



Louisa County Conservation Board – Regular Meeting Minutes

The Louisa County Conservation Board met in regular session on Monday, September 9, 2024 at 3:00 pm at the Louisa County Complex

Board Present: Josh Hardin, Joellen Schantz, and Shawn Maine

Staff Present: Jacob Ewart, Lana Artz-McComb, Tanner Hollingsworth

Public Present: Jim Rudisill, David Roberts, John Murphy, Troy House

Meeting Called to Order: at 3:14 pm by Maine

- 1. Agenda Approval:** Hardin motioned to approve the agenda re-ordered to move Agenda Item 9 to after Agenda Item 2 to honor the time of the public present wishing to discuss the HNT land sales, Schantz seconded, Motion passed all ayes
- 2. Audience Consideration:** Rudisill presented the Board with information on a recent connection of portions of the High Trestle Trail and Racoon River Valley Trail in Central Iowa. Presented as a reminder of things being done and trails being completed even after a long process.

Roberts, Murphy, and House are all landowners interested in purchasing the sections of the HNT adjacent to their properties. Roberts mentioned that Amy Kirk wanted to attend but wasn't able. Ewart said that Kirk came to the office that morning to express her interest as well.

9. Hoover Nature Trail Land Sales Update: Ewart reported that he spoke with Adam Parsons about the process. LCCB can recommend sale of the land to the County Supervisors. They will handle the hearings and sale of the land. Maine clarified that LCCB has already voted on this at the August meeting. LCCB can request specific language like first right of refusal to adjacent landowners. Schantz remembers that the Board discussed the price being the same as when the southern portions were sold. Artz-McComb looked through minutes from FY22/FY23 when the southern portions were sold. Discussion and review of the minutes from the previous HNT sales. Ewart is to calculate the dollar amount/acre referencing the price offered before and let landowners know.

Process will be first right of refusal to the adjacent landowners and then sealed bid with a set minimum price per acre. The Landowners asked about the zoning change from commercial to residential and other questions that need to be directed to the Assessor's Office. Landowners will be kept up to date on the process and the recommendation will go to the Supervisors at the meeting on September 17, 2024 during Ewart's monthly report.

- 3. Consent Agenda:** Hardin asked Ewart a question about backdating budget items paid in FY25 that come out of the FY24 budget. Ewart reports meeting multiple times with the Auditor's office to ensure that the process was done correctly. Schantz requests that future board packets contain a copy of the detailed budget so that everyone knows where line items stand.

Schantz motioned to approve the consent agenda, Hardin seconded, Motion passed all ayes

- 4. Director update:** Sale of various surplus shop items discussed. Ewart has photos and descriptions and will get any more information from former Ops Supervisor Jeff Snyder. Hardin motioned to approve the sale of surplus



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items via sealed bid and advertise for 1 month online and in the newspaper. Schantz seconded the motion. Motion passed, all ayes

Sandy Creek LLC Update:

The owner is willing to pay us the original \$9,000 to hold the easement.

HOWEVER, they aren't willing to give us the first right of refusal, AND therefore we won't get access to the long term management agreement

If we don't hold the easement, someone will. We were just asked first

They are waiting on the Corps of Engineers to make some documentation. Could use the answer now, but definitely by February. Hardin asked Ewart for his gut instinct and Ewart reports "no". LCC has other areas to manage and the deal isn't as sweet as it was before. Ewart will contact them and let them know.

Chinkapin Bluffs Update

Water fountain – done (7,000 + 2000)

Overlook – done (4000)

Shelter – done (50,000)

Spark arrester – not done

Bathrooms painted, vented, and pumped – done (2600)

Tables - 6400

= 71,000 ish has been spent.

Vandalism occurred involving cutting into the ceiling and removing lights as well as abandoned property requiring Sheriff investigation. Security cameras are a necessity especially since so much money has been spent improving the area. Discussion of quotes on cameras from USCellular and possible donation to purchase the cameras. Request made by Harding and Schantz to include that the area is under surveillance on the MCP.com shelter reservation page and potentially on the kiosk by the parking lot.

