

Story County Conservation Board
May 14, 2018
Story County Conservation Center, Ames, Iowa

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. ROLL CALL

BOARD MEMBERS

Jim Pease - present
Craig Meyers - present
Christine Laumer - present
Ted Tedesco – present
Nancy Franz - present
Rick Sanders - absent

STAFF

Mike Cox
Jolene Van Waus
Amy Yoakum
Joe Kooiker

GUESTS

Mike Meetz
Cindy Hildebrand
Roger Maddux

3. REVIEW OF AGENDA AND HANDOUTS

Chair Pease reviewed the agenda. The Natural Resource Program update was moved ahead of the action items.

4. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Vegetation Management Biologist Joe Kooiker introduced Cindy Hildebrand and Roger Maddux and presented them with a framed “Jewels of the Prairie” poster and stained glass sandhill crane in appreciation of their volunteer efforts in Story County and around the state. Kooiker recognized Cindy and Roger for their assistance to Story County Conservation over the last 30 years—helping start the IRVM program in 1987, rescuing plants, combining prairie seed, lugging 20-pound bags of seed, donating seed towards 1,500 acres of plantings, donating cash for education and equipment, providing conservation easements to protect the land, helping with CCI projects, lobbying state legislators, and supplying staff and volunteers with awesome snacks. Kooiker thanked Cindy and Roger for being Story County’s jewels of the prairie.

Cindy thanked the board and staff for this recognition and acknowledged Kooiker and Natural Resource Specialist Amy Yoakum for their work in protecting natural resources. She and Roger appreciate everything that Story County Conservation has done with hard work, education, and experience to balance human use and keeping the landscape in good ecological health

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION by Tedesco, SECOND by Laumer, to approve the minutes of the April 9, 2018 board meeting. MCU.

6. APPROVAL OF CLAIMS AND RECEIPTS

MOTION by Laumer, SECOND by Tedesco, to approve claims and receipts. MCU.

7. FINANCIAL REPORTS AND UPDATES

Director Cox commented that FY18 budget amendments will be reflected in June. In the IRVM budget, Cox noted that the cost of the combine was much lower than expected.

8. CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS/MEETINGS

Cox announced that a watershed sign unveiling event is scheduled on June 6 at 2:00 at Gilbert City Hall. Two of the watershed signs will be installed that day. After discussion, the board decided to meet on June 11 as scheduled. A joint meeting with the board of supervisors and planning and development is tentatively scheduled for June 18.

9. Natural Resource Program Update

Amy Yoakum, natural resource specialist, gave a report on the program's accomplishments since her position was created in 2012. Yoakum summarized these into three areas: grants and grant projects; natural resource enhancement and development, and outreach.

- Grants and grant projects - \$52,660 in funds were secured for SCC from several grant programs: Living Roadway Trust Fund, Iowa DNR, Iowa Native Plant Society, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, and Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship. Projects benefited the I-35 Prairie View Area, Robison Wildlife Acres, Dakins Lake, Murphy/Micah French Cemetery, Tedesco Environmental Learning Corridor, Jordan Wildlife Area, Hickory Grove Lake, and the Iowa Invasive Species Conference.
- Natural resource enhancement and development – Yoakum highlighted several projects in which she is/has been involved. These included contracted breeding surveys at several areas, sensitive areas inventory, identification and protection of prairie remnants in cemeteries, ongoing invasive species management/control, planting prairie and pollinator habitat, hand-harvesting prairie seed, rain garden at Dakins Lake, water sampling on East Indian Creek, and oxbow, wetland, savanna and prairie remnant restorations. Several plans or procedures were created for EAB mitigation, bur oak blight treatment, prairie haying, and management grazing utilizing goats. In addition, templates and forms were created to monitor data collection and streamline record keeping.
- Outreach – The natural resource specialist engages many volunteers through group projects and individual service (including the Wasp Watchers program), offers a land stewardship intern to college students, trains and supervises summer employees. Yoakum also monitors easements, provides landowner assistance to the public, works with ISU classes, serves on departmental, county, and state committees, gives numerous presentations at the local, state, and regional level, and provides articles for the Prairie Horizons newsletter and SCC Facebook page.

Board members thanked Yoakum for her informative report and noted that many of these projects were not done five years ago. They added that Yoakum is providing important leadership by being the first to try things and encouraged her to define goals for the program and what is needed to meet those goals.

10. ACTION ITEMS

A. Consider Employment of Seasonal Staff

MOTION by Franz with correction of \$.25/hour adjustment for returning employees, SECOND by Meyers, to approve employment of Story County Conservation 2018 Seasonal Staff. MCU.

B. Consider Salary Adjustments for Merit Staff

MOTION by Meyers, SECOND by Franz, to approve merit adjustments effective

May 27, 2018 for Michael Cox @ \$3,410.39 biweekly, Joseph Kooiker @ \$2,122.65 biweekly, and Ryan Wiemold @ \$2,497.93 biweekly. MCU.

C. Consider Lease Agreement with Brent and Jody Larson

MOTION by Tedesco, SECOND by Laumer, to approve a lease agreement with Brent and Jody Larson for property on the Skunk River Greenbelt, effective May 1, 2018 - May 1, 2023, for \$500. MCU.

