

Dickinson County Conservation Board

7 p.m. Jan. 13, 2015

Chairman: Eric Stoll

Board members: Steve Anderson, Kathy Kleen, Joan Gronstal

Employees: Lee Sorenson, Karess Knudtson, Kiley Roth

Others:

Absent: Willia Mueske, Pam Jordan

1. **Call to order** 7:03 p.m.
2. **Agenda approval** Anderson motion, Kleen second. Approved.
3. **Election of officers:** Anderson motion Mueske as chairman and Kleen as vice chair, Kleen second. Approved.
4. **Approval of past month's minutes:** Kleen motion, Anderson second. Approved.
5. **Conservation Foundation of Dickinson County update:** Sorenson reported that the Conservation Foundation of Dickinson County had good response for its membership drive. The TD Ameritrade account has been increasing. One board member was not a paying member, and it was discussed that all board members should be paying members. The issue will be brought up at the February meeting.
6. **Environmental education update:** Displays are changing, and an art gallery has been added. The staff will attend Winterfest in Waterloo next week, and Knudtson will present there on the connection between nature and art. In February, Knudtson will also attend an ICEC seminar on connecting environmental and formal educators working together.
7. **Operations and facility update**
 - a. **Recycling center update:** No update
 - b. **Budget 2015-16:** Sorenson sent out a new budget via e-mail. Supervisor Mardi Allen was happy about the budget, and it will be brought before the Dickinson County Board of Supervisors on Feb. 2. Anderson motion to approve budget, Gronstal second. Approved.
 - c. **Vehicle purchases:** After an oak fell last summer, four bids were submitted for new vehicle purchases. Motor Inn of Spirit Lake bid \$40,756 for two 2014 Ford Escapes. Gronstal motion, Anderson second. Approved.
 - d. **Policy for Step program for new employees:** During a previous budget meeting, the board discussed eliminating the Step program for new employees. Anderson motion, Kleen second. Those on the Step will continue on the Step program until the maximum Step is reached. Approved.

e. **Needs assessment:** Following the completion of the needs assessment, the top areas to address were highlighted and staff put together plans for each issue.

-Facilities update: Sorenson presented what was needed throughout conservation board areas and a possible timeline for the different projects. Projects included a new fishing pond, enclosed shelter facility, new walking bridge and canoe launch area at Horseshoe Bend; a concrete boat ramp and artificial fish reef at Westport Park; an improved canoe access at Twin Forks; updates at the Spring Run shooting range; the removal of the barn, a new open shelter and storage building, a nature playscape, new shingles on the schoolhouse roof and a new well at Kenue Park; a restroom, solar boat ramp light and repaired boardwalk at Orleans Park; and camp materials for environmental education.

-Environmental education plan: Knudtson is looking at creating a larger, dynamic master plan that she has been working for more than a year. The goal for environmental education is do facilitate people into action as lifelong caretakers. Education practices will be changed from standing and talking to getting people outside and engaged in learning. Once they make a connection, they will want to preserve the environment.

-In July, a tally system was implemented to get a better handle on the number of people coming through the nature center's doors. July-December about 4,400 people came to the nature center. Average visits have also increased in length.

-A questionnaire will be sent out to educators to narrow down what they want and need from the conservation board staff. That will help staff to service those needs directly. It will also draw classes to the nature center instead of specifically going into the schools. Kleen mentioned time is a great constraint for teachers, and a question should be put to them about how to fit into their schedule.

-Programming is being implemented to reach a wide array of ages, from children's camps to an intergenerational day camp.

-Art & Nature programs are also being implemented, from classes to a summer concert series to the new art gallery. This is a bridge to allow people to get connected in the outdoors.

-The issue of collaboration has been brought up, how can we also work with other local conservation groups and help fill each other's programs?

-Marketing plan: Roth presented about the marketing strategies that have been implemented and continued since she started in March. That includes press releases to media, churches and schools; interviews for radio, newspaper and TV; social media campaigns; dickinsoncountynaturecenter.com and mycountyparks.com; e-mail and print

newsletters; online calendars; Vacation Okoboji; Festival of Trees; public speaking engagements; and other printed materials.

-The year's paid placement included an ad for Horseshoe Bend Winter Sports Area in DISCOVER!, gift shop ads in the Lakes News Shopper, brochures, print newsletters and giveaways.

-The 2015 marketing plan includes expansion of social media, blogs and the implementation of videos; a partnership with Western Iowa Tourism, Vacation Okoboji and Travel Iowa and more ads.

-To see a return on investment, better statistics will be kept about how people are hearing about conservation board activities.

8. Dickinson County Conservation Board areas

a. **Abbie Gardner agreement:** Requested changes were made to the agreement. Kleen motion, Gronstal second. Approved.

b. **Spring Run shooting complex:** Sorenson met with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources about updating the Spring Run shooting complex. The DNR has a plan in place. Changes would include an archery range with elevated platform, a shooting shelter, new targets and birms and a clay target range with in-ground throwers. A lead reclamation will be done in the fall, with the range shut down for about a week for the lead reclamation and the updates. The project is estimated at \$50,000 with half requested locally. The CFDC said it would donate \$5,000 to the project, and the board has also budgeted \$5,000 for the project.

9. Approval of expenses: Kleen motion to approve except Eric Stoll's mileage reimbursement is incorrect, Anderson second. Approved.

10. General discussion

11. Adjournment: Kleen motion at 9:20 p.m., Anderson second. Approved.