

DRAINAGE DISTRICT MEETING
DISTRICT GRANT #5, MULTIPLE DISTRICTS
JANUARY 2, 2018

The Story County Drainage District Trustees met in Conference Room A in the Story County Administration Building in Nevada, IA to consider a request by I & S Group (ISG) to continue as Story County's Project Engineer for Grant #5 and future drainage district projects. Members present were Rick Sanders, chair, Martin Chitty, and Lauris Olson. Also present were Drainage Clerk Scott Wall, ISG representatives Ivan Droessler, Brian Blomme, and Nick Frederiksen, and two members of the public.

Sanders called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. The purpose of the meeting is to continue (see December 12, 2017 minutes) consideration of retaining ISG as Story County's Drainage District Project Engineer or switch to Bolton & Menk for ongoing drainage district projects and Grant #5 in particular.

Droessler said that while Kent Rode and Tyler Connelly had left ISG for Bolton & Menk, most of ISG's drainage district staff is based at their Storm Lake office, not Algona. All the survey work in Marshall-Story #1, Richland #20, and Grant #5 was done by staff out of Storm Lake. ISG closed the Algona office due to a low volume of municipal projects. The agricultural projects had adequate volume but not enough to maintain the office without the municipal side. There was also no senior engineer on staff at Algona to mentor the younger staff. As a company ISG has 260 employees with Iowa offices in Storm Lake and Des Moines. Droessler has been doing drainage district work for ISG since 1991.

Sanders said it was his understanding that the data ISG has compiled on the projects they've performed for Story County belongs to Story County. Kent Rode has been the face of ISG for Story County and for our drainage district landowners. To Sanders it's a wash as to whether to go with Rode at Bolton & Menk or with ISG. There are positives and negatives with either choice but the trustees need to make that decision soon since Grant #5 is ongoing and a public hearing has been set for March 20, 2018.

Droessler said if the trustees decide to retain Rode as the engineer for Grant #5 he understands but ISG is interested in working with Story County going forward. There are several counties that farm drainage district work out to more than one firm depending on the volume of projects. As to Grant #5, the trustees had asked that the addendum to the engineer's report filed in November be combined with the original report to create a single, new report. Work on that report had not begun when Rode and Connelly left ISG.

Sanders asked what our relationship with ISG would look like without Rode.

Droessler said he would attend public hearings with one or two other ISG staffers and he would be our point of contact.

Chitty noted the handout Droessler had brought (attached) included something about bioreactors and saturated buffers. This has been of interest to Story County and he wondered what ISG has been doing on water quality issues.

Droessler said bioreactor and saturated buffer design is being handled out of the Storm Lake office. ISG has installed four bioreactors and two saturated buffers with more being planned. They have been offering these to individual landowners as something they can do to improve water quality on their lands.

Frederiksen said ISG does a lot of work in Minnesota and that state mandates that water quality investigations be included in drainage projects. Iowa law isn't there yet but he sees that time coming.

Sanders said the County Engineer's drainage crew will likely see staff changes in the near future. The county doesn't know at this point if staff will be maintained at current levels or if there will be an interest in something like ISG's watchmen services in which the county would contract with ISG to take over district maintenance and repair. With 120 drainage districts Sanders sees an increasing amount of drainage district work in the future and whatever the trustees decide to do with Grant #5, it will not preclude their working with ISG and/or Bolton & Menk on future projects.

Olson said Droessler had stated there was no senior engineer on staff in Algona.

Droessler said there was no senior municipal engineer on staff. Rode had been the senior engineer for the agricultural division.

Olson asked about staffing levels at ISG following Rode and Connelly's departure. Is ISG replacing them with new staff?

Droessler said ISG is always adding new staff. They have an engineer at Storm Lake who was hired last year and they are interning a couple of college students that they hope will join ISG after they graduate.

Sanders said the next step for the trustees is to schedule a meeting as soon as possible to continue the work on Grant #5. He will work with Wall to schedule a meeting, probably this Thursday, to select a project engineer for Grant #5.

Frederiksen said the trustees should know that ISG is more than just drainage districts. They are a full service engineering firm and would be happy to work with Story County on roads, buildings, parks, or anything else that requires engineering services.

Chitty moved, seconded by Olson, to adjourn. Motion carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 2:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Scott T. Wall