

The Mahaska County Conservation Board (MCCB) held its regular monthly meeting on Thursday, May 4, 2023, at the Environmental Learning Center (ELC) at Caldwell Park. Board Chair Willie VanWeelden called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. Also present at the meeting were Board Members Curt Jager, Linda Fox, Steve Dixon, and Jennifer Peterson. Members of the staff present were Director Chris Clingan and Administrative Assistant Dorothy Wedgewood.

Board Chair VanWeelden asked if there were any changes to the agenda. Clingan stated there were no changes. Jager made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Fox seconded this motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The Minutes were discussed.

- I. Dixon made a motion to approve the Minutes of the April 6, 2023, board meeting as presented. Jager seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

The Expenditures were reviewed.

- I. Clingan discussed several items on the expenditures listing including but not limited to the claim to Bailey Office Outfitters for four (4) chairs for the meeting room in the ELC. Clingan said that he has an additional chair on hold for his office at the cost of \$615.00 to add to this claim, however he wanted to get the Board's approval before purchasing the additional chair.
- II. Fox made a motion to approve the expenditures as presented. Dixon seconded this motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Caldwell Park was addressed.

- I. The Mammoth Display was discussed.
  - A. Clingan presented a picture of the assembled mammoth. It is scheduled for sent the paint booth to finish the mammoth, giving it an aged appearance.
  - B. Elemoose estimates shipping this project in 22<sup>nd</sup> of May 2023.
  - C. Clingan stated that MCCB has a petrified cedar tree root ball that was found on top of one of the mammoth skulls. They are in the process of drying it out and then will treat it to preserve it. He recommends including this tree root ball in the mammoth diorama.
  - D. Dixon advised he would be gone the first full week in June and may not be able to help assemble the mammoth.
- II. Purchases for the ELC were discussed.
  - A. Clingan informed the Board that he purchased four (4) chairs for the meeting room located next to his office on the upper level of the ELC. The cost was \$935.12.
  - B. Clingan then requested the Board approve an additional chair for his office at a cost of \$615.00. Clingan explained the combined cost would be over the director's \$1,500.00 purchase authority, thus he is asking for Board approval for this purchase.
  - C. Jager made a motion to approve the purchase of the additional chair for the director's office in the amount of \$615.00. Dixon seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.
- III. Clingan updated the Board regarding the plans for the playscape.
  - A. Clingan discussed the conceptual plans provided in the board packets.
    1. Clingan advised the Board that FMCC helped fund the conceptual plans.
    2. Clingan also stated that he has a meeting with Ashley Utt, Pathways RCD. She will tour here and several other areas. Chris said that Utt is a grant writer who may be able to help MCCB with grants.

3. Dixon said that it was his understanding that how an area/property was purchased was how it was determined what could be done with, how that area could be used, or what types of items could be put on the area. Dixon then asked if, according to how Caldwell Park was acquired, could a playscape be placed on that area. Clingan advised he did not believe this was an issue, but he would research Dixon's concern.
4. Clingan said that he is working with Tom Flaherty, Director of Economic Development, Amal Eltahir, Oskaloosa City Manager, and Iowa State University on a comprehensive plan for the city and county areas. Partnering with these entities could potentially increase the ability to procure grant funding and help with cost share amounts required for said grants.
5. Peterson asked if the Mahaska County Recreation Foundation (MCRF) was a part of this group and encouraged Clingan to include them in this partnership. Peterson added that she does sit on the MCRF board.

The Eveland Access Cabins were discussed.

- I. Wedgewood updated the Board regarding the proposed renovations for Phase 1 for the cabins.
  - A. Wedgewood described in detail the recommended furniture and layouts for the bedrooms, kitchen, living room, bathroom, and accessories such as window treatments and rugs. Wedgewood also stated that the windows in both cabins need replaced. Discussion ensued.
  - B. Peterson commented that there are rugs that have a backing that stays adhered to the floor, however you can lift the actual rug and wash it and then place it back down on the backing.
  - C. Dixon mentioned Denny Doud as a contact for replacing windows and Peterson suggested purchasing windows through Falvey Lumber.
  - D. Dixon asked Clingan to contact the insurance company regarding the use of bunkbeds in the cabins.
  - E. Wedgewood discussed placing a coin operated stackable washer and dryer in each cabin. Jager and Dixon advised against the coin operated units stating they continually needed fixed but commercial units would be acceptable.
  - F. Clingan informed the Board that after talking with Ashley Utt and Laura, this project is on hold while he investigates if the cabin project could be used as the cost share for grants for the campground project and/or other projects.

