LINN COUNTY, IOWA, CONSERVATION BOARD

MINUTES OF THE MONDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2020, BOARD MEETING

The following is a true copy of the minutes of the meeting of the Linn County, Iowa, Conservation Board held on October 26, 2020, at Prairie Oak Lodge, Wanatee Park, Marion, IA 52302.

Board Members Present
Hillary Hughes, John Hanson, George Kanz
Member Kanz was appointed acting secretary.

Board Members Absent
Cindy Burke, Steve Emerson

Staff Present
Dennis Goemaat, Director; Daniel Gibbins, Deputy Director; Randy Burke, Planner; Ryan Schlader, Community Outreach Specialist; Jason Baumann, Resource Manager; Dana Kellogg, Natural Resources Manager; Kent Rector, Nature Center Manager; Lisa Epp, Linn County Attorney

Others Present
Kimberly Dickey, NextEra Energy Inc.

Call To Order
Board Vice-President Hanson called the meeting to order at 12:05 PM.

Public Comment
None

ITEM R1. Approve Consent Agenda

Motion by Hughes, second by Kanz

To approve the consent agenda.

Vote:

aye; all present
nay; none
absent: Burke, Emerson

The consent agenda was approved and involved the following items:

ITEM C1. Approve the September 28, 2020 Monthly Meeting Minutes

ITEM C2. Approve claims list and expenditures – Claims List #2021-4.
Claims and Transfer list #2021-4 involving claim #4-303 through claim #4-414.


ITEM C4. Receive and place on file the September 2020 activity report.

ITEM C5. Acceptance of gifts.
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1. Gift #9-2021 – Monetary donation ($2,220) from the Aschbrenner family for use at Morgan Creek Park.

ITEM C6. **Authorize staff to purchase a triple axle (25-ton) trailer for use in the Services work unit.**

ITEM C7. **Capital Improvement Program updates report.**

REGULAR AGENDA:

ITEM R2. **Discuss and decide on amending Resolution #2020-16 to guarantee matching funds for the Board’s share of the Transportation Alternative Program (TAP) grant for paving a section of the Grant Wood Trail from Waldo’s Rock Park in Marion to Oxley Road.**

Randy Burke reviewed the amendment to Resolution #2020-16 to guarantee matching funds for the Board’s share of the Transportation Alternative Program (TAP) grant for paving a section of the Grant Wood Trail from Waldo’s Rock Park in Marion to Oxley Road.

**MOTION** by Hughes, second by Kanz

To approve the amendment and authorize the Executive Director to sign the grant application on behalf of the Board.

**VOTE:**

ayon: all present
nay: none
absent: Burke, Emerson

ITEM R3. **Discuss and decide on amending Resolution #2020-17 to guarantee matching funds for the Board’s share of the Federal Recreation Trails (FRT) grant for paving a section of the Grant Wood Trail from Waldo’s Rock Park in Marion to Oxley Road.**

(Burke)

Randy Burke reviewed the amendment to Resolution #2020-17 to guarantee matching funds for the Board’s share of the Federal Recreation Trails (FRT) grant for paving a section of the Grant Wood Trail from Waldo’s Rock Park in Marion to Oxley Road.

**MOTION** by Kanz, second by Hughes

To approve the amendment and authorize the Executive Director to sign the grant application on behalf of the Board.

**VOTE:**

ayon: all present
nay: none
absent: Burke, Emerson
ITEM R4. **Discuss and decide regarding a funding commitment to the Cedar River Public Private Initiative’s Cedar River Source Water Partnership and authorizing the Board President or Director to sign the letter of commitment.**

Goemaat reviewed a funding commitment to the Cedar River Public Private Initiative’s Cedar River Source Water Partnership.

**MOTION** by Kanz, second by Hughes

To approve the funding commitment and authorize the Board Vice-President to sign the letter of commitment.

**VOTE:**

aye; all present
nay; none
absent: Burke, Emerson

ITEM R5. **Discuss and decide regarding signing a lease option involving potential lease of property for a commercial solar array.**

