LINN COUNTY, IOWA, CONSERVATION BOARD
MINUTES OF THE MONDAY, MAY 23, 2016, BOARD MEETING

The following is a true copy of the minutes of the meeting of the Linn County, Iowa, Conservation Board held on Monday, May 23, 2016, at the Wickiup Hill Learning Center, 10260 Morris Hills Road, Toddville, Iowa.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT
Cindy Burke, Kristin Eschweiler, Hillary Hughes, Steve Emerson and George Kanz

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT
None

STAFF PRESENT
Dan Biechler, Director; Dennis Goemaat, Deputy Director; Randy Burke; Planner; Ryan Schlader, Community Outreach & Marketing Specialist

OTHERS PRESENT
Todd Happel, Anderson Bogert Engineers

CALL TO ORDER
President Eschweiler called the meeting to order at 12:05 PM.

PUBLIC COMMENT
No comments were received.

ITEM R1. APPROVE CONSENT AGENDA

MOTION by Emerson, second by Kanz.

To approve the consent agenda.

VOTE: aye; all present
nay; none
absent; Hughes

The consent agenda was approved and involved the following items:

ITEM C1. APPROVE MINUTES OF THE APRIL 25, 2016 REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING

ITEM C2. APPROVE CLAIMS AND EXPENDITURES – CLAIMS LIST #2016-11

Claims and Transfer list #2016 – 11 involving claim #10-551 through claim #10–

ITEM C3. RECEIVE AND PLACE ON FILE THE APRIL 2016 FINANCIAL/BUDGET REPORT

ITEM C4. RECEIVE AND PLACE ON FILE THE APRIL 2016 ACTIVITY REPORT
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ITEM C5. ACCEPTANCE OF GIFTS
   1. Gift #36-2016, M.D & D.L. Blin – monetary donation ($1,000) toward the nature playscape at the Wickiup Hill Outdoor Learning Area.


ITEM R2. REVIEW BIDS AND ENGINEER’S RECOMMENDATION REGARDING BIDS AND DISCUSS AND DECIDE ON AWARD OF CONTRACT AUTHORIZATION FOR THE BOARD PRESIDENT TO SIGN THE CONTRACT ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD AND AUTHORIZATION TO PROCEED WITH THE PROJECT REGARDING THE CEDAR VALLEY NATURE TRAIL CONSTRUCTION AND PAVING PHASE 4, PROJECT #4-10.

   Todd Happel from Anderson Bogert Engineers met with the Board to discuss bids for the Cedar Valley Trail paving project.

      MOTION by Emerson, second by Kanz.

      To award the construction contract to Vieth Construction Corp for their low bid in the amount of $957,945.85 and to authorize the Board President to sign the contract on behalf of the Conservation Board.

      VOTE:
      aye; all present
      nay; none
      absent; Hughes

ITEM R3. REVIEW AND DECIDE ON BIDS AND AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO SIGN THE CONSTRUCTION CONTRACT FOR THE MORGAN CREEK PARK OXBOW RESTORATION, PROJECT #2-17.

   Randy Burke reviewed the bids for the Morgan Creek oxbow restoration project. Recommendation is to accept the low bid from Jerry McElmeel Excavating and Grading from Monticello, Iowa.

      MOTION by Emerson, second by Kanz.

      To award the construction contract to Jerry McElmeel Excavating and Grading for the low bid of $33,100 and authorize the Executive Director to sign the contract on behalf of the Conservation Board.

      VOTE:
      aye; all present
      nay; none
      absent; Hughes
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ITEM R4. DISCUSS AND DECIDE ON THE SELECTION OF AND AWARD OF CONTRACT CONCERNING A WETLAND CONSULTANT FOR THE BUFFALO CREEK PARK DAM MITIGATION, PROJECT #8-14. AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO SIGN THE CONTRACT ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD.

Goemaat reviewed the proposals received from various wetland consultants for work on the Buffalo Creek dam modification project. Proposals are still being evaluated by the project team.

MOTION by Burke, second by Emerson.

To authorize staff together with the project partners to select a wetland consultant for this project and authorize the Executive Director to sign a contract with the selected consultant.

VOTE:
aye; all present
nay; none
absent; Hughes

Board Member Hughes arrived at this point in the meeting.

