

Dickinson County Conservation Board meeting

5 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 11, 2019

Dickinson County Nature Center, Okoboji

Chair: Eric Stoll

Board members: Willia Mueske, Kathy Kleen, Joan Gronstal arrive at 5:05 p.m.

Employees: Lee Sorenson, Kiley Roth

Board liaison: Pam Jordan, Steve Clark

Public: John and Carol Huigens, Alan Blake, Karen and Steve Sabasta, Deb and Dale Sienknecht

Call to order at 5:02 p.m.

Agenda approval: Mueske motion, Kleen second. Approved prior to Gronstal arrival.

Public comment:

Consent agenda: Kleen motion, Mueske second. Approved.

- a. **Approval of past month's minutes**
- b. **Recycle report**
- c. **Environmental education report**
- d. **Conservation foundation minutes**

Dickinson County Conservation Board areas

-253rd right-of-way consideration: Jordan and Clark said that the board of supervisors decided that the original agreement was with the conservation board and so it should be the decision of the conservation board.

Sorenson presented photos of the area. There is about 6 feet of unmowed grass to the trail that should be mowed that is not being mowed. It is not possible to have a legal, 20-foot easement between the trail and the county right-of-way, because there is not enough room. Sorenson walked the area with the person who walked the easement with the original grantor, and the 20-foot section was between the trail and the field, not the trail and the road. The rest of the green space is county right-of-way.

Sorenson said he felt the board of supervisors would like to recommend mowing the county right-of-way. He would recommend following the recommendation of the board of supervisors. Sorenson talked to Lonnie Saunders, assistant county attorney, and he is not in favor of mowing the county right-of-way.

The city of Orleans allows private citizens to mow on the other side of the road.

Dale Sienknecht said the whole thing is to follow what the original grantor wanted with the 20-foot easement.

The conservation board will mow 20 feet on either side of the trail, following the stipulations in the easement.

Dale Sienknecht: That's been mowed by the county, 20-some years.

Sorenson said that a mistake 20 years ago isn't necessarily a mistake today.

Landowners brought up the grass has crab-grass right now, and Sorenson said that it takes three years for prairie to really take hold.

Clark said that secondary roads twice per season will mow along the roadway with the side mower along the shoulders.

Sorenson said the options are to not mow the county right-of-way, to mow the county right-of-way, to allow the supervisors to allow the private citizens to mow the right-of-way.

Steve Sabasta said The greenspace between the road and trail varies in width.

Kleen said the reason these plantings have been done is to manage roadsides to make them more natural.

Alan Blake said that people are pro-prairie but are concerned about weeds, access to the trails, safety issues of tall grasses surrounding the trails. He didn't think it was a big deal to continue mowing the area. "What we would like, and what we would encourage is, that you continue mowing."

Sorenson said there should not be parking in the county right-of-way, and in the easement agreement there said there should be no parking and that any parking should be cited and that "no parking" signs be erected. Landowners said it is used for some temporary parking. Sorenson said that wouldn't be the job of the conservation board to enforce.

Stoll: "There's no other spot where we're mowing county right-of-way?" Sorenson said no. Stoll asked, "That would be the only place in the county." Sorenson nodded.

Steve Sabasta said that going 20 foot down from the trail, would it be mowing prairie grass. Sorenson said that much mowing would probably kill warm season grasses and would allow cool season grasses to grow. Sabasta said if it was planted back to grass, he would be willing to mow the section across from his house. Sorenson said if it was planted back to grass, if some people didn't mow it, it wouldn't have as much wildlife/water quality benefit.

Gronstal asked why Saunders didn't want the area to be mowed, and Sorenson said it was the precedent this would set.

Dale Sienknecht asked what the water quality benefits of prairie would be since there is prairie on the other side of the trail. Mueske said that road runoff would be purified before going into the lake.

Sorenson asked if it would be a fair solution to send out a letter to all of the residents along that stretch of roadway to hear from anyone instead of just a small group of people.

Sabasta also asked about mowing paths to the trail for homeowners. Sorenson said he wouldn't have a problem to have trails mowed every 10 houses or so to allow easier access to the trails for homeowners.

Blake asked Jordan and Clark what the decision of the board of supervisors actually was. Jordan and Clark said no decision was made and that board felt that it was the conservation board's decision because it had the original agreement. If the county took over, it would only mow the road shoulder.

On the skinny sections, Blake said that a six-foot swath of prairie wouldn't be that helpful. Mueske said that cities have small rain gardens that help drain parking lots, and even small gardens are helpful for water purification.

The Dickinson County Board of Supervisors voted to recommend that the conservation board put the area back to what it was. Sorenson said there was confusion about what is county right-of-way and what is not county right-of-way.

Kleen said the conservation board wants to look past its own needs to preserve the lake for the future. "Some of our old ideas just weren't the best choices. As we gain more and more information about keeping our resources, we're going to have to change some of the ways that we've done things."

Sorenson plans to meet with Sabasta to draft a letter to send all of the other homeowners.

-Sanitary sewer easement: For the permanent easement, Sorenson would like to see any additional horizontal structure covered by damage, even in the future. For instance, if a future parking lot is poured over the sewer structure and is harmed that it would be covered. Currently, it says any issues would replace what is currently there when it is installed.

The temporary construction easements are wider than the permanent easement.

Gronstal motion to approve the construction agreement and to change wording to the permanent easement so that any future horizontal structures would also be covered. Mueske second. Approved.

-REAP grant approval for Okoboji wetland: The grant was not funded through REAP. Sorenson will look into other options to find funding for the property.

-Kenue Park wetland: The Kenue Park wetland is completed under budget, and excess funds will most likely be used to deepen the wetland.

-Ainsworth-Orleans Beach boat ramp: A grant was approved previously for a new dock and ramp at Ainsworth-Orleans Beach, but the DNR was going to allow free engineering and is now not allowing that. Sorenson said the DNR does not require engineering, and the assistant county attorney said there is no county policy. The project will be put out to bid. The Spirit Lake Protective Association may be able to help with any additional needed funding as well.

-Land scoring: The conservation board has been approached with a possible land acquisition. It is currently being inventoried and will be scored on the previously agreed upon rubric.

Operations and facility update

-Kenue Park lodge: Construction is going well.

-Horseshoe Bend bridge: It looks like FEMA will pay for issues caused by spring flooding. An additional support structure will also need to be added in the middle of the bridge.

Approval of expenses: The recycling center purchased a new grapple bucket to help with chipping. Kleen motion, Gronstal second. Approved.

General discussion

-Secondary roads is taking a bridge out and asked if it would be usable at one of our parks. It would help provide access to the south side of the Judd Wildlife Area, if the conservation board would pay to install it in the future.

-The Bee & Butterfly Festival was successful.

Gronstal motion to adjourn. Kleen second. Approved. Adjourn at 6:45 p.m.