

Story County Conservation Board
Thursday, June 2, 2011
Story County Conservation Center, McFarland Park

1. Chair T. Tedesco called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

MEMBERS

Ted Tedesco – present

Wayne Clinton – present

Jim Pease – present

Erin Wilgenbusch – present

Joyce Hornstein – present

STAFF

Mike Cox

Amber Tiarks

GUESTS

Mike Meetz

Linda Meetz

Gary Thien

3. INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Chair Tedesco welcomed guests and asked them to introduce themselves.

4. REVIEW OF AGENDA AND HANDOUTS

Chair Tedesco pointed out a supplemental packet and a copy of a *Des Moines Register* article on reduced funding for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR).

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION by W. Clinton, SECOND by J. Hornstein, to approve the minutes of the May 9, 2011 meeting. MCU.

6. APPROVAL OF CLAIMS AND RECEIPTS

MOTION by J. Pease, SECOND by Wilgenbusch, to approve all claims and receipts as submitted. MCU.

7. FINANCIAL REPORTS AND UPDATES

Director Cox gave an update on the FY11 budget. New numbers from the financial data coordinator show a balance of \$96,368 in operating expenses, of which \$65,769 is unspent FEMA money that will be amended in the next fiscal year. Projections through the end of June show that new balance of \$30,599 being reduced to \$5,200. The capital expenses line currently has a balance of \$18,080 but is expected to be reduced to \$700 at the close of the year.

One bid was received for FEMA repairs to several sites along the Heart of Iowa Nature Trail (HOINT). The bid is \$10,000 over the FEMA estimate. Cox is clarifying some issues and will consult FEMA for an adjustment on the estimate.

8. SCHEDULE OF UPCOMING EVENTS/MEETINGS

Several board members said they are unavailable for the scheduled July meeting date.

MOTION by J. Hornstein, SECOND by E. Wilgenbusch to change the July meeting to July 12, 7:30 p.m. MCU.

9. COMMUNICATIONS

Correspondence was received regarding the Dakins Lake camping fee increase with no increase in amenities. A chart of camping fees, 2003-present, on packet page June-50 was

reviewed. The typically full campground was only 50 percent full over Memorial Day weekend. Cox did not ask the board to consider a change in fees but is taking it under advisement.

Cox offered an update on the property line issue at O'Neil prairie. The county attorney advised that Story County Conservation (SCC) enter into a license agreement with the landowner to use and maintain the land as a buffer to his own property. The landowner would prefer an easement. The property is less than one acre and is the only property inside O'Neil Street.

Regarding the certified letter from the City of McCallsburg, the unspoken agreement was that the trail is county land and the county is responsible for its maintenance. However, the city has always done it. The new arrangement is that SCC will resume maintenance. Before staff was able to mow and apply a growth retardant, the grass exceeded 9 inches and was in violation of the city's nuisance policy. It has since been mowed, but the growth retardant will have a different effect on different species of grasses, resulting in patchy areas.

10. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Gary Thien of Thien Farm Management in Council Bluffs outlined his business of developing wetland mitigation banks in Iowa. All mitigation banks are monitored by an inter-agency review team consisting of the Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the IDNR. Wetlands are protected in the United States, and compensatory mitigation is required when disturbance of a wetland is unavoidable. Thien Farm Management finds properties that were wetlands at one time and restores their hydrology. They then create a bank where entities can purchase credits of that wetland to assist with their mitigation responsibility. Wetland banking allows for larger wetlands (often adjacent to established natural resource areas) rather than smaller, single, project-specific mitigation projects.

When a mitigation bank site is developed, a conservation easement is placed on the property. If Thien Farm Management develops a site in Story County, they would like to know ahead of time whether the board is interested in holding the easement and, if necessary, defending it to make sure nothing impacts it. As rules change, conservation entities now want a long-term maintenance fund to assist with defending the easement. Thien Farm Management has developed a fund for that purpose, and while the amount that goes into the fund is negotiable, it has typically been \$30,000. Thien Farm Management has also done agreements that once the bank is full, a conservation board has an option to buy the property. If the board decides to buy the property, Thien Farm Management would contribute one-half of the purchase price to the county conservation board.

Based on the engineering and permitting process, a piece of land is determined to have a specific amount of wetland credits within the property. When an entity is required to mitigate, it can buy a credit, and the "ledger" is debited until there are no credits left and the bank is considered "full."

At this point, Thien Farm Management has not found a suitable property in Story County, but they do not want to surprise the board if or when they do. Mr. Thien left the meeting following his presentation.

Wilgenbusch commented that there are those who are philosophically opposed to the idea of buying any kind of credits, and SCC needs to be proactive rather than reactive about any

possible fallout. Pease said it always depends on the projects, and the best SCC could do is educate citizens up front.

Meetz thanked SCC for loaning wildlife mounts for the upcoming Youth Hunter Education Challenge and other hunter education programs.

11. APPROVE FY12 COST OF LIVING INCREASES

Tedesco confirmed that the proposed increase is a \$1,000 payable over 26 pay periods and is not based on a percentage.

MOTION by E. Wilgenbusch, SECOND by J. Hornstein, to approve the FY12 cost of living increases. MCU.

Cox noted he would like to refuse the increase for himself. Clinton said that is not an option but that it was within Cox's right to return the increase via a donation to a conservation project.

12. ACCEPT FY10 ANNUAL REPORT

MOTION by J. Pease, SECOND by W. Clinton, to approve the FY10 Annual Report. MCU.

13. OTHER

Clinton consulted with the Human Resources Director on how Cox should conduct business while he is away. Due to the Fair Labor Standards Act, Cox must be compensated per day if he's performing work on behalf of the county. Clinton said staff should contact Cox only for major issues that occur.

Cox said that the agreement of his hire was that his time in Alaska would be leave-without-pay, and he intends to honor that to the extent the law allows. He reported he will leave June 4, be gone through June 17, return to work June 18-24, be gone June 25–July 27, and return to Story County on July 28. During his absence, the respective department heads will be in charge of conducting business within their units. In the future, Cox will bring a policy before the board that will allow "acting" appointments.

Cox reported the staff planted six oak and two maple trees at the primitive campground at Hickory Grove Park with money from the Dean Harms memorial. Staff is also considering prescribed grazing with goats at Robison Wildlife Acres to control invasive species and woody vegetation. If it comes to fruition, Cox will bring an agreement before the board regarding the management practices. SCC has received a memorial donation of \$1,000 towards fence for the grazing project.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by J. Pease, SECOND by W. Clinton, to adjourn the meeting. MCU.

Chair Tedesco adjourned the meeting at 8:25 p.m.