Goemaat reviewed a lease option involving the potential lease of property for a commercial solar array by NextEra Energy Inc. Goemaat noted this would not be competing with private land owners because of the number of acres in the area that are sought by NextEra. Goemaat noted the lease would be for 30 years with a 10-year renewal option. Hughes asked how the land would be modified. Goemaat noted NextEra would fence the array and possibly incorporate native prairie and water quality enhancements in the array. Hughes noted the Board would need to know the management plan and post-lease decommission plan. Kimber Dickey with NextEra stated they would build plans according to Linn County’s requirements including native seed mixes around the array, fencing for security in high traffic areas or living fencing with trees. Dickey confirmed there would be a decommissioning plan and bond to restore the property after the lease to as good or better condition as the original condition of the land. Hanson asked about the vegetation under the panels. Dickey noted that vegetation type depends on the height of the array and terrain of the land as determining the maximum height of the plantings. Hanson noted he would like to see the option for prescribed grazing. Hanson asked how long the lifespan of a panel is today. Dickey noted increasing technology would determine when the panels would be replaced and upgraded. Kanz asked how wind turbine blades are disposed of. Dickey described future recycling options, but currently they are landfilled. Dana confirmed very little of the property is within the floodplain. Kanz noted his support for using as much of the land as possible for the array. Hanson noted preference for a mix of array and other uses. Hughes asked if there were any other commitments for the Learning Farm. Kellogg confirmed no other commitments are in place. Hanson noted importance to maintain any sensitive artifact areas on the property. Hughes noted initial preference to use as many acres as possible for large green infrastructure education.

No motion was made. Board consensus was to continue exploration of this opportunity for the Learning Farm.
ITEM R6.  **Discuss and decide regarding authorizing the Director to sign a letter to the Iowa Northern Railway Company to negotiate an access and crossing agreement.**

Goemaat reviewed a letter to the Iowa Northern Railway Company to negotiate an access and crossing agreement for the HWY 100 Trail segment from 42nd Street to the Cedar River. Randy Burke described discussions with the State and the railroad to this point.

**MOTION** by Kanz, second by Hughes

To approve the letter and authorize the Executive Director to sign on behalf of the Board.

**VOTE:**

- aye; all present
- nay; none
- absent: Burke, Emerson

ITEM R7.  **Discuss and decide regarding authorizing staff to dispose of logs salvaged as a result of the derecho through sealed bids.**

Kellogg reviewed proposed sale of logs salvaged as a result of the derecho through sealed bids.

**MOTION** by Hughes, second Kanz

To authorize staff to dispose of salvaged logs as a result of the derecho through sealed bids.

**VOTE:**

- aye; all present
- nay; none
- absent: Burke, Emerson

ITEM R8.  **Discuss the Conservation Board’s preliminary FY 2022 budget.**

Goemaat reviewed the Conservation Board’s preliminary FY 2022 budget. Hughes asked if the increase in electricity was from higher campground use despite days closed in the camping season. Goemaat and Baumann confirmed camping demand was very strong due to COVID providing the increase in electrical use. Goemaat complimented the Wanatee Park staff for keeping camping open to serve ongoing contractor camping needs for derecho repairs to the community. Kanz asked about potential winter management for snow and ice at the trail parking at County Home Road to allow winter access. Dennis confirmed staff would look at winter demand concerning the issue after the lot has been hard surfaced. Hanson asked what percentage of mowing does the seasonal staff budget cover. Goemaat and Baumann confirmed the majority of seasonal staff conduct mowing operations. No motion was made.
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ITEM R9. Board member / staff reports – Board members and staff may report and/or discuss meetings or activities in which they have been involved.

1) Community Outreach/Marketing: Schlader reported on monthly marketing and communications updates including the renaming of Wanatee park and changes to digital platforms to reflect the change. The name change story received national media attention. Schlader also reported on the recent Oak Hickory publication, thank you letter received and his being named to the Eastern Iowa Tourism Board.

2) Updates:
   a. Wickiup Hill education program & Wilderness Leadership School proposal – Rector was introduced to the Board by Dennis Goemaat and then reported on a new Conservation Education Wilderness Leadership program being planned for upcoming seasons. Hughes suggested looking at environmental social governance (ESG) goals of local companies to partner with business goals toward ESG with this type of programming.
   b. CMPO Planning Grant – Randy Burke reported on a $55,000 MPO design grant received to help fund the initial planning of the Biechler Bridge design concerning the railroad piers structural integrity and trail alignment to the river.
   c. Discuss location of the November 23rd meeting. The Board requested a virtual meeting on November 23rd. The December meeting will be held at noon on December 21st at the Public Services Center. The budget presentation to the Board of Supervisors will follow at 1:30 PM.

ITEM R10. Public comment

None.
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ITEM R11.  Closed Session

**MOTION** by Kanz, second by Hughes

To go into closed session at 1:30 PM for the purpose of discussing land acquisition in accordance with section 21.5(l)(j) Code of Iowa.

**VOTE:**
aye: Hanson  
aye: Kanz  
aye: Hughes  
nay: none  
absent: Emerson, Burke

**MOTION** by Hughes, second by Kanz

To go out of closed session at 1:55 PM.

**VOTE:**
aye: Hanson  
aye: Kanz  
aye: Hughes  
nay: none  
absent: Emerson, Burke

ITEM R12.  Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 1:56 PM

Catherine Kastens typed the above minutes.

[Signature]
Recording Secretary

Cindy Burke - virtual mtg
Board Secretary (by Email)