

December 14, 2022
Polk County Administration Bldg., Room 120
111 Court Ave., Des Moines, IA
5:30 PM – PCC Board Meeting

PROCEEDINGS OF THE POLK COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD

The Polk County Conservation Board met in person for regular session Wednesday, December 14, 2022. The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m.

- #22-1201 **Roll Call**
Members Present: **Lewis, Mollenhauer (Zoom), Crane, Altringer, Cataldo**
Members Absent:
- #22-1202 **Public Comments**
- #22-1203 **Shoreline Signals Presentation- Teva Dawson**
- #22-1204 **Public Hearing rejecting all bids after considering plans, specifications, form of contract, engineer's estimate, and bid for the construction of the Athene North Shore Recreation Area at Easter Lake Park.**
- #22-1205 **Financial Reports**
- #22-1206 **MOVED BY Altringer to approve the November 9, 2022 meeting minutes.**
Vote Yea: **Lewis, Mollenhauer (Zoom), Crane, Altringer, Cataldo**
Members Absent:

CONSENT AGENDA

- #22-1207 **Approving** bill list.
- #22-1208 **Approving** revisions and additions to the Employee Administrative Manual of the Polk County Conservation Board that was approved at the August 10, 2022 PCC Board Meeting. All changes in this manual will be effective January 1, 2023.
- #22-1209 **Approving** update to the Polk County Conservation Board's Bylaws.
- #22-1210 **Approving** the fee adjustment for the Jester Park Nature Center after-hours rental fee and the elimination of the senior discount and off-season campsite rates.
- #22-1211 **Approving** fee for service agreement with the Conservation Corps of Minnesota and Iowa (CCMI) in the amount of \$153,360 for the 2023 dedicated Polk County Conservation Crew.

- #22-1212 **Awarding** the bid for forestry mowing and follow up herbicide treatment within the Fourmile Creek Greenway to Four Seasons Conservation in a contracted amount of \$79,500.
- #22-1213 **Awarding** lowest contractor bid for wetland excavation at the Dykstra Parcel at Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt to Lahr Excavating in a maximum contracted amount of \$238,620.00 with a 5% contingency.

LET THE RECORD SHOW it was moved by Cataldo to approve the consent agenda.
Vote Yea: **Lewis, Cataldo, Mollenhauer (Zoom), Crane, Altringer**
Members Absent:

ACTION ITEMS

- #22-1214 **Public Hearing rejecting** all bids after considering plans, specifications, form of contract, engineer's estimate, and bid for the construction of the Athene North Shore Recreation Area at Easter Lake Park.

LET THE RECORD SHOW it was moved by Altringer to approve Action Item 22-1214.
Vote Yea: **Lewis, Mollenhauer (Zoom), Cataldo, Crane, Altringer**
Members Absent:

- #22-1215 **Approving** the amendment request from Shive-Hattery in the amount of \$183,120 for additional design, supplemental services, construction phase services, signage coordination, cost reduction modifications, and rebidding for the Athene North Shore Recreation Area project.

LET THE RECORD SHOW it was moved by Altringer to approve Action Item 22-1215.
Vote Yea: **Mollenhauer (Zoom), Cataldo, Crane, Altringer**
Vote No: **Lewis**
Members Absent:

- #22-1216 **Approving** the purchase and installation of a new playground at Thomas Mitchell Park, featuring ADA accessible features for a total cost not to exceed \$386,540 to Play-Pro Recreation.

LET THE RECORD SHOW it was moved by Altringer to approve Action Item 22-1216.
Vote Yea: **Lewis, Mollenhauer (Zoom), Cataldo, Crane, Altringer**
Members Absent:

- #22-1217 **Approving** Professional Service Agreement with Snyder and Associates for Design/Engineering Services for the Mountain Bike Park in the contract amount of \$106,500.

LET THE RECORD SHOW it was moved by Lewis to approve Action Item 22-1217.
Vote Yea: **Lewis, Mollenhauer (Zoom), Cataldo, Crane, Altringer**

Members Absent:

#22-1218 **Accepting** the land donation from the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation along NE 29th st. adjacent to the Chichaqua Valley Trail.

LET THE RECORD SHOW it was moved by **Altringer** to approve Action Item 22-1218.

