

Dickinson County Conservation Board meeting

7 p.m. Oct. 11, 2016

Dickinson County Nature Center, Okoboji

Chairperson: Kathy Kleen

Vice chairperson: Joan Gronstal

Board members: Eric Stoll, Willia Mueske, Steve Anderson arrive at 7:02 p.m.

Board liaison: Pam Jordan

Employees: Lee Sorenson, Kiley Roth, Aric Ping

Others: Kae Luchtel, Deb Travis, Lezlie Pohlman

Call to order at 7 p.m.

Agenda approval motion by Gronstal, second by Mueske. Approved.

Approval of past month's minutes, motion by Stoll, second by Mueske. Approved.

Conservation Foundation of Dickinson County update: The sixth-grade science teacher at Spirit Lake has been leading an effort to have his students work to clean up the Audubon Society bird sanctuary in Spirit Lake. A presentation was given by the students to Sorenson and Ping, and Ping met with the students at the site to discuss changes to their proposed plans. It is a three-year, aggressive plan that will keep the students busy.

Environmental education update: The naturalists have been busy with field trips and school programs. Sorenson also set up a booth at Fall Fest in Arnolds Park, reaching 761 people in about two hours.

Operations and facility update

-Saddle Club land donation: Pohlman, president of the Saddle Club, said the club met and would like to retain their funds and keep the Saddle Club as an entity but would help to make some improvements on the grounds. The club would like to have a caveat that the land would stay an equine park with horse use in the arena if nothing else. The club has maintained through the years that no one would be allowed to hunt on the grounds unless he or she was a member. The club is also unsure of what to do with electricity at this point, whether to keep it or turn it off, as any future reconnection charge would be very expensive.

Other than the horse arena, there is only a small four-foot trail along the road where trees were cut down to keep the horses off of the blacktop.

Ping, the county vegetation specialist, did a vegetation survey of the land. He said the work on the land would be difficult because of the steep slope but would be worth doing. The land across the river appeared to be once CRP land, but it is quite degraded. A low spot has remnant wetland plants and is the best conservation spot along the river.

Ping thinks the property would be worth acquiring to continue gaining a corridor of properties along the Little Sioux River and to work on erosion control along the bank. The land is similar to the Little Foote Forest and the management plan that is underway there.

Luchtel said she needs an arena to board and show her horse and knows others have the same need/desire, because the other closest arena is in Spirit Lake.

Anderson mentioned future planning has included the idea of having equestrian camping at Horseshoe Bend, so perhaps this area could act as that and then as easements come up in the future a trail could be built to lead from the Saddle Club grounds to Horseshoe Bend. He agreed with Ping about putting together a puzzle of a building a good ecosystem along the Little Sioux River.

Anderson motion to move forward with arrangements on receiving the land, Gronstal second. Approved.

-Pollinator Paradise: The estimate came back at \$541,000 for construction, without design or septic and water hook-ups. Sorenson talked with Masers, Becky Peters and Penny Wilson about the building and the cost for only being open for three months per year. Sorenson suggested possibly moving the building from the trail to north of the nature center, connecting to the nature center, so it would be open year-round and would not need additional staff to run it.

To move forward with the new plan, a new estimate of \$50,000-\$60,000 would be needed for engineering. Possibilities would include do a two-story building or a one-story building with a green roof.

The time table given was to have specs in place by December with fundraising to start in mid-December.

-Recycling center: The wood chippers were released from the project because they had not been paying the company that was contracting them. The other company that is available will charge \$10 per ton, which Sorenson estimates will cost \$25,000 per year for chipping.

Jordan asked if fees could be raised to cover that cost since tree diseases will ensure that a large quantity of trees will be cut and brought in each year. Stoll made a motion to allow \$15,000 (1,500 tons) of chipping, Gronstal asked to amend that at Sorenson's discretion, and she seconded the motion. Approved.

Dickinson County Conservation Board areas

-Horseshoe Bend proposal for sled hill: Sorenson has researched snow machines, and since Horseshoe Bend has all the piping, the Dickinson County Landfill said the conservation board could rent the snow machine there to test out snowmaking on the hill this winter. The board will have to purchase a pump though.

Approval of expenses: Stoll motion to pay the bills, Gronstal second. Approved.

General discussion

-Ping submitted a grant to the Clean Water Alliance to establish a wetland on the west edge of Kenue Park in a cooperative agreement with the neighbors, the Peterson family. The project is estimated at \$17,000, and Ping talked to Chris LaRue with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

The wetland basin is an important piece of the Center Lake watershed. The requested amount was for 80 percent of the project.

Anderson was elected as a new district representative to the Iowa Association of County Conservation Boards.

Motion to adjourn by Anderson, Gronstal second. Approved. Adjourned at 8:35 p.m.