

The Mahaska County Conservation Board (MCCB) held its regular monthly meeting on Monday, September 18, 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, Jennifer Peterson, and Chuck Webb. The members of the staff present were Director Chris Clingan, Naturalist Laura DeCook and Administrative Assistant Dorothy Wedgewood. Present from the public were Bonnie VanWeelden, Valerie Terpstra, Melissa Bowen, Charlie Bowen, Amelia Bowen, Aubrey Bowen, Amara Bowen, Declan Bowen, Brendan Terpstra, Alexa Slotten, Breanna Slotten, Orville Slotten, Taylor Terpstra, Abby Terpstra, Tabitha Terpstra, and Boaz Terpstra.

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.

Board Chair Dixon introduced Chuck Webb, the newest member of the Mahaska County Conservation Board.

The Minutes were discussed.

- I. Jager stated that under Item XII Public Safety, b. Issues and Concerns (Closed Session) there was no indication of a second to the original motion to go into closed session and there was no roll call taken to enter into closed session. Peterson made a motion to approve the Minutes of the August 3, 2023, regular board meeting as amended. Jager seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

The Expenditures were reviewed.

- I. Clingan discussed several items on the expenditures listing.
 - A. Clingan addressed the claim from Wymore Automotive in the amount of \$1,581.18 for the repairs of the 2011 Chevrolet Silverado. Clingan apologized for not calling the Board about the repairs beforehand.
 - B. Jager asked about the repairs to the John Deere mower.
 1. Clingan said that staff has been mowing the Eddyville Dunes Sand Prairie where the previous year the Sumac and Black Locust was cleared. While mowing, staff hit the stumps of these trees and in doing so, the hitch broke, the mower blades/plates were bent at a 90-degree angle throwing the mower off balance, and damage to the front of the skid.
 2. Clingan added that Dixon saved MCCB about \$300.00. He came in and completed some repairs on the mower.
 3. These places have been marked and this fall/winter the machine will be taken out to grind the stumps down to avoid this problem in the future.
- II. Jager made a motion to approve the expenditures as presented. Fox seconded this motion. The motion carried unanimously.

The Henry W. (Willie) VanWeelden Commemorative Ceremony was addressed.

- I. Board Chair Dixon made introductions of the board members and staff for the family of Willie VanWeelden.
- II. Director Clingan expressed to the family his gratitude for coming tonight to honor Willie VanWeelden for his work including but not limited to, being instrumental in obtaining the funding for the Environmental Learning Center, his work with the Mahaska County Conservation Board, and his efforts as a Board of Supervisor for Mahaska County.

- III. Board Chair Dixon spoke to the family of Willie VanWeelden, sharing VanWeelden's contributions to Mahaska County Conservation.
- IV. Webb added that VanWeelden was a proponent of the Southeast Iowa Detention project and that project went through today.
- V. Melissa Bowen, VanWeelden's daughter, shared that VanWeelden was very proud of the ELC and the Caldwell Park area.
- VI. Fox stated that VanWeelden loved bringing his grandchildren to Youth Outdoor Field Day (YOFD).
- VII. Dixon and Clingan presented the family with an award in honor of VanWeelden and in appreciation for all his work. Clingan read the inscription on the award. Pictures were taken.

Caldwell Park was addressed.

I. ELC

- A. Clingan stated that the Upland Bird Display (Bill Benson Memorial) designed by Pheasants Forever has been completed and the glass to cover the display is done and needs to be picked up. Please thank Jeff VanDerBeek the next time you see him.
 - 1. Clingan would like to give Mahaska County Pheasants Forever credit for their work on this display. Clingan also recommended issuing a press release/article on Pheasants Forever to highlight all the things they have been doing for MCCB.
- B. Oskaloosa Glass took measurements for the glass for the bobcat and albino deer displays.
 - 1. The FMCC is having their monthly meeting and will be voting on whether to pay for the cost of the glass for both displays.
- C. Clingan discussed the playscape.
 - 1. Clingan informed the Board that MCCB has been selected as the recipient of the McQuiston Trust grant in the amount of \$27,100.00 to go towards the playscape project. A portion of this grant (\$10,000.00) can be used as cost share monies toward the Rural Enrichment grant. Ashley Utte with Pathfinders helped with the Rural Enrichment grant.
 - 2. Clingan added that the George Daily Trust grant is due sometime in November. Most of the board members of the George Daily Trust have seen the plans for the playscape and are supportive of this project.
 - 3. Clingan advised that if MCCB also received the Community Attraction Tourism grant (CAT), the playscape could become a reality sooner rather than later. The CAT grant requires a significant match.
 - 4. Jager asked when the project could start. Clingan answered that if MCCB was awarded the George Daily Trust grant, Phase I of the playscape project, which is a little over half the project, could start as soon as April 2024.

The Promotional Video/Tourism Grant Update was discussed.

- I. Clingan said that the Promotional Tourism grant is worth \$12,500.00 and MCCB needs to have 25% or \$2,500.00 of cost share monies to be considered for this grant. As of today MCCB has exceeded the cost share requirement.
- II. Clingan went on to say that he and DeCook had been working to get donations to go towards this project. To date they have partnered with Clow Valve, FMCC, MCG, William

Penn University and Musco. There are a few partners pending and individuals that have expressed interest in this project. Clingan said that DeCook is scheduled to talk with 2 more potential donors.

