

LINN COUNTY, IOWA, CONSERVATION BOARD

MINUTES OF THE MONDAY, JULY 19, 2021, BOARD MEETING

The following is a true copy of the minutes of the meeting of the Linn County, Iowa, Conservation Board held on **July 19, 2021**, at Red Cedar Lodge, Wanatee Park, 1700 Big Bluestem Drive, Marion, IA 52302.

Board Members Present

John Hanson, Hillary Hughes Steve Emerson and Brent Oleson

Board Members Absent

Cindy Burke

Staff Present

Dennis Goemaat, Director; Daniel Gibbins, Deputy Director; Randy Burke, Planner; Jason Baumann, Resource Manager; Dana Kellogg, Natural Resources Manager;

Others Present

Linn County Board of Supervisors: Ben Rogers, and Louie Zumbach; Amanda Hoy, Auditor's Office; Seth Staashelm, Marion Parks and Recreation Director

Call To Order

Board President Hanson called the meeting to order at 10:13 AM

Public Comment

None

ITEM R1. Approve Consent Agenda

Motion by Emerson, second by Hughes

To approve the consent agenda.

Vote: aye; all present
 nay; none
 absent: Burke

The consent agenda was approved and involved the following items:

ITEM C1. Approve minutes of the June 28, 2021 monthly meeting

ITEM C2. Approve claims list and expenditures – Claims List #2022-1.

Claims and Transfer list #2022-1 involving claim #12-1272 through claim #1-61.

ITEM C3. Receive and place on file the June 2021 financial/budget report.

ITEM C4. Receive and place on file the June 2021 activity report.

ITEM C5. Acceptance of gifts.

1) None

BOARD MEETING MINUTES

7/19/2021

- ITEM C6. Approve project to hard surface the Cedar Valley Trail parking area at County Home Road and authorize the Director to sign the contract.
- ITEM C7. Authorize the Director to sign a change order for the Morgan Creek Park project.
- ITEM C8. Capital Improvement Program updates report.

REGULAR AGENDA:

- ITEM R2. Public hearing regarding the proposed plans, specifications, form of contract and estimated cost for the Cedar Valley Nature Trail, Hoover section repairs, Project #2-21.

The Conservation Board conducted a public hearing in accordance with Iowa law regarding the proposed plans, specifications, form of contract and estimated costs for the Cedar Valley Nature Trail, Hoover section repairs, Project #2-21. The published notice of the public hearing was presented. No written or oral comments or objections were received.

Hughes noted vandalism occurring adjacent to the trail near Ely. Social media posts indicate someone is placing tacks along the sides of the trail. Goemaat noted the section referenced is managed by Ely and we have not been contacted about this activity.

MOTION by Hughes, second by Oleson

To close the public hearing.

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

- ITEM R3. Discuss and decide on Resolution #2021-14, approval of the plans and specifications, form of contract and estimated construction costs for the Cedar Valley Nature Trail, Hoover section repairs, Project #2-21.

Randy Burke reviewed the plans and specifications, form of contract and estimated construction costs for the Cedar Valley Nature Trail, Hoover section repairs, Project #2-21.

MOTION by Emerson, second by Hughes

To adopt Resolution #2021-14 indicating that a public hearing was held and approving the plans, specifications, form of contract and estimated costs for the Cedar Valley Nature Trail, Hoover section repairs, Project #2-21, and to authorize staff to receive and open bids.

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

BOARD MEETING MINUTES

7/19/2021

ITEM R4. Discuss and decide regarding Resolution #2021-15 establishing a speed limit and authorizing traffic signs be erected at Morgan Creek Park day use area.

Goemaat reviewed Resolution #2021-15 establishing a speed limit and authorizing traffic signs be erected at Morgan Creek Park day use area.

MOTION by Emerson, second by Hughes

To approve Resolution #2021-15 establishing a speed limit and authorizing traffic signs at Morgan Creek Park.