Toolesboro Management update.

We are working toward getting another sprayer to be able to spray broadleaf herbicide to better control the growth on the mounds.

The large stump is getting made into a natural chair

There is a septic and propane tank underground next to all the roots

We have to wait for frozen ground to work on anything out there (rutting up yard)

Friend of Conservation Award – LCC staff recommends Tom Wahl because of the amount of volunteer work he provided surrounding the pawpaw project at Chinkapin Bluffs. Tom donated his time, expertise, equipment, and genetic stock to help teach Columbus High School students and LCC staff how to graft and maintain the pawpaw grove. The Board agrees that Tom Wahl will be presented with the Friend of Conservation Award at the Fall Picnic on October 7th.

5. Maintenance Report: Hollingsworth reported that both Snively campground and Flaming Prairie were both opened fully by Labor Day. Extensive work was done removing debris from the HNT/Chinkapin Bluffs trails. Work completed installing the new drinking fountain and water bottle filling station at Chinkapin Bluffs.

6. Environmental Education Update: Artz-McComb told the board that a rolling all of our website presence over to MCP.com is complete and eventually sunseting louisacountyconservation.org by the end of the year.

Louisacountyconservation.org will still be ours and take people to MCP.com. EE Record keeping is now paperless and migrated off of Access. Highlight – Noah Brown volunteering, scheduling with schools (seeing every prek-6th class at least twice). Working on MS and HS scheduling. Sarah is working on a fish habitat grant application for



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the VG pond. Lana is working on accessibility grants through WCRF and perhaps Carver. CFLC grant wrap up is happening now and we will be applying for EE project supplies and also for Iowa Habitat education. Working on the Interp Signage for Wilson Prairie. Meet with the SHSI at Toolesboro to discuss future state-funded projects and the completed Drake University project

7. Sandy Creek LLC update: See Director’s Report

8. Chinkapin Bluffs Shelter Reservation Fee Increase: See Director’s Report regarding improvements. So much renovation work has been completed that it seems appropriate to raise the shelter reservation fee. Most reservations involve at least 1 hour of cleanup (balloons, glitter, confetti, tape etc.) Refundable deposits are tricky with MCP.com and pursuing cleaning fees after reservations is difficult. Best solution is to raise the shelter reservation fee to cover cleanup costs and encourage the area to be treated respectfully. Schantz motions to raise the reservation fee to \$50 for the Chinkapin Bluffs Shelter. Hardin seconds. Motion passed, all ayes.

10. Annual Report Presentation: Board requests that Ewart hold off on the presentation. Instead, he should email copies of the annual report for them to review. They will bring any changes and approve the annual report on October 7th.

Additional Discussion: Ewart asked the Supervisors about maintenance (mowing, string trimming etc) at the County Complex, specifically about his lack of staff and time to complete it especially without an MOU or payment. The answer he was given was “we should talk about that” which he interpreted as a dead end. Ewart asked LCCB to support him in continuing this discussion with the Supervisors as the full entity of the Board. Schantz suggests to wait til after the election and put together a presentation with a plan/ideas for moving forward. Hardin agrees that the Board should wait til after the election to hopefully speak with Supervisors who care. Maine agrees that the current setup is not right and doesn’t make sense. Ewart also asks that the solar field discussion and management should remain in this discussion as well. The Board will revisit the issue in January in preparation for Spring.

Adjournment: Schantz motions to adjourn the meeting, Hardin seconded. Motion passed with all ayes. Meeting adjourned at 4:35 pm.

Next Regular Meeting: Monday, October 7, 2024 at 3:00 pm at Langwood Education Center followed by the Conservation Fall Picnic.

Chair

Secretary/Treasurer

Date Approved

Chair – Shawn Maine

Vice-chair – Joellen Schantz

Secretary/Treasurer – Elizabeth Kling

*Louisa County Bylaws regarding voting by the Chair/Acting Chair:

According to Article II, number 2.4 of the Louisa County Conservation Board Bylaws, “At all meetings that a full quorum is present, the board chair does not vote except to break a tie. In a three-member quorum, all persons present cast a vote.”