- A. Clingan informed the Board he will be working on this grant project next week. The grant deadline is September 29, 2023.
- B. Clingan stated he has a meeting set with Max Leonida, William Penn University, to work on ideas and concepts for the promotional video.
 1. Clingan told the Board that Leonida has suggested targeting young families that may not be able to afford a big vacation such as Disney parks and showcasing what Mahaska County has to offer for recreation. The video will highlight camping, fishing, exploring areas, etc., viewed through the eyes of a small child.
 2. Clingan added that the film will be five to six minutes long but shot in a way that MCCB can take 30 second bites of the film for advertising a more specific activities.
 3. Clingan said that the video would be filmed mid-June to July to optimize the prairie field and the beauty of the areas during prime blossoming.
 4. Clingan explained that they have extensive studies of the areas that visitors are traveling from and would like to target those locations and the surrounding areas. Discussion ensued.
 5. Clingan indicated that the video would end with a quote from John Lacey.

The District Forestry Shared Room/Space was discussed.

- I. Clingan informed the Board that he met with Bryan Hellner, District Forestry Supervisor. Hellner told Clingan he is looking at several areas and is not sure where they are going to end up.
- II. Clingan advised Hellner that the Board requested a contract/agreement and Hellner was not opposed to this request.
- III. Clingan stated he has not heard back from Hellner since their meeting.

The Public Safety item was addressed.

- I. Clingan gave an update on Eveland Access Campgrounds.
 - A. Clingan stated that the camping revenue was up \$2,000.00 from the month July.
 - B. Clingan advised the Board that in conversation with Andrew Ritland, Mahaska County Attorney, Ritland told him the Board needs to have a neutral policy regarding selling firewood. If the Board allows Brooke Sells to sell firewood, then KC Firewood should be allowed to sell firewood.
 - C. Dixon stated MCCB needs to have a policy for wood sales.
 - D. The Board discussed putting firewood sales out for bid and receiving a portion of the wood sales from the vendor with the highest bid.
 - E. Dixon asked if a kiosk could be placed at the campgrounds to post services.
- 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.

Setting the October Board Meeting – Date/Time Discussion.

- 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 October board meeting for the third Monday, October 16, 2023, at 6:00 p.m.
- D. Jager made a motion to set board meetings for the third Monday of the month at 6:00 p.m. Webb seconded this motion, and the motion was approved unanimously.

In Other Business:

- I. Clingan addressed a couple items.
 - A. Clingan informed the Board that MCCB that he was contacted by NCCC. MCCB was not selected because there were more projects than people to fill the projects.
 - 1. Jager asked if MCCB were to apply again, would we be given preference points. Clingan said that he was not sure, but he will talk with J.J. Trotta, the coordinator.
 - 2. Discussion ensued.
 - B. Clingan advised the Board that the 5K Mammoth Run scheduled for October 14, 2023, will probably not happen.
 - C. Clingan stated there will be a disc golf tournament held at Caldwell Park on October 7, 2023.
 - D. Clingan apprised the Board that the City of Oskaloosa signed the comprehensive plan and there is a tour of areas scheduled for this Saturday, September 23, 2023, with Iowa State University.
 - 1. Clingan said that the representatives from Iowa State University were interested in visiting MCCB areas, City of Oskaloosa areas and Vennard College and the Lacey Complex.
 - 2. Clingan advised that Joe Crookham intends to take him on a tour of Vennard College.
 - 3. Peterson told the Board that Crookham wants to add camping and dormitories at the Lacey Complex sight for the ball players during tournaments.
 - 4. Discussion ensued.
 - E. Clingan talked with the Board about the REAP meeting on September 25, 2023. Clingan then asked about a REAP committee for this district.
- II. DeCook discussed a couple items.
 - A. DeCook talked about Youth Outdoor Field Day (YOFD). YOFD is set for Saturday, September 30, 2023.
 - 1. The Board asked how many people have registered. DeCook answered she has approximately 180 people signed up.
 - 2. Fox asked if DeCook needed more volunteers.
 - 3. Dixon asked how many stations DeCook would have set up. DeCook answered she has eleven (11) or twelve (12) stations.
 - B. DeCook told the Board about the program on Cherokee leaf pounding.
 - C. DeCook is highlighting MCCB areas on the Steve Shettler program social media page.
- III. Fox discussed fall conference and whether to take a gift basket or not. She stated it could be used for the Halloween Bash if it was not needed at fall conference.

- IV. Peterson asked about creating mountain bike trails. Jager stated that MCCB would have to be careful because this can cause erosion and there are specific ways to maintain bike trails.
- V. Webb said that, in speaking with Tom Flaherty, there has been approximately 160 million dollars in business industry development.
- VI. Jager stated he has been seeing lots of wildlife, however, he has not seen any quail.
- VII. Dixon mentioned a couple things.
 - A. Dixon talked about the campgrounds located east and south of the ELC. Discussion ensued.
 - B. Dixon asked if the White Oak boat ramp had been cleaned. Clingan advised that VanRenterghem had cleaned the Rose Hill boat ramp but was not sure about White Oak.
 - C. Dixon asked if the shooting range at the Russell Wildlife had been cleaned. Clingan answered that field staff has been working on it to prepare it for YOFD. DeCook mentioned that the Drummond's have volunteered to keep that area clean.
 - D. Dixon asked about dove plots and dove hunting. Clingan said that he talked with Jeff VanDerBeek about dove plots. Discussion ensued.
 - E. Dixon said that he is working on the brackets for the eagle nest display.
 - F. Clingan asked Dixon if he had been contacted by either park ranger about welding a mower. Dixon stated he had not been contacted to date.

Jager made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Peterson seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 7:13 p.m.

Chairman _____

Secretary _____

Date _____

Date _____