

Dickinson County Conservation

Horseshoe Bend shop, 2391 200th Ave., Milford

5 p.m. July 10, 2019

Vice chair: Steve Anderson

Board members: Willia Mueske, Kathy Kleen, Joan Gronstal

Employees: Lee Sorenson, Kiley Roth

Board of Supervisors: Pam Jordan, Steve Clark

Community members: Perry Pearson

Call to order at 5:24 p.m.

Agenda approval: Kleen motion, Gronstal second. Approved.

Consent agenda/items: Mueske motion, Gronstal second. Approved.

-Approval of past month's minutes

-Recycling report

-Environmental education report

-CFDC minutes

Dickinson County Conservation Board areas

-Brooks Golf Course: Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation has set a conservation easement, without the current structures. INHF had a few questions in the agreement, and those were discussed. It needs to be noted that if Dickinson County Conservation no longer wants the property it will revert back to the donor, and that there is limited access to the property under discretion of the management. A section at the end needs deleted because it was copied from another easement. Changes will be made and returned to the INHF. The conservation easement will not need to be in place until November.

All public input has been sent to the board members for consideration. Jester Park, run by Polk County Conservation, leases out its course with a management company. The current management agreement with Brooks Golf LLC was modeled after the Jester Park agreement. PCCB also ranks its requests for proposal on a scoring system to choose which management company will have a contract.

Anderson said after going through public comments that there isn't much of an option beyond keeping Brooks Golf. Gronstal said she suggests beginning with 27 holes, because one comment mentioned that going from 27 to 18 holes would not necessarily be a cheap option. Sorenson said, "I've looked at the course and taking nine out of that would not be easy. They're all intermingled." An option would be to allow management companies to propose a plan for 18 holes if desired.

Anderson asked for a motion to decide if Brooks Golf will be kept a course. Gronstal motion, Mueske second. Approved.

Perry Pearson said that if anyone had other questions or proposals that they may have been intimidated at the public meeting due to support for the course. He thinks there is a way to utilize programming on the course to intermingle conservation and golf.

Anderson asked for a motion if there should be an RFP to lease to a management company or to manage the course through DCCB. Gronstal motion to request RFPs to lease the course, Kleen second. Approved.

Sorenson has talked with a lawyer in Des Moines to go through the model RFP from Jester Park, and a special meeting will need to be set up to approve the RFP. Jester Park sends out its RFP by July 25, and Sorenson would like to stay on that same schedule if possible since it seems to work well for Jester Park.

Anderson asked how long of a lease agreement DCCB would want. Jester Park does a 10-year lease with an option for an additional five-year renewal. Kleen said 10 years seems like a long time. "It takes a long time to get back the investment," Mueske said. Sorenson said marketing also needs some time to revamp the vision of the course. "I know 10 years sounds like a long time but for someone to get their feet underneath them, it's going to take at least 5 years to get a flow of how it's going to operate," Anderson said. "They may not fully understand our season." Kleen asked if there was a way to look at it at five years, but Sorenson said it may limit the pool of management companies who would want to submit an RFP. Anderson said he would recommend 10 years, because it works for Jester Park. However, the season is longer in Des Moines, and the population is also different. "We're not going to compete with Jester," Sorenson said.

Kleen asked what happens to taxes. The city of Okoboji is getting affected by the property tax reduction, but the city sent a letter saying it is more concerned with hotel/motel tax. The city is also considering conservation zoning. Sorenson said profit from the course would go toward capital improvements and would be kept in a reserve fund to be used for the DCCB.

Gronstal asked if there was an option to give a management company to select five years or 10 years, but Sorenson suggested picking one. Pearson said from the people he knows, no one would touch it for less than 10 years. Sorenson said there should also be a contingency for insolvency.

No decision regarding lease length was made. It will be discussed after the lease agreement is finalized at the next meeting or a special meeting.

-Audubon Sanctuary: Staff have had comments about the Audubon Sanctuary's upkeep in Spirit Lake. A plan was put together through Spirit Lake Middle School to revamp the property, but the students are not there during the growing season and maintenance has suffered. The school has also received complaints. Sorenson would like to gift it back to the donor. Kleen said it makes her sad that the area has not been maintained. Sorenson said it takes longer for the maintenance staff to get to the property than it does to maintain it, because it is such a small parcel. People have also misconstrued what a bird sanctuary is, because trees have been taken down.

Kleen wants to make an effort to keep it. Gronstal asked if the Master Gardeners would be able to help. Kleen asked if natural resource manager Brian Cuperus would be the point person with the schools, but Sorenson said that a plan was in place but there wasn't enough follow-through.

Anderson asked if ISU Extension, between Master Gardeners and 4-H, would be able to put some time into it. Sorenson said he hates to take something away from Jason Schneider. Kleen said perhaps it is something that can be more of a group effort if a plan is in place for who is in charge of doing what when. Perhaps mowing could be contracted out as well.

-Road by Okoboji Commons Motel: DCCB owns a parcel behind the Okoboji Commons Motel, and there have been complaints that the road has pot holes. However, the DCCB does not do road maintenance, and Anderson doesn't think that road is the deeded access to those homes.

Gronstal motion to find out if the road is deeded access, and if it's not that it the DCCB not maintain it, Mueske second. Kleen asked if it looks and acts like a road and there is an accident or issue due to the lack of maintenance, is there liability? She said if it's not supposed to be a road, then the DCCB should make it obvious that it's not a road.

Gronstal revamped motion to find out if it's deeded access and make a decision from there, Mueske second. Approved.

-Orleans Beach: DCCB received a grant from the I-DNR to revamp the boat ramp, but the DNR now will not be able to do the engineering from the project. Sorenson said he has a hard time spending money on the engineering plan for a DNR property and suggests giving back the grant money. The next agreement ends in 2020, and it is a 25-year agreement, and he suggests not renewing the agreement due to maintenance and utility costs that aren't being recouped. "I think that's a smart suggestion," Mueske said.

Sorenson said Cuperus also asked about the campground at Horseshoe Bend, because there has been issues, and the campground does not make much income off of the campground anyway.

-Kenue Park lodge update: The final building designs were looked at. The CFDC approved a final bid of \$1,128,800 from Poppema-Sikma Construction. Construction will begin on July 29. Al Maser also requested a metal sculpture of a monarch butterfly and flowers that will go in front of the lodge.

Operations and facility update

-Full-time positions: Doug Todey and Clay Pavelko have been hired for the two new full-time positions. Four positions were budgeted as full-time seasonal, but that may be changed to year-round, part-time.

-Horseshoe Bend walking bridge: The walking bridge is closed to due flood damage, and Sorenson has started a process for funding with FEMA. He is hoping the bridge can be repaired and not have to be replaced, and he has also asked for mitigation for the future.

Approval of expenses: Gronstal motion to pay expenses, Kleen second. Approved.

General discussion: Jess Radcliffe is going to the Board of Supervisors to discuss people being at the Dickinson Recycling Center after hours, however, that is addressed by the RCC and those people are charged.

-The name of the Dickinson Recycling Center should revert back to the Regional Collection Center, but people are getting confused that it is can, plastic, cardboard recycling. It should be taken to the Dickinson County Landfill Commission.

-IRVM employees have asked about turning overspraying landowners into IDALS for spraying pesticide into rights-of-way.

Adjournment: Mueske motion, Gronstal second. Approved. Adjourn at 7:03 p.m.