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

ITEM R5. Discuss and decide on Resolution #2021-16, approving an application for funding assistance from the State Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) grant program through the Iowa Department of Natural Resources for funding assistance for modifying the Pinicon Ridge dam, Project #2-19.

Gibbins reviewed Resolution #2021-16, approving an application for funding assistance from the State Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) grant program through the Iowa Department of Natural Resources for funding assistance for modifying the Pinicon Ridge dam, Project #2-19.

MOTION by Emerson, second by Hughes

To approve Resolution #2021-16 and authorize the Executive Director to submit the grant application on behalf of the Board.

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

BOARD MEETING MINUTES
7/19/2021

ITEM R6. Discuss and decide on memorandum of agreement with Linn County to follow the Linn County handbook for management employees. (Goemaat)

Goemaat reviewed the memorandum of agreement with Linn County to follow the Linn County handbook for management employees.

MOTION by Emerson, second by Hughes

To approve the memorandum of agreement and authorize the Board President to sign the memorandum of agreement on behalf of the Board.

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

ITEM R7. Discuss and decide on a memorandum of understanding with the Conservation Board bargaining unit regarding no holiday pay for seasonal employees and access to vacation for regular employees following their probation period.

Goemaat reviewed a memorandum of understanding with the Conservation Board bargaining unit regarding no holiday pay for seasonal employees and access to vacation for regular employees following their probation period. Hanson asked if probationary period differs by classification. Goemaat noted it was contractual and a 90 day period.

MOTION by Oleson, second Emerson

To approve the memorandum of agreement and authorize the Board President to sign the memorandum of agreement on behalf of the Board.

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

BOARD MEETING MINUTES

7/19/2021

ITEM R8. Discuss and decide on resolution #2021-17 setting date and time for the public hearing regarding the proposed plans, specifications, form of contract and estimated cost for the Plains campground improvements in Pinicon Ridge Park, Project #2-21.

Randy Burke reviewed resolution #2021-17 setting date and time for the public hearing regarding the proposed plans, specifications, form of contract and estimated cost for the Plains campground improvements in Pinicon Ridge Park, Project #2-21 for Monday, August 23, 2021 at 12:00 PM. Hanson asked whether the green parking grid material planned for use had been used on prior projects. Randy Burke confirmed the former use of similar material in projects for grass parking areas.

MOTION by Emerson, second Hughes

To approve Resolution #2021-17 setting the public hearing.

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

ITEM R9. Discuss and decide regarding an agreement to transfer land and development funds to the Conservation Board to establish and develop the Bird Preserve and authorize the Director to sign the agreement pending final legal review.

Gibbins reviewed a draft agreement for the transfer of land and development funds to the Conservation Board to establish and develop the Bird Preserve.

MOTION by Hughes, second Emerson

To approve the agreement and authorize the Director to sign the agreement on behalf of the Board pending final legal review.

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

BOARD MEETING MINUTES

7/19/2021

ITEM R10. Discuss man-made snow tubing and sledding site(s) proposal.

Member Hanson discussed a proposal to investigate man-made snow making recreational opportunities at Linn County areas. Hughes asked if the example of a facility covering the cost included only operations or also infrastructure costs. Hanson confirmed it was only for annual operations. Hughes noted significant water and energy resources would be needed to operate a sled hill, and that the cost would seem high for a seasonal activity and might be better conducted by a city organization. Hughes also noted she would not want to manage maintenance operations at a City park. Oleson noted that making a decision to construct and operate a new facility based on anticipated revenue would not be the best approach due to how revenue can fluctuate from year to year, but a decision based on the merit of the operation would be best. Oleson also noted Conservation has many millions of dollars in priority needs and this would probably not be a priority. Oleson noted some of the city examples given for sled hills are not at officially sanctioned sites. Emerson noted that there are some partnerships that might be able to conduct grooming operations. Emerson noted he didn't know if snow making was a good Conservation function, but perhaps grooming could be achieved with a partnership if another group had grooming equipment they would bring to various locations. Hanson discussed electrical requirements for snow cannons. Hughes asked if Hanson had researched any partnerships with city organizations. Hanson noted he had not at this stage. Oleson noted diversion of staff resources need to be considered due to current staff work load. Hughes noted how the equipment budget is also very tight currently with flat budgets from year to year making it difficult to prioritize new equipment for a snow hill concept. Hughes noted if a donor would come forward, that might make the concept more viable. Goemaat noted staff could look into some of the details and talk with local city staff about potential partnerships. Hughes noted concerns about habitat impacts for a snow making operation. Board consensus was to report back with some research during the summer of 2022.

