

The Mahaska County Conservation Board (MCCB) held its regular monthly meeting on Monday, October 16, 2023, at the Environmental Learning Center (ELC) at Caldwell Park. Board Chair Steve Dixon called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Also present at the meeting were Board Members Curt Jager, Linda Fox, and Jennifer Peterson. Board Member Chuck Webb was absent. The members of the staff present were Director Chris Clingan and Administrative Assistant Dorothy Wedgewood. Present from the public was Rodney Anderson, President of Friends of Mahaska County Conservation.

Board Chair Dixon asked if there were any changes to the agenda. Clingan stated that 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. Fox made a motion to approve the Minutes of the September 18, 2023, regular board meeting as presented. Peterson seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

The Expenditures were reviewed.

- I. Clingan discussed several items on the expenditures listing.
 - A. Jager asked for an explanation on the lawnmower repair regarding lawnmower heads. Clingan answered that this should be listed as weed-eater heads.
- II. Jager made a motion to approve the expenditures as presented. Peterson seconded this motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Caldwell Park was addressed.

- I. ELC
 - A. Clingan discussed the grants and contributions for the playscape.
 1. Clingan stated that MCCB has received an additional grant in the amount of \$20,000.00 through Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA). This grant money will go toward the playscape.
 2. Clingan said that he talked with Rodney Anderson, President FMCC, and Anderson indicated that FMCC received \$3,555.00 from Cargill that will go towards the playscape. The \$3,555.00 combined with the approximately \$1,200.00 from the Willie Van Weelden memorial money is an additional \$4,700.00. Clingan advised that with the various sources of monies, at this point, MCCB now has approximately \$51,700.00 of the \$500,000.00 needed for the playscape.
 3. Clingan also advised that he will be applying for the George Daily grant and the Strengthening Communities Through the Iowa Arts grant. The Strengthening Communities Through the Iowa Arts grant is a \$10,000.00 grant.
 4. Peterson asked how much cost-share money MCCB needs to have in place to start the playscape project. Clingan advised Phase I of the playscape they would need \$250,000.00 to \$300,000.00 to start.
 5. Discussion ensued.

The Public Safety item was addressed.

- I. Clingan gave an update on Eveland Access Campgrounds.
 - A. Clingan stated that campground revenue is down (the boat ramp is completely exposed). Clingan informed the Board that he believes this is due to the low level of the river hindering fishing, boating, canoeing, kayaking, etc. Jager stated that the economy is affecting camping also.
 - B. Dixon asked if any repairs could be done on the boat ramp while it is out of the water. Clingan indicated that he had not noticed anything that needed to be done to the boat ramp, but he would investigate this matter further.
 - C. Fox asked what the camping revenue is compared to last year. Clingan did not have the numbers in front of him but would check on this.
- II. Clingan addressed the Issues and Concerns.
 - A. Clingan stated that there has been progress with the issue the Board discussed in closed session at the August 2023 board meeting.
 - B. Clingan also talked about arrests, citations, etc.

The Swanson Property was discussed.

- I. Clingan notified the Board that the lease with Roger Rodwell for the Swanson property terminates in March of 2024.
 - A. Clingan recommended the Board not renew the rental agreement but instead plant this area in native prairie. Clingan went on to discuss the benefits of planting the area in native prairie and how prairie planted in the fall grows better than planting in the spring.
 1. Clingan stated that the seed would cost approximately \$5,000.00 which could be covered by REAP. Clingan said that he talked with Pheasants Forever. He has not heard back yet, but they may be interested in paying for all or part of the seed.
 2. Jager asked about the seed mix. Clingan told the Board he would like to use a higher mix (quail mix) for quality.
 3. Clingan made a recommendation to move forward, purchasing the seed and planting this area in prairie this fall. Jager made a motion to accept Clingan's recommendation to purchase the seed for the Swanson property up to \$5,000.00 and to plant this area in native prairie. Fox seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.
 4. Clingan mentioned that Jason Ryan talked with Rodwell about planting this area into prairie this fall instead of waiting until spring and Rodwell was not opposed to the idea.
 - B. Clingan discussed Rodwell and the use of the outbuildings.
 1. Clingan added that Rodwell did ask if he could continue to rent/use the outbuilding to store some of his equipment.
 2. Clingan stated he talked with the park rangers about keeping some of MCCB's equipment in the outbuilding. There are several pieces of equipment that sit out in the elements all year long that would benefit from being housed in the outbuilding.
 3. Jager asked what equipment could be stored. Clingan suggested the corn planter, a mini excavator attachment for the skid steer, and disc would be some of the equipment that could be stored.
 4. Clingan advised his one concern with the outbuilding is that the south side of the building is completely open, and the building sits in the middle of nowhere. Peterson asked about securing the equipment stored, possibly using a trail camera. Clingan said the open side could be gated and chained and padlocked.
 5. Discussion ensued, regarding but not limited to the lease agreement with Rodwell regarding use of the building, equipment to be stored, cost savings, and the possibilities of using the building at the Eddyville Dunes and Sand Prairie to house equipment.
 6. Clingan recommended using the outbuilding instead of renting.

