

Story County Conservation Board
February 9, 2016
Story County Conservation Center, Ames, Iowa

113821952. Chair Craig Meyers called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

MEMBERS

Craig Meyers - present
Nancy Franz – present
Allen Weber – absent

STAFF

Mike Cox
Jolene Van Waus
Ryan Wiemold

GUESTS

Steven Holmes
Laura Bell
Ethan Anderson

Ted Tedesco – absent
Jim Pease – present
Wayne Clinton – arrived 5:45

113823008. INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Guests were welcomed by Chair Meyers and introduced themselves.

4. REVIEW OF AGENDA AND HANDOUTS

Meyers noted the supplemental claims list for consideration. He proposed that updates on the Army Corps of Engineers land acquisition, tobacco-free/nicotine-free policy, and Skunk River Unit report follow financial reports and updates.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION by Franz, SECOND by Pease, to approve the minutes of the January 11, 2016 board meeting. MCU.

6. APPROVAL OF CLAIMS AND RECEIPTS

MOTION by Pease, SECOND by Franz, to approve claims and receipts. MCU.

7. FINANCIAL REPORTS AND UPDATES

Meyers noted that everything seems on track for the fiscal year.

8. SCHEDULE OF UPCOMING EVENTS/MEETINGS

Meyers noted that the next board meeting is scheduled for March 14.

9. COMMUNICATIONS

None.

10. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Laura Bell, YSS, was present to propose that Story County Conservation adopt a tobacco-free/nicotine-free policy drafted by YSS that would include all Conservation Board buildings, grounds, vehicles, and events and extend to visitors as well as employees. Bell stated this policy would allow for healthy choices and improve the life of others, preserve SCC's areas, and reduce litter and the cost of cleanup.

Bell offered YSS's help with implementation of the policy by educating staff, holding

cessation classes, and providing free signage at buildings and areas. She added that 19 counties have at least one city park that has adopted this policy. In addition, there are over 200 tobacco-free businesses across the state.

Pease asked if enforcement was an issue in parks. Bell replied that she has not heard anything negative. She believes signage and communication with the public are important for people to follow the rules.

Meyers thanked Bell for sharing this information and said the board will take her recommendations into consideration.

11. **CONSIDER FIRST READINGS OF BY-LAWS AND RULES AND REGULATIONS**

Franz noted some typographical errors in the by-laws, and Meyers questioned the possession of firearms in the Rules and Regulations in Chapter 4. Director Cox reported that this chapter is under review with the county attorney's office; final wording will be presented for the second reading. Cox shared staff discussions regarding hunting at Dakins Lake, Peterson Park, and a portion of the Skunk River Greenbelt, and he clarified a proposed change in the 14-day camping limit for specific times during the camping season.

MOTION by Franz, SECOND by Pease, to approve first reading of Story County Conservation Board By-laws and Rules and Regulations with changes discussed. MCU.

12. **CONSIDER APPROVAL OF ANNUAL REPORT**

MOTION by Pease, SECOND by Franz, to approve the Story County Conservation Board FY15 Annual Report. MCU.

13. **CONSIDER APPROVAL OF MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH CENTRAL IOWA RSVP AND CENTRAL IOWA RSVP NORTH**

MOTION by Pease, SECOND by Franz, to approve a Memorandum of Understanding with Central Iowa RSVP and Central Iowa RSVP North for placement and management of volunteers. MCU.

14. **ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS LAND ACQUISITION UPDATE**

County Attorney Stephen Holmes gave an overview of his involvement with the acquisition of the Army Corps' right-of-way north of Ames. He showed a map of the parcels prepared by Scott Wall in the Auditor's office and distributed a summary of activity in the area from 1945-1978. He has also gathered a binder containing cursory history of the greenbelt by parcel and section, including original conveyances and deeds. Holmes remarked that many people over several decades have been involved in this project, and he added that SCCB files provided numerous news clippings, correspondence, and record of board actions that were very helpful in his research.

Holmes explained that the area was acquired for interstate right-of-way. At the same time, the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) was considering a dam for flood control. During this period of time, many things change, and right-of-way was acquired by the ACOE. Relevant sections of an appropriations act shows that the land was conveyed to Story County in 2008. The ACOE states they were not funded to make this transfer and has asked for payment of \$112,000. Holmes said this is an option to consider and would be the easiest and most straightforward. Another option would be a writ of mandamus—which

would compel the ACOE to transfer title to Story County.

Holmes has requested a meeting with the ACOE to discuss solutions. He stated he has more documents to review and add to the informational binder before giving a copy to the board. Holmes said he will wait for direction from the board before proceeding. Meyers stated the board would like to see some resolution in the next couple of months and suggested holding a special meeting if needed.

