

The Mahaska County Conservation Board (MCCB) held its regular monthly meeting on Monday, December 18, 2023, at the Environmental Learning Center (ELC) at Caldwell Park. Board Chair Steve Dixon called the meeting to order at 6:17 p.m. Also present at the meeting were Board Members Curt Jager, Linda Fox, and Chuck Webb. Board Member Jennifer Peterson was absent. The members of the staff present were Director Chris Clingan and Naturalist Laura DeCook. Present from the public were Rodney Anderson, President of Friends of Mahaska County Conservation (FMCC), Christine Jaennette, Cheyenne Reak, and Aubrey Brown with AmeriCorps.

Board Chair Dixon 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. Fox made a motion to approve the Minutes of the November 20, 2023, regular 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.
- II. Jager made a motion to approve the expenditures as presented. Fox seconded this motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Caldwell Park was addressed.

- I. ELC Playscape Update

A. Clingan discussed the George Daily Trust follow-up meeting.

1. Clingan stated that he met with Randy DeGeest regarding the George Daily Trust.

- i. Clingan said that DeGeest informed him that the George Daily Trust, as a general rule, does not provide the seed money for projects but can provide supplemental funding.
- ii. Clingan said that DeGeest requested a breakdown of the phases for the playscape project. Clingan told him that the project will be done in four phases.
- iii. Clingan told the Board that DeGeest would like letters of support from the community indicating their endorsement of the playscape project. This could include the general public, community groups, teachers etc.
- iv. Clingan advised the Board that he and DeCook have been working on other donation projects. One example for a project is posting the playscape plans and attaching a QR code so the public could donate to the project through said QR code. Other ideas were discussed. Anderson added that the funds raised from the annual 5K run will contribute towards the playscape.
- v. Clingan advised the Board the Trustees for the George Daily Trust will meet again in February.

2. Clingan informed the Board that Channing Rusk would be at the ELC tomorrow to take photographs of the check presentation of the monies received from the McQuiston Trust. He encouraged the Board to come and participate.
3. Clingan told the Board that Anderson received an email that FMCC was awarded \$97,000.00 for the Strengthening Communities Grant that was applied to for grant monies for the playscape.
4. Webb asked about the cost to maintain the playscape. Clingan said that he would like to utilize the AmeriCorps group and possibly Master Gardeners to help with the upkeep and maintenance of the playscape. He also added that some of the general maintenance would include simply mowing the area.
5. Discussion ensued.

The AmeriCorps Opportunity item was addressed.

- I. Clingan discussed several items with AmeriCorps.

- A. Clingan stated that the current advisor for AmeriCorps, Debbie Stevens, is stepping down from this position and would like Clingan to take over this position.
 1. Clingan advised the Board that he would like to use AmeriCorps for beautification of the MCCB areas, entrances to the areas, the cabins, White Oak entrances, and the ELC.
 - i. Under his leadership Clingan would like to restructure the program and he discussed ways he would like to accomplish this.
 - ii. Clingan said there would be a total of seven to nine people assigned to AmeriCorps, including the three crew leaders. Clingan went on to explain that the crew leaders work eleven months of the year and summer help works three months of the year.
 2. Clingan stated that MCCB's share of the partnership is \$2,500.00.
- B. Clingan introduced AmeriCorps Crew Leaders Christine Jaennette, Cheyenne Reak, and Aubrey Brown.
 1. Jaennette, Reak, and Brown talked about the different aspects of AmeriCorps such as but not limited to projects, goals, partnerships, and number of workers.
 - i. The AmeriCorps Crew Leaders discussed their work with Land and Water Stewardship and environmental education.
 - ii. The leaders also spoke about the statewide branches and 26 host sites.
- C. Clingan recommended the Board approve the \$2,500.00 cost for the partnership and allow him to take over the advisor position for Debbie Stevens.
 1. Fox asked Clingan if he felt he had time to dedicate to this endeavor. Clingan answered with a yes.
 2. Jager made a motion to approve Clingan's recommendation. Webb seconded this motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Park Planning was discussed.

- I. Clingan notified the Board that he has sent out dates for the first public meeting and it will be held sometime in January with two additional public meetings to follow.
- II. Clingan told the Board that the University of Iowa Engineering Program can create schematic plans at a cost of \$1,000.00 per project with a total cost of \$2,000.00.
 - A. Clingan stated he would like to have the program create plans for improvements at White Oak and for water trail improvements.
 1. White Oak plans could include but not be limited to paved roads, new innovative pavilions, evaluation of the existing lake and pond system, pedestrian bridges, etc.
 2. Water trail improvements could include but not be limited to sitework, boat launches, parking areas, camping sites, road access and other supporting infrastructure.
 - B. Clingan recommended the Board approve the \$2,000.00 expenditure to proceed ahead with detailed schematic plans for these projects. Fox made a motion to approve the recommendation as presented. Jager seconded the motion, and the motion was approved unanimously.

The Cabin Donation Request was addressed.

- I. Clingan advised that MCCB received a cabin donation request for the Oskaloosa Christian School.
 - A. The Board discussed how many cabin donations are given per year and what year this donation would be in. Wedgewood stated the Board has granted five cabin donations per calendar year and this donation request is for calendar year 2024.
 - B. Fox made a motion to approve the cabin donation request from the Oskaloosa Christian School. Webb seconded this motion, and the motion was carried unanimously.

The Cabin Claim Update was given.

- I. Clingan updated the Board regarding the renter's fall at the cabins over the Thanksgiving holiday. He informed the Board that it was submitted to the insurance company, and they will make any decisions on how to proceed. Discussion ensued.

The Board Member Appointment Recommendation/Officer Rotation was discussed.

- I. Jager made a motion to recommend to the Mahaska County Board of Supervisors (MCBOS) reappointment of Chuck Webb to the Mahaska County Conservation Board. Fox seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
- II. Jager asked that the officer rotation remain on the agenda for the January 15, 2024, monthly meeting. Setting the December Board Meeting was addressed.

- I. The Board decided to leave the meeting date set at January 15, 2024.

In Other Business:

- I. Clingan addressed a couple items.
 - A. Clingan discussed the district meeting held in VanBuren County.
 - 1. Clingan said that he talked with Adam Shirley< ICCS regarding placing ground into CRP.
 - 2. Jager said to check with the NRCS office because if the ground has not been cropped it may not qualify for CRP.
 - 3. Discussion ensued.
 - II. Webb discussed purchasing pork butts for Summerfest.
 - III. DeCook talked about the wolf display.
 - IV. Wedgewood told the Board that in discussion with Adam Shirley, ICCS she found that as long as the board minutes have been approved by the Board, any board member may sign them if any of the officers are missing.
 - V. Jager praised the naturalists that the board has hired for Mahaska County Conservation. He also said that the deer population in Wapello County is down 50% due to the EHD.
 - VI. Dixon addressed a couple items.
 - A. Dixon said that the new mammoth beer is available from No Coast Beer.
 - B. Dixon stated that there are pressed concrete beams in several areas around the county that could possibly be used for bridges.
 - C. Dixon reminded the Board that Clingan’s one year anniversary is next month, and he presented a new executive director evaluation form. Jager asked for this to be placed on the agenda for January.
 - VII. The Board discussed the budget and budget committee meeting. Clingan stated that the Salary Compensation Committee recommended a three percent (3%) increase for employees.

Fox made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Webb seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 7:48 p.m.

Chairman _____

Secretary _____

Date _____

Date _____