No action was taken.

ITEM R11. 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: A report was submitted to the Board for monthly marketing and communications updates.
- 2) Updates:
 - a. Board signatures for contract labor agreement. Goemaat distributed the contract agreement for signatures.
 - b. Natural resource management plans. Gibbins reported on the completed Natural Resource Management Plans for Wanatee and Pinicon Ridge Parks. Hughes asked for staff to send an electronic version to Board members.
 - c. Tower Terrace Road intersection with Cedar Valley Trail. Goemaat noted progress on getting an underpass into the design for the Cedar Valley Trail at the future Tower Terrace Road project.

BOARD MEETING MINUTES

7/19/2021

d. Injured deputy/Pinicon staff involvement - Goemaat noted staff involvement with the recent Coggon incident in which a Linn County Sherriff Deputy was injured in the line of duty.

ITEM R12. Public comment

None.

ITEM R13. 11:00 AM – Meet with the Linn County Board of Supervisors to discuss issues of mutual interest and tour selected park areas including:

a) Discuss upcoming priority projects – Goemaat reviewed positive annual revenue generation during 2021 despite COVID-19 and derecho impacts. Gibbins facilitated a review of current projects and programs. Zumbach asked what the source of increased revenue was when campgrounds are already typically full. Goemaat noted the mid-week camping significantly increased during Covid in 2021. Goemaat noted that all other system usages increased significantly in addition to camping. Zumbach noted concern for upstream impacts of the park for the Pinicon Ridge Dam project. Hughes noted long-term study has looked carefully at upstream impacts. Gibbins described some of the hydrologic study from the consultant that has confirmed low impacts upstream and downstream expected for the project in regard to river water level changes and sediment migration.

b) Discuss items of mutual interest – The Boards discussed general topics including growth in educational partnerships with disadvantaged youth; Utility scale solar – Supervisor Rogers asked about Conservation property north of Palo being a possible site for solar panels. Goemaat summarized the process of Conservation Board consideration of NextEra proposal to use Conservation land including a concept for solar panels and wildlife habitat creation with the project. Emerson noted how the design proposal did not include panels that would allow conservation practices under the panels such as establishment of native prairie, and that he does not support the proposal with the current panel design. Zumbach noted the recent Wapello solar project is one of Iowa’s newest industrial scale solar farms and that it would be a good example to review. Zumbach noted a lack in maintenance of vegetation away from primary road areas at the Wapello project. Hughes noted concern that Conservation doesn’t compete with private acres for a solar project. Zumbach noted flexibility in the NextEra proposal that wouldn’t necessarily need Conservation land in the program.

c) A tour of South Cedar District areas included the following to show progress on district projects:

- i. Derecho damage, cleanup activity and woodland renovation plans
- ii. Mountain bike trails
- iii. Recently completed wetland projects
- iv. Grant Wood Trail
- v. Wanatee pond
- vi. Trail damage at Wanatee Park

BOARD MEETING MINUTES
7/19/2021

ITEM R14. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 1:09 PM

Daniel Gibbins typed the above minutes.



Recording Secretary

SEAL

Board Secretary

*Minutes approved via conference
call on 8/23/2021
DEA*