

Dickinson County Conservation Board minutes

5 p.m. April 10, 2019

Dickinson County Nature Center, Okoboji

Chair: Eric Stoll

Vice chair: Steve Anderson

Board members: Willia Mueske, Kathy Kleen, Joan Gronstal via phone at 5:02 p.m.

Employees: Lee Sorenson, Kiley Roth

Others: Rebecca Peters and Brandon Rohrig, Healthy Hometowns Feel Better Committee

Call to order at 5:01 p.m.

Agenda approval: Anderson motion, Kleen second. Approved, prior to Gronstal joining.

Approval of past month's minutes: Mueske motion to approve regular and special meeting minutes, Anderson second. Approved.

Conservation Foundation of Dickinson County minutes: Mueske has not received a membership renewal card.

Environmental education update: The nature center was closed for March Nature Tots because the driveway was a sheet of ice and dangerous for visitors. Sorenson and Roth also talked with Kiwanis in Spirit Lake.

Dickinson County Conservation Board areas

-Healthy Living Report: Peters and Rohrig discussed putting together a tobacco- and nicotine-free policy for county parks. Signage is available free of charge, and volunteers are also interested in helping put up signage.

Mueske and Kleen asked about enforcement. Peters said the city of Spirit Lake put a policy in place and has found people have not asked for much additional enforcement and the signage has done a good job of deterring smoking. E-cigarettes are also included in the nicotine-free policy.

Kleen asked about the smoking policy county-wide, and Jordan said policies have been put in place for the courthouse but not county-wide. The question of what properties this would apply to was also discussed, including whether the Dickinson County Trails would also have no smoking under this policy. Stoll also asked what the punishment would be for breaking the rule.

It is not a current issues in county areas, but this would be a pro-active stance on the board's view of healthy living. Sorenson will put together a list of parks, and the board will look into which parks it might wish to implement this policy in.

-Brooks Golf Course easement/vehicle sale: The Brooks Golf Course has three small parcels with buildings as well as C1 commercial property where the clubhouse restaurant is located that

Sorenson isn't sure should have a conservation easement on it, held by the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation.

Stoll said if it is already zoned commercial and is already developed that it should be fine not to put a conservation easement on it, because the donor simply didn't want further development. Jordan suggested that if the development should ever be demolished that perhaps a conservation easement could be established at that point.

Three vehicles were included in the sale of Brooks, and one has left the county. The county attorney has been contacted, and he will send a letter to the person who has possession of county property. Two vehicles are at Brooks Golf Course and are being used by Brooks Management LLC, which has offered to purchase them at fair market value so non-county employees are not driving county property. If the third car is returned, Sorenson would like to keep it. Kleen motion to approve the sale of the two vehicles for \$4,000, Mueske second. Approved.

-City of Okoboji zoning: Sorenson was contacted that the city of Okoboji is looking at doing a conservation district easement, which other local cities have. It would basically protect voluntarily enrolled areas for development. Sorenson said this change is similar to R1 but would be without housing development, and Brooks Golf Course is currently zoned R1. The only red flag is that a conservation district would not allow farmers markets. Anderson said these types of conservation districts can easily be undone by future boards and don't provide any permanent protection for land. This process was started when the Inn at Okoboji was demolished.

Operations and facility update

-Recycling center: The chipping company pulled their equipment out on April 9 due to mud, but the brush pile is growing as people start working on landscaping. Manager Charles Vigdal talked about getting a grappler for the wheel loader, and it would cost about \$15,000. Sorenson and Vigdal will see where the RCC budget ends up at the end of the fiscal year.

-Lodge update: A donation request was submitted for \$1.1 million, and it was approved. The donor has asked for naming rights. The total project will be approximately \$1.6 million, and the rest of the funding will be requested from the AWC Family Foundation. Construction will hopefully begin summer 2019.

-New position job descriptions: Sorenson requested to table the discussion.

-Horseshoe Bend shop: Completion date was set for April 15. The final walk-through created a two-page punchlist, and the contractor is arguing over some of the items. Sorenson asked if the next board meeting should be held at the new building, and board agreed.

-Pollinator Paradise acceptance: Tabled until May meeting

-Imagine Iowa Great Lakes: A plan has been put together for the Imagine Iowa Great Lakes project at the Nature Center Road/Highway 71 corner. The committee is also looking for an entity to take over maintenance of the entire project. Sorenson said with equipment storage, employees and other considerations that it would be difficult for county conservation to take it on. There would need to be an estimate of man-hours, a maintenance plan, a financial review and more in order to consider the request.

-Legal counsel: In the future, with the Brooks Golf Course management agreements, should outside counsel be used because the assistant county attorney lives on the golf course? Jordan said the board should choose what counsel to use going forward. Sorenson noted that nothing has been budgeted for attorney fees for FY20. Ahlers & Cooney of Des Moines will be used on a trial basis.

Approval of expenses: Kleen motion, Anderson second. Approved.

General discussion

-Anderson said that in addition to public surveys about Brooks Golf Course that the conservation board should also have some public meetings. He has led some discussions with the INHF and possibly the conservation board could use that organization to help lead conversations. "I really want to see what the taxpayers have to say versus what the visitors have to say," Anderson said. "I think it's wise to do that," Mueske said. Sorenson said he is concerned about public meetings that the golf community may intimidate other people from showing up, but he agreed that the conservation board should not facilitate so that it does not come off biased. Kleen said the INHF may also come off biased as a facilitator, but it would be good to have an INHF representative available to answer questions.

-Kleen suggested having consent agenda items so some things wouldn't need to be discussed each meeting.

Adjournment: Anderson motion, Gronstal second. Approved. Adjourn at 6:35 p.m.