseeder, fire rig, flail mower, tractor, spray trucks, trailers, and combines.
- Routine maintenance/facilities upkeep was performed at the vegetation management base, sheriff's gun range, Secondary Roads shop, and Engineer's building. Storage and tool organization is ongoing at the vegetation management base shop building.
- The roadside biologist was active in several organizations and committees, including the Iowa Weed Commissioners Association, Story County Pheasants Forever, and Story County Conservation safety committee. The IRVM staff was also featured in an Iowa State University continuing education video on right-of-way spraying.
- IRVM provided or assisted with these volunteer opportunities: public seed harvests, combining, seed drill repairs, Conservation Corps Iowa work days, and Iowa State 4-H Council service day.
- IRVM staff took advantage of several continuing education opportunities, including the Iowa Prairie Conference, Roadside Conference, Winterfest, Iowa Association of Weed Commissioners Conference, Midwest Wildlife Fire Training, DNR Fire Program, and an Invasive Species Class.

Vegetation Management Specialist Tyler Kelley gave an overview of the new drainage district program. The board of supervisors serve as the drainage district trustees, and Kelley's position was created to manage vegetation in the districts.

- Kelley stated that there are 53 linear miles of open ditch districts and 9 miles of tile districts in Story County. The plan of action enacted was to assess and then treat, remove, or burn vegetation in the open ditches.
- Backpack sprayers were used to start on some of the smaller areas, but it was discovered that there was much larger vegetation requiring more work than anticipated. Two staff are needed when using chain saws, so clearing large trees may be contracted with an outside vendor.
- Kelley said that a "cut and frill" method is being utilized and will continue into the winter

as weather permits.

- Spring burning is planned, and Kelley is working with NRCS to promote buffer strips on project area boundaries.
- Revenue in FY12—the first year of the program—totaled \$4,572. Revenue to date in FY13 is \$10,101.

The board thanked Kooiker and Kelley for their presentation.

11. APPROVE STORY COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD MEETING DATES FOR 2013
The proposed schedule was reviewed, and the January, February, and March meetings were re-scheduled. MOTION by Tedesco, SECOND by Weber, to approve amended meeting dates for 2013. MCU.

12. APPROVE APPLICATION FOR IOWA DNR WILDLIFE DIVERSITY GRANT – DAKINS LAKE
Director Cox reported that a grant proposal has not been completed yet; approval for grant funding is requested from the board to meet the December 15 application deadline. MOTION by Hornstein, SECOND by Optsvedt, to approve the application for an Iowa DNR Wildlife Diversity Grant. MCU.

13. APPROVE PLACEMENT OF MEMORIAL BENCH AT HICKORY GROVE PARK
MOTION by Tedesco, SECOND by Weber, to approve placement of a bench at Hickory Grove Park in memory of former employee Paul Peterson. MCU.

14. APPROVE FY14 CONSERVATION AND IRVM BUDGET PROPOSALS
Director Cox summarized the budget proposals and changes made since last month's drafts.
- The Conservation budget request includes new full-time and seasonal staff for Dakins Lake. These positions are prorated for a portion of the fiscal 2014 year. The new lake and campground will be significant additions and require more staff time and maintenance. Additional staff will fill these needs as well as help with field work to address an additional 590 acres acquired by the board since 2001.
 - The only new equipment shown is a new truck for use at Dakins Lake. Other new expenses related to Dakins Lake are prorated for the year.
 - Salary adjustments are shown to bring four Conservation positions up to the minimum pay scale according to the compensation study conducted for the county.
 - Many infrastructure improvements are needed at Hickory Grove Park. The sewage system was analyzed several years ago, and the sewer load cannot be increased with the current lagoon. The most cost effective option in the 2010 study was to pipe the sewage to Colo at a cost of \$230,000. Cox explained that camping revenue deposited in the conservation reserve account is being budgeted for this expense until the project can be started.
 - The original heating and cooling system at the conservation center is 21 years old. In 2007, a geothermal system was explored, with a replacement cost of the entire system estimated to be approximately \$80,000. In discussion, board members remarked that as a conservation department, energy savings should be utilized in some way—whether geothermal, solar, wind energy, or a high efficiency LP system. All agreed that efficiencies of the building (windows, insulation, etc.) need to be evaluated to obtain true energy efficiency and geothermal gain. \$50,000 will be requested towards an energy efficiency study of and improvements to the heating and cooling systems.

MOTION by Tedesco, SECOND by Opstvedt, to approve the revised FY14 Conservation budget proposal. MCU.

Discussion on the IRVM budget proposal focused on drainage district revenue. In FY13, \$62,000 in revenue was expected for this new program to offset the same amount in expenses. Cox explained that when the program was created, one of IRVM's seasonal positions was moved to assist with drainage district maintenance. However, increased ditch cleanouts and seeding projects by Secondary Roads have left IRVM short staffed. Additional seasonal staff hours are requested in FY14 to address this need. Also, work in some of the drainage districts was more complicated than anticipated with the amount of brush and large trees needing removal and required more than one person to accomplish. The vegetation management specialist is considering seeking contractors to remove these large trees. The board and director are concerned about collecting budgeted revenue in FY14. Proposed FY14 revenue will remain at \$62,000 with the narrative stating that this will be reviewed at the end of the calendar year. There was a brief discussion on the request for a new tractor. The age and number of hours on the 1977 Massey Ferguson tractor were noted.

MOTION by Tedesco, SECOND by Opstvedt, to approve the FY14 IRVM budget proposal with the caveat that the director will report at the end of the year. MCU.

15. GENERAL UPDATES

Director Cox gave these updates:

- SCC has a joint conservation easement with the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation (INHF) on property north of McFarland Park. The owners want to donate that property--which adjoins the Skunk River Greenbelt. Cox commented that there would be no trails on the property. *(Director's note: development of minimal impact hiking trails is permitted.)*
- The director attended the Iowa State Association of Counties (ISAC) Fall Workshop last week. He reported that it was a good meeting with many county conservation directors in attendance. There were informative sessions and discussions on TIF and foundations.
- A request for the board of supervisors to consider bid letting for the Dakins Lake expansion project has been postponed until a flood easement is obtained. Cox has asked for a conditional permit from the Iowa DNR. A wetland permit with the IDNR and the Army Corps of Engineers is pending as well as the conversion process dealing with LAWCON funding for purchase of the property from the INHF and sale of a portion of the property to the Lincoln Township trustees for cemetery expansion. Cox is still hoping for a bid letting on January 7.
- A public meeting updating the Zearing community on the Dakins Lake project will be held on December 4. A different manufacturer for the facilities is being considered; this company wants to have a design cost agreement charging for the design if their products are not used. This agreement is needed before the engineers can completed the 100 percent design plan. Cox will follow up on this issue and request a special meeting for board approval if necessary.

17. OTHER

None.

ADJOURNMENT

Tedesco moved, Hornstein seconded, that the meeting be adjourned.

Chair Pease adjourned the meeting at 8:15 p.m.

Recording Secretary

Story County Conservation Board