ITEM R5. DISCUSS AND DECIDE ON THE PROPOSED AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE CONSERVATION BOARD AND THE CITY OF MARION FOR THE GRANT WOOD TRAIL EXTENSION FROM HIGHWAY 13 TO 35TH STREET IN MARION.

Biechler reviewed the proposed agreement with Marion for funding assistance on the Grant Wood Trail west of Highway 13 into Marion. Marion was a significant partner in the Grant Wood Trail underpass at Highway 13 project and this agreement continues that partnership to complete the trail into Marion.

MOTION by Emerson, second by Kanz.

To approve the funding agreement between the Conservation Board and the City of Marion to help meet the Federal grant local match requirements for the Grant Wood Trail Extension into Marion.

VOTE:
aye; all present
nay; none
absent; none

Randy Burke reviewed the proposed 28E agreement with the Board. Tood Happel from Anderson Bogert Engineers also participated in this discussion since Anderson Bogert is the consulting engineering firm retained by the Conservation Board for design and engineering work on this project.

**MOTION** by Emerson, second by Kanz.

To approve the 28E agreement between the Conservation Board and the City of Ely and authorize the Board President to sign the agreement on behalf of the Board.

**VOTE:**

aye; all present
nay; none
absent; none

ITEM R7.  DISCUSS AND DECIDE ON THE PROPOSED EASEMENT AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE CONSERVATION BOARD AND MICHAEL GIFFORD REGARDING COUNTY PROPERTY ADJACENT TO 619 EAST WASHINGTON STREET IN CENTER POINT INVOLVING THE CEDAR VALLEY NATURE TRAIL.

Biechler reviewed the proposed easement agreement between the Conservation Board and Michael Gifford for a garage located partially on County property along the Cedar Valley Nature Trail in Center Point.

**MOTION** by Kanz, second by Burke.

To approve the easement agreement between the Conservation Board and Michael Gifford and authorize the Board President to sign the easement on behalf of the Board.

**VOTE:**

aye; all present
nay; none
absent; none
ITEM R8. DISCUSS AND DECIDE ON THE AMENDMENT TO THE CONSERVATION EASEMENT AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE CONSERVATION BOARD AND TOM AND KATHLEEN ALLER.

Goemaat reviewed the proposed amendment to the Aller conservation easement.

MOTION by Kanz, second by Burke.

To approve the amendment to the Aller conservation easement and authorize the Board President to sign the amendment.

VOTE:
aye; all present
nay; none
absent; none


Randy Burke reviewed the plans and specifications for the Squaw Creek Park mountain bike trail project and the associated Resolution #2016-19 with the Board.

MOTION by Emerson, second by Hughes.

To approve and adopt resolution #2016-19 setting the date and time for the public hearing related to the Squaw Creek Park mountain bike trail project.

VOTE:
aye; all present
nay; none
absent; none
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ITEM R10. DISCUSS AND DECIDE ON AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO SIGN PURCHASE ORDERS AND/OR CONTRACTS WITH GPS IMPACT FOR PROFESSIONAL SERVICES CONCERNING COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND MARKETING PRODUCTS AND ACTIVITIES.

Schlader reviewed the upcoming proposed community outreach activities with GPS Impact to promote Linn County Conservation areas and facilities.

MOTION by Emerson, second by Kanz.

To authorize the Executive Director to sign purchase orders and contracts with GPS Impact for community outreach activities.

VOTE:

aye; all present
nay; none
absent; none

ITEM R11. BOARD MEMBER/STAFF REPORTS

Ryan Schlader reported that Amanda Bieber and he are working with a group called Hike-it-Baby Cedar Rapids. It’s a national group with a local chapter with the focus of getting caregivers and kids out to explore the natural environment together. They wrote a nice blog for Morgan Creek and they are planning a hike at Wickiup Hill this Saturday. Staff will be attending the hike and giving them more ideas of hikes in Linn County.

Staff is working on a partnership with Central City’s Mainstreet program as a way of cross-promoting city amenities with Conservation Park services at Pinicon Ridge Park.

Some promotional pieces for giveaways at tents/fairs, displays etc. have been ordered and they should be arriving soon.

He attended the unveiling of a new branding campaign by the former Cedar Rapids Area Convention and Visitors Bureau “GoCedarRapids” with a focus on places to go and things to do. In conversations with their staff, there are opportunities to highlight destination areas within Linn County Conservation.