D. Consider Placement of Memorial Benches at Christiansen Forest Preserve

Cox stated that one bench will be placed by the parking area, and the second bench will be located near the prairie area. SCC will be reimbursed for the cost of the benches. MOTION by Meyers, SECOND by Franz, to approve placement of two memorial benches at Christiansen Forest Preserve in memory of Vernon Bauge. MCU.

E. Consider Contracts for Construction of Water Trail Accesses

MOTION by Franz, SECOND by Tedesco, to approve contracts with Con-Struct, Inc. for construction of water trail accesses at Peterson Park (\$28,530) and Askew Bridge (\$29,360) and recommend approval by the Story County Board of Supervisors. MCU.

Cox added that Con-Struct was the only bidder on both projects and plans to complete the work in late summer/early fall. Matching funds for the project will come from Energy Transfer Funds designated for water trails.

F. Consider Development and Easement Agreement for Recreational Trail Construction and Operation

MOTION by Franz, SECOND by Meyers, to approve a development and easement agreement with Hunziker Development Company, LLC, and Aurora Heights, LLC, for recreational trail construction and operation on a portion of the Tedesco Environmental Learning Corridor and recommend approval by the Story County Board of Supervisors. MCU.

G. Consider Watershed Awareness Month Proclamation

The board reviewed the proposed proclamation and made wording changes to the last paragraph. MOTION by Tedesco, SECOND by Franz, to approve the proclamation as amended announcing June 2018 as watershed awareness month and recommend approval by the Story County Board of Supervisors. MCU.

11. UPDATES

A. General Updates

Director Cox reported on the following:

- Repairs are needed on a portion of the Heart of Iowa Nature Trail east of 630th Avenue due to ongoing erosion problems. This unbudgeted expense may be a significant because of a very steep bank.
- Repairs to the transmission and clutch are required on the JD5510 tractor assigned to the Skunk River Unit. The tractor is scheduled for replacement in 4-5 years; Cox feels the repairs are appropriate to obtain additional years on the equipment.
- Key Cooperative has denied access through their property for the planned extension of the Praeri Rail Trail through Zearing. Cox said the trail will now terminate at that location, curve up to Main Street, and join the sidewalk on the north side of the

street. CIRTPA is reviewing the proposed change, the October 2018 project deadline, and status of the \$225,000 grant funding.

- Phase 2 construction at TELC is underway, and staff has been pleased with the contractor and progress of the work. Staff is researching information on different filter paving materials and cost for finishing the secondary trail.
- NAWCA grant funding (\$100,000) for the Jordan land acquisition was announced. An agreement will be on the June board agenda for approval. Cox anticipates that the land transfer will occur late this summer.
- Phase 1 of the Hickory Grove watershed improvement project is underway with work started on the gullies and shoreline—with completion scheduled for September 30. Bids for Phase 2 are due May 24, and the DNR will meet with the Natural Resource Commission on June 14. A special SCC board meeting may be scheduled to approve the agreement prior to DNR action. Phase 3 design is 75% complete.
- Tedesco and Cox located more rocks in Hardin County for the Hickory Grove watershed project as well as additional rock for TELC.
- Staff have been planning the next phase of the sensitive areas inventory. \$60,000 is identified in the FY19 budget, and board members commented that Energy Transfer Funds might be an appropriate source of additional funding.
- EOR has drafted a county watershed assessment; they would like to meet with the conservation board, the board of supervisors, and the Story County Planning and Zoning Commission to discuss the assessment. A tentative date of June 18 at 5:00 p.m. was scheduled.
Cox will distribute the assessment prior to the meeting; Franz suggested having a list of guided questions to facilitate discussion at the meeting.
- Cox thanked the board for their input and support in the evaluation process for merit staff.

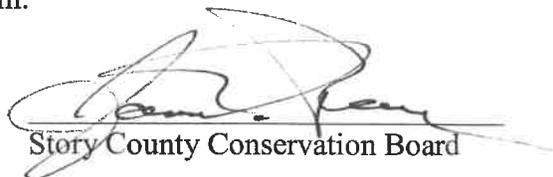
B. Liaison Assignments, Committee Meeting Updates, and Announcements from the Board

- Franz reported that about 300 people attended the spring festival and enjoyed all the activities. The April TEAM Day at Robison Wildlife Area had 20 volunteers and cleared garlic mustard in two sections. The May TEAM day will be at the Brotherson tract. A Trailgate Party to celebrate National Trails Day will occur at Torrent Brewing Company on June 1.
- Laumer said she and Franz enjoyed staffing the SCCB booth at the ECO Fair. They answered many questions about TELC.
- Meyers reported that Dan Haug from Prairie Rivers of Iowa spoke at the last Outdoor Alliance of Story County meeting.
- Pease sought input from other board members to complete the director's annual evaluation. He and his wife hiked at McFarland Park and enjoyed seeing the bluebells and numerous warblers.

12. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Pease adjourned the meeting at 8:10 p.m.


Recording Secretary


Story County Conservation Board