Public Safety was discussed.

- I. Clingan discussed the Eveland Access Campgrounds.
  - A. Clingan stated that the campgrounds opened April 21, 2023.
  - B. Clingan informed the Board that Brooke Sells is the campground host and will be staying at the campgrounds maintaining the shower house, pit toilet, and completing other duties around the campgrounds as they arise. Clingan said she is enjoying the host position and making the campsite her own.
- II. Clingan told the Board that Darin Hite, Mahaska County IT, created an electronic logbook/spreadsheet, updating the registration process.

- A. Clingan stated that all staff will be able to access the logbook to determine the availability of campsites.
  - B. Clingan added that the logbook/spreadsheet collects information such as the number of campers if they have included this on their envelope, average length of stay, and calculates the money by month, and is a comprehensive log of the campgrounds.
  - C. Clingan also said that the logbook can be used for record keeping, tracking campground usage and revenue.
- III. Fox asked if MCCB has an emergency plan in place in case of flooding, fire, and/or inclement weather. Clingan answered that he would check.
- IV. Peterson recommended adding any emergency plan to the Stewardship booklet. Clingan said he would contact Jamey Robinson, Emergency Management, for help with this plan.
- V. Clingan reviewed issues and concerns pertaining to public safety.
- A. Clingan advised the Board that there was an incident at Caldwell Park that involved underage drinking and an OWI investigation.
  - B. Clingan told the Board that MCCB assisted the Mahaska County Sheriff's Office with a suicidal individual. Clingan presented the note of appreciation from Russ Van Renterghem, Mahaska County Sheriff.
  - C. Clingan went on to inform the Board that in the month of April the Park Rangers had twelve (12) calls for service that were routine in nature.

Board President VanWeelden introduced KayLynn Sieber, ELC Attendant.

- I. Discussion with Sieber ensued.

NCCC Update was addressed.

- I. Clingan advised the Board that he has completed and submitted the Concept Form. Clingan said that he has been in communication with J.J. Trotta, the NCCC coordinator for our area and has gathered insight from him on how to proceed.
  - A. Clingan stated that the Concept Form was the first step. After they review the Concept Form, if they like the project, they will have MCCB fill out a detailed application.

Natural Resources was discussed.

- I. Clingan addressed purchasing seed for the Vos Addition.
  - A. Clingan reminded the Board that last year restoration of the Vos Addition bottomland started. Clearing willow thickets and replanting the addition for wildlife habitat was the goal.
    - 1. Clingan recommended planting a heavy mix of switch grass to compete with the established canary grass to improve the habitat. A seed mixture of Forbes would be used on the dryer slopes where that type of mixture would flourish.
    - 2. The total cost of this project for the thirty-eight (38) acres is approximately \$4,080.00.
    - 3. Dixon asked if Clingan was talking about the southern side by the river. Clingan stated he was, and he advised Dixon that the switch grass species is well adapted to tolerate the water and the seed mixture with the Forbes is well suited to the higher portions of the southern side that are out of the dampest areas.
    - 4. Jager made a motion to proceed with this project as presented. Dixon seconded the motion, and the motion was approved unanimously.
  - B. Clingan addressed custom mowing and spraying.