Schlader has met with some Gazette staff regarding future opportunities, including blogs. Some radio interviews were also conducted recently. A story was written this past week about Buffalo Creek dam in the Gazette.

A new bike repair station was installed at Cedar Valley Nature Trail, Boyson Road trailhead. This addition was well received and generated a lot of buzz.
Schlader participated in a Linn County Bike Ride after-work ride organized by the Healthy Linn County Committee. The bike repair station was highlighted as a new addition to the trail.

Alliant Energy has awarded Linn County Conservation $5,000 toward the Playscape. A grant proposal has been submitted to the McIntyre Foundation in Mt Vernon. We expect to hear back from them soon.

We partnered with Alliant Energy and the DNR for operation Re-leaf where Alliant offered trees at discounted prices for customers. About 500 trees were delivered to Squaw Creek and then distributed to customers.

Duane Arnold Energy Center conducted a FEMA evaluated emergency drill last week that included Dan and Dennis at the Emergency Operations Center and Schlader at the Joint Information Center serving as a Linn County Public Information Officer. FEMA conducts an evaluation every 8 years.

ITEM R12. STRATEGIC PLANNING DISCUSSION

The Linn County Conservation Board continued to review and discuss its vision and mission and the current strategic investment plan and have discussion and dialogue about strategic outcomes and key areas of focus for the future.

Cindy Burke made a statement about the Board’s role to speak for nature.

Emerson commented that we need to integrate people into nature. People need to experience nature so they care about it.

Kanz commented that we also need to educate people about nature and help them develop a connection.

Eschweiler noted that the vision should be larger than just “community”. Hughes also noted that “community” could be limiting. Perhaps the vision should be broadened. The statement could be modified slightly and provide a better communication tool.

Kanz noted that the current vision statement is limiting and doesn’t state where we want to be in twenty years. He also noted that he prefers sustainable over nature needs half.

Emerson noted that hunters do a lot for nature and spend money to protect natural areas.

Burke noted that hunting has not always been positive for the hunted species. We need to figure out what we can do to develop corridors along the rivers – especially the Wapsipinicon.

Biechler noted that the Linn County Park and Outdoor Recreation Plan has been in place for fifty years. The plan identifies major stream corridors for protection.
Hughes said that protecting stream corridors makes a lot of sense for a number of reasons. These corridors are of marginal value for farmers and offer many benefits for people.

Kanz noted that Bur Oak Land Trust is doing good work that can show results.

Burke noted that humans use far too much of the earth’s resources.

Eschweiler indicated that much of the issue goes back to the education piece. Much of what we do comes back to educating people.

Biechler asked if we need to develop focus areas such as conservation education, critical habitat protection, etc. Excerpts from the strategic investment plan were quoted regarding protecting open spaces.

Hughes noted that Junior Achievement has a plan to do financial literacy programming in schools K-12. She also noted that we need to develop a limited number of priority areas.

Kanz stated that he has been looking into lean engineering called value streaming. Conservation may want to look at “value points” within people’s life.

Biechler discussed the county’s current strategic planning efforts to identify strategic outcomes and products.

The Board discussed possible vision and mission statements.

A possible mission statement was developed - “Leading in nature conservation and outdoor recreation for all generations.”

A possible vision statement is “We envision Linn County as a vibrant area with healthy waterways, ample natural spaces, and outdoor recreation to support a healthy community.”

The Board decided to review these proposed statement at the next meeting.

Board members were asked to develop five focus areas for review and discussion at the next meeting.
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ITEM R13.  CLOSED SESSION

The Conservation Board went into closed session in accordance with Iowa Code Section 21.5(1j) to discuss the purchase of real estate.

MOTION by Emerson, second by Kanz.

To go into closed session at 2:32 PM

VOTE: aye: Emerson
       aye: Hughes
       aye: Eschweiler
       aye: Burke
       aye: Kanz
       nay: none
       absent: none

President Eschweiler reported that the Board is out of closed session at 3:10 PM.

The closed session was taped according to Iowa law.

ITEM R14.  ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 3:10 PM.

The above minutes were typed by Amanda Bieber.

__________________________________________
Recording Secretary

SEAL

__________________________________________
Board Secretary