Setting the November Board Meeting.

- I. The Board revisited the meeting date and time for future board meetings.
 - A. The Board talked about the day of the week and the time of the meeting.
 - B. Discussion ensued.
 - C. The Board set the November board meeting for the third Monday in November, November 20, 2023, at 6:00 p.m. The Board agreed the meeting would remain scheduled for November 20, 2023, at 6:00 p.m.

In Other Business:

- I. Clingan addressed a couple items.
 - A. Clingan discussed the various training opportunities, ICCS Fall Conference, Leadership Summit, and CCPOA.
 1. Clingan told the Board that he enjoyed the fall conference and thought it was well planned and well worth attending.

- i. Clingan stated it was a chance to see what other counties were doing and not just classroom speakers.
 - ii. Clingan talked about Pottawattamie County and how holistically and sustainably this county managed their areas. They mill their own boards. Picnic tables were made of wood harvested from their lands as well as their shelters. They heat their nature center with wood.
 - iii. Discussion ensued.
2. Clingan reviewed his time at the Leadership Summit. He said that participants took an assessment on the first day. The assessment was like a personality test for leadership skills, indicating strengths and weaknesses in leadership. Then the next day those who had been directors for a while talked with and gave advice to the new directors. They shared their experience with the board of supervisors, REAP, grants, training for new directors, etc.
 3. Clingan advised the Board that he and the park rangers attended CCPOA for their yearly conference and training. They provide firearm training. This year Clingan was unique in that each person went through a simulator that ran different scenarios that participants had to respond to. Clingan also shared that one of the speakers was Ed Morales, former FBI agent that was in the shootout in Miami in 1986.
- B. Clingan advised the Board that Youth Outdoor Field Day was a success. There were approximately 200 people that enjoyed the activities.
 - C. Clingan also informed the Board that the Halloween Bash is this weekend at the Eveland Access campgrounds.
 - D. Clingan apprised the Board of a discussion he had with Gary Dannel. Dannel has been commercially cutting willows out of Rose Hill Marsh to make furniture for resale on a special use permit granted by MCCB.
 1. Clingan told the Board that MCCB should have a commercial harvesting policy in place. Clingan also reiterated Andrew Ritland's, Mahaska County Attorney, advise that he gave regarding the firewood sales, any policy would need to be a neutral policy.
 2. Clingan said, regarding the firewood policy, that MCCB could put out bids for the next campground and part of the job duties could include firewood sales, so many hours spent at the campgrounds, cleaning shower house and pit toilets, etc.
 3. Clingan stated Polk County Conservation has a commercial harvesting policy in place that states there is to be no commercial harvesting on Polk County properties.
 4. Clingan recommended writing a policy similar to Polk County's policy stating that MCCB does not allow commercial harvesting.
 5. Discussion ensued.
 6. Clingan also advised he will be working on getting all policies updated and in one location for easy access.
 - E. Clingan asked Anderson about FMCC providing funds for a twelve-foot Christmas tree for the ELC.
- II. Rodney Anderson, FMCC President, discussed a couple items.
 - A. Anderson spoke about the 3,555.00 match from Cargill.
 - B. Anderson notified the Board that the funds FMCC is collecting in the donation box at the ELC will be going toward animal supplies for DeCook's animal displays.
 - C. Anderson also talked about the Walmart grants. They are on hold at this time, but he will look into them again next spring.
 - D. Anderson advised the Board that he and Clingan continue to work together on grants.
 - III. Jager said that he has come across several deer that have died from Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease.
 - IV. Fox said she enjoyed the fall conference and thanked Steve Dixon for his service on the ICCS board.

- V. Peterson asked about creating mountain bike trails and having a weekend Christmas celebration for the public out at the cabins. Jager mentioned that some areas cannot have bike trails because of how they were acquired. MCCB also needs to consider erosion created by bike trails. However, Evertru was donated so there would be no restrictions on this area.
 - A. Discussion ensued.
- VI. Dixon mentioned a couple things.
 - A. Dixon asked about the number of volunteers for the Halloween Bash.
 - B. Dixon asked about decorating the mammoth for Christmas.
 - C. Dixon talked about his time serving on the ICCS board and the improvements to county conservation programs.

Jager made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Peterson seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

Chairman _____ Secretary _____

Date _____ Date _____