1. Clingan advised the Board that to maintain a new prairie, it needs to be mowed. Clingan went on to say there are fifty-one (51) acres on the Vos Addition that should be mowed at least twice a year and another thirteen (13) to fifteen (15) acres at Caldwell Park.
2. Clingan said a prescribed burn was completed at the North Skunk Wildlife Area, but this area also has willows and cottonwoods that need removed.
  - i. Clingan said he talked with Steve Woodruff, Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR). Woodruff said the IDNR had a similar problem with willows and cottonwoods in one of their areas, and they used a drone to do an aerial spray to kill the trees. They left them and let them fall to eventually burn up in the next prescribed burn.
3. Clingan stated that the approximate cost to mow the Vos Addition and the areas at Caldwell Park would be approximately \$2,550.00 and the aerial spraying of North Skunk Wildlife Area would likely exceed \$1,500.00, but Clingan did not have a precise estimate for the aerial spraying at this time.
4. Clingan recommended custom mowing and completing and aerial spraying of the above-mentioned areas.
5. Jager made a motion to approve the custom mowing. Dixon seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.
6. The Board requested a precise estimate for the aerial spraying unless the estimate is below Clingan's purchase authority of \$1,500.00.

The ICCS Membership Renewal was presented.

- I. Clingan said that he received the renewal membership request from ICCS.
  - A. Clingan recommends renewing the ICCS membership at the cost of \$2,000.00.
  - B. Discussion ensued.
  - C. Fox made a motion to renew the ICCS membership at said cost. Peterson seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

The Externship Update was discussed.

- I. Clingan notified the Board that MCCB has acquired a second extern.
  - A. Clingan told the Board name of the extern is Nicole Craig and she will start in June. Craig is an agriculture teacher from Tri-County.
  - B. Clingan said that Craig will work on the sand prairie at the Eddyville Dunes Sand Prairie.
  - C. Clingan stated that his plans are for Craig to work the six (6) weeks she is allocated to MCCB at the Eddyville Dunes and Sand Prairie and then if the NCCC application is approved, the NCCC participants will work another six (6) weeks at this area.
  - D. Clingan stated he would like talk to a scientist or someone familiar with sand prairies.
  - E. Jager recommended moving the dirt and creating huge piles, so the dirt sloughs off during the year.

The Volunteer Update was addressed.

- I. Clingan told the Board that DeCook has had several people contact her interested in serving as a Volunteer. Discussion ensued.
  - A. Clingan stated volunteers have been assisting with DeCook's field trips.

- B. Clingan said there was ELC Host training. They were shown how to unlock the doors. They have forms to keep track of visitors because they will not have computer access for this. Clingan advised it would cost \$200.00 for each individual volunteer to have access to their own account.
- C. Clingan advised DeCook has been working on designing a logo on the Cricut so each volunteer has a t-shirt/polo designating them as an ELC Host, Attendant, and/or volunteer for clarity and uniformity.
  - 1. Dixon asked if vests could be used by the ELC Host or Attendant. He said that MCCB could keep the vests available and hand them out as needed and at the end of the shift they would be handed back in.
  - 2. Peterson commented that she wears a vest when volunteering at the hospital. It is embroidered with the hospital logo, and they are laundered and kept at the hospital.
  - 3. Discussion ensued.

Setting the May Board meeting was addressed.

- I. The June Board meeting is currently set for June 1, 2023.
- II. After discussion the Board agreed to keep the meeting set for said date and will set a special meeting at that time, if it is needed.

In Other Business:

- I. Fox stated that it appears everything is going well and the public is pleased the ELC is open more hours for access.
- II. Peterson said General Tommy Franks coming to town for graduation. He is on the Board of Trustees for William Penn. She would like to bring Jeannie and Joe Crookham and General Franks to the ELC on May 14 for a tour in the afternoon. Peterson thought it would be beneficial for board members to attend and host. Discussion ensued.
- III. Dixon addressed several items.
  - A. Dixon stated that FMCC advised the Stewards at Russell Wildlife Area (RWA) were happy with the response to the suggestions they submitted to fill some holes at RWA. They were pleased it was done in a timely manner.
  - B. Dixon then advised that if the sheriff's office needs to use our area for a bomb, he supports this. Dixon explained, there was a director at Ringgold County. The sheriff in Ringgold County had a bomb they needed to hold in a safe area until the bomb squad could take care of it, and the director would not let them on the property

Fox made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Jager seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 8:43 p.m.

Chairman \_\_\_\_\_

Secretary \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_