Board members thanked Homes and Ethan Anderson for all their hard work.

15. SKUNK RIVER UNIT UPDATE

Park Ranger Ryan Wiemold presented a PowerPoint program highlighting work accomplished by the Skunk River Unit in 2015.

Staff devoted much time and effort to the Dakins Lake expansion project. During the months of January-March, pallet structures were placed for fish structure, invasive species were cleared, turf grass was planted, memorial benches were installed, and camping pads were leveled. Staff was busy during April, May, and June readying the expanded park for its soft opening on May 22. More turf was planted (or re-planted), erosion matting was installed, and construction debris was cleaned up. Staff prepared locations for 150 trees and 64 shrubs planted by Colo-NESCO students and an ISU forestry class. Building amenities were added, and campground envelope pedestal, site posts, fire rings, signage, kiosks, additional benches, and picnic tables were installed. A workday was held to install the playground equipment, and staff moved and arranged large rocks around the playground. Volunteers built the wood shed, with staff adding the red roof later in the summer. In early fall, the primitive campground was cleaned up, trees and shrubs were trimmed, invasive species were removed, and a sand volleyball court was installed at the old playground site. A crappie release was held in October with 150 excited Colo-Nesco students participating. Trees and fence were removed, and the forestry mower was used to clear brush to help establish an open savannah and prairie setting. Buildings were winterized, and garlic sticks were attached to the new trees to prevent damage from deer.

Timber stand improvements were made at McFarland Park, frost seeding was done at Roland Wildlife Area, and prescribed burns covered 200 acres. Mowing of all the parks started in April, and staff graded roads, sprayed parking lots and trails, and cleared and groomed a portion of the Heart of Iowa Nature Trail. A cable gate was added at the Ed Powell Wildlife Area.

A pergola swing was installed along the Touch-A-Life Trail at McFarland Park with labor and monetary support from the Ames Town and Country Kiwanis group. Staff installed an electrical pedestal east of the conservation center, repaired a hydrant, ran electricity to the open shelter, and rewired the lake's aerator.

Administrative tasks included designing new campground envelopes, hiring summer employees and a new conservation technician (Ben Marcus), budget research, and soliciting bids for additional trees at Dakins Lake. Staff attended the following inservice: Midwest Fire Conference; training on seeding techniques; drug recognition in the workplace; workplace safety; and County Conservation Peace Officers Association workshops.

Wiemold said staff was excited to be part of the Dakins Lake Expansion project, and added

that it was a team effort among all Conservation staff. Skunk River Unit goals for 2016 include work on the ISU Research Park project, addition of concrete to the final section on the Touch-A-Life Trail, installation of the natural playscape at McFarland Park, remodeling the deck at the conservation center, and rebuilding bridges at Wakefield Woods.

The board thanked Wiemold for his presentation and for all the hard work done by him and the entire Skunk River Unit. Cox praised Wiemold for his leadership.

16. GENERAL UPDATES

Meyers reported that he reviewed rules on closed meetings pertaining to land acquisition. He stated that this will be something to keep in mind while discussing potential land acquisitions during board meetings.

Director Cox gave these updates:

- The Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation has purchased a 50-acre property north of Nevada, which Story County may want to acquire. INHF has already started raising funds for this acquisition.
- Acquisition of the Baldus was approved by the board of supervisors. INHF is spearheading fundraising for this project, which will receive support from several conservation groups, private funding, and grants.
- The CIRTPA grant review committee has recommended that the grant for the Praeri Rail Trail extension be approved. Grant awards will be presented in March.
- Cox attended a meeting at the state capitol today in support of funding for the Watershed Improvement Review Board (WIRB).
- Approval of the final plat for the ISU Research Park was on the Ames City Council meeting agenda tonight. The board of supervisors will consider the research park agreement at their February 16 meeting, and Cox anticipates a 28E agreement ready for consideration at the March board meeting. Cox has met with landowners regarding location of a trail from the research park to R38 and is also in the process of establishing a committee for streambank design.
- Mediation for union contract negotiations has been scheduled for February 29, 2016.

17. BOARD REPORTS

Franz announced that she will be involved with the service enterprise activity for non-profits to learn how to integrate volunteers in organizations. The trails committee met last week and commented that people were utilizing park trails throughout the winter. Franz was impressed with the collaborative environment at the FY17 budget worksession and noted the good relationship between the conservation board and the board of supervisors.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Pease, SECOND by Franz, that the meeting be adjourned. MCU.
Chair Meyers adjourned the meeting at 8:25 p.m.

Recording Secretary

Story County Conservation Board