

Dickinson County Conservation Board

2279 170th St., Okoboji

7 p.m. Tuesday, March 13, 2018

Chair: Willia Mueske

Vice chair: Eric Stoll

Board members: Steve Anderson, Kathy Kleen, Joan Gronstal via phone

Board liaison: Pam Jordan

Employees: Lee Sorenson, Kiley Roth

Call to order 7 p.m.

Agenda approval: Kleen motion, Anderson second. Approved.

Approval of past month's minutes: Kleen motion, Stoll second. Approved.

Conservation Foundation of Dickinson County: There are some accounting issues, because the accounting firm's records do not match the donation records at the Dickinson County Nature Center. The board would like the foundation to get a record of all deposits to see which were missed from the nature center's list. Jordan suggested revamping the way the foundation minutes are done. Anderson asked Sorenson to e-mail the board and update as clarifications are made.

Environmental education update: Mueske asked if environmental education coordinator Bryanna Kuhlman and naturalist Ashley Hansen learned tips about how to follow the Iowa Core Curriculum in our program plans during the Iowa Conservation Education Coalition conference. Sorenson said all the naturalists appear to be sharing at this point as it is new for everyone, and there is no set way to incorporate the curriculum. Some naturalists have not attempted to incorporate STEM and the Core curriculum yet.

Dickinson County Conservation Board areas

Update wetland project at Kenue Park: Instead of starting in the spring, the wetland renovation project in Kenue Park will begin this fall due to contractor conflicts. All agreements have been signed. Anderson asked if any changes had to be made to CRP on the neighboring property, but Sorenson said no changes needed to be made.

Update on Nature Center Road name change petition: So far, everyone who has been asked has been in favor of the name change. More than half of the needed signatures have been obtained from the neighbors. The next step would be to take the petition to the county 911 board, and if it is approved it will be taken to the Dickinson County Board of Supervisors.

It has also been suggested to put a nature-related arch over the road just off of Highway 71. If the Nature Center Road name change is approved, Sorenson plans to meet with the Highway 71 beautification project group to see if that could be incorporated into their plans.

Operations and facility update

Recycle center: The overall account balances for the recycling center were found to be off, and corrections are being made to charts and formulas to make sure that these mistakes do not happen on the monthly report in the future. Sorenson has asked the reports to be the calendar month rather than the Dickinson County Landfill Commission month.

The wood chipping company was back at the recycling center, working on the brush pile. Sorenson heard that the Marble Beach renovation project is underway, and many of the trees have been cut down. The recycling center is expecting to receive these trees soon. The chipping company takes the wood chips and sells them, which is why the company gives the recycling center a deal on the wood chipping fees. About half of the brush pile has been chipped so far.

Shine Bros. will be coming to pick up the white goods that have been demanufactured at the recycling center.

Anderson said he got screened compost from the recycling center, and the screener is doing a good job of getting a nice final product compared to what it used to be. Because the compost is not certified, the recycling center cannot charge for compost to any person or entity. A loading fee has been discussed, however.

Pollinator Paradise: The contractor is working on the final punch list for the project. However, the final project will not be done until the paint and downspouts are finished after spring arrives. Two change orders less than \$1,000 were the only items added to the original project.

Conservation board employees have been talking to an exhibit design company, but Sorenson would like to get a second proposal before approving the first. The human-sized honeycomb has been ordered, and the greenhouse has arrived but is not constructed yet. Exhibits from the current Butterfly House will most likely be moved in temporarily as exhibits are constructed in the addition. The indoor beehive will also be moved into Pollinator Paradise, with an area in the beehive for the honeybees to construct honeycomb naturally instead of on a frame like most beekeepers have. The outdoor walkway by Pollinator Paradise will end in a fenced gate that will not allow people to get too close to the beehive entrance/exit.

Since the nature center beehive struggled this winter, Mueske asked Anderson, a beekeeper, if he lost bees this winter. He said he has lost a couple of his hives. He thinks that varroa mites infected the nature center's hive and that is why it has collapsed. The new hive structure in Pollinator Paradise will allow better access for treatment of mites and other issues than the current hive setup does.

County Home building: An anonymous donor has verbally committed to \$500,000 for the project of converting the former Pride Group to a lodge/shelter in Kenue Park. A \$100,000 Okoboji Foundation grant application has been submitted, and other donors have also been contacted about the project. Sorenson has started to look into having separate sub-contractors for the project with himself as the general contractor rather than having one company in charge of the project. He thinks this may decrease the overall project cost.

Sorenson has hired a company to do the asbestos abatement in the building, and a final inspection will then be mandated before construction could begin.

Marketing plan: Roth presented her 2017 marketing recap and 2018 marketing plan.

Approval of expenses: Alliant Energy is not just the Spillway electric but all electrical charges. Anderson motion, Kleen second. Approved.

General discussion

-The county 2018-19 budget was approved at the Dickinson County Board of Supervisors meeting.

-The conservation board is working on adding a second pole by the osprey nest on which to attach the web camera so it can be attached straight instead of on a curved arm that can bend and break as has happened the past few years.

-A meeting about solar power will be held at the courthouse with the possibility of future discussions on how to implement changes and add solar to different county entities.

-Joe McGovern, president of the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, called and asked for constituents to call Iowa Rep. John Wills to ask him to not change the I-WILL formula. Iowa Rep. Megan Jones told Anderson she thought the formula would stay the same. Anderson said what is feared is that changing the formula would not benefit conservation entities but instead would go toward ag projects.

-Anderson said that Tom Hazelton, director of the Iowa Association of County Conservation Boards, is planning retirement in two years and is working on tying up loose ends as he plans to pass the reins. He and the IACCB board are working on bringing together the different conservation entities under one umbrella.

Anderson motion to adjourn, Stoll second. Approved. Adjourn at 8:42 p.m.