Vote Yea: **Lewis, Mollenhauer (Zoom), Cataldo, Crane, Altringer**

Members Absent:

BOARD DISCUSSION

Director Remarks

North of Lauridsen Skatepark under the bridge by the dog park has terrible parking. We have been negotiating with the city of Des Moines for a long time to shift the dog park north to make room for a large parking lot, and the City of Des Moines is essentially giving us land to do so, but the deal is that we have to pay some of the costs to reestablish the dog park. The dog park will now be right up against University, where they will take out a street and building a trail. Simplifying a complicated negotiation, it is essentially a \$2M parking lot and relocation of the dog park fence. We are in active negotiations with the county, and we are hoping that they will pay for all of it, but we will see what they say and go from there. More to come.

The \$44M road improvement Broadway project is happening, which affects us from the east side of the Gay Lea Wilson trail all the way to Bridgestone Firestone. This project will have a 10ft concrete trail and there will be 10-12 bioswells associated with it; it is a big deal and it is going to take a long time, but it marches forward. This is a Public Works project, and they are consulting with us, but we are a minor player. This is a part of an infrastructure project where they are getting money from the Iowa DOT and others.

Kami has been working with the Great Outdoors Foundation on the shared, Full Time position for Easter Lake. Our fundraising went beyond our original goals, and now we need to come up with a job description, contract management, and location of office, which is ongoing.

On January 31, 2023, our management staff are going on a retreat, where we will be going over our strategic and operational action plans for 2023/2024. Rich would like to invite the PCCB members to do the same, sometime in early to mid-February? Once we get the staff input and our ideas put together, we would like to bring the PCCB in and get your (PCCB) thoughts as well.

Financial Updates

North Polk Pheasants Forever chapter has agreed to provide \$30,000 to support the acquisition of the Bailey parcel out at Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt (Thank you to Doug Sheely as he is responsible for making this happen).

PCC was awarded a \$200,000 Water Quality Improvement grant from IDALS for restoration of the wetland basin on the Dysktra property at Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt – Thank you, NR team!

We also received a \$10k donation from Toro via Amanda Brown to help with prairie restoration and tree planting after the latest derecho.

Currently our internal grant writers leverage existing grant funds to pursue additional matching grant funds. It is dizzying how much they can come up with to help support PCC efforts!

a) 2023/2024 FY Decision Package Request to BOS

- PCC's Decision Package has been submitted to the Polk County Board of Supervisors. Our official budget presentation is on January 4th at 9:30 AM at the downtown Polk County Administration building. It would be fantastic if any PCC Board Member decides to attend. Many negotiations are going on now, and the first four items in the Decision Package have to do with Sleepy Hollow.
- Sleepy Hollow is an Enterprise fund, which means it is a business account like the Jester Park Golf Course. An Enterprise fund isolates all revenue and expenses separately from other PCC funds. Expenses are accruing in this development phase of Sleepy Hollow, but with the installation of the tubing hill and other amenities, it is anticipated that revenues will outpace expenses within a short timeframe. We have established a new unit, Leisure Services, which is managed by Jeff Condon. Jeff's first task is to get Sleepy Hollow up and running. Via a previous agreement with Polk County, four full time positions (FTEs) are slated to be hired, and additional PPT staff will be allocated to help with operations. Sam Lorton has recently been hired as the first PPT Sleepy Hollow employee and two more full time employees are slated to be hired before July 1st, 2023. Tom Hockensmith has provided his support and justification for the new hires needed for Sleepy Hollow operations. An operating budget has been established for the new business unit, which is imperative for moving forward with planning. PCC plans to run Sleepy Hollow (at least for now) including the year-round tubing hill, which means we need the staff and resources to offer the same level of exemplary service that PCC strives to provide in all of it's parks and recreation areas.
- The newest position to be requested for PCC is a Trails Coordinator. This position has been built into the PCC staffing plan and we believe it should be a part of the Leisure Services department as a permanent, part-time role. PCC has 50 miles of paved recreational trails and at least that much in soft trails. PCC's goal is to re-distribute the Trails workload between several roles. Adam Fendrick, PCC Parks Planner, is currently tasked with trails planning, development, and maintenance and does great work, but he has the whole organization to plan for. Erich Braun, Parks Manager, does a lot of Trail operational planning and enforcement. Doug Sheeley, Natural Resources Manager, focuses on the natural resource elements of Trail planning and maintenance (trail integration into natural environments, prairie, wetland, and forest restoration impact, etc.). Ron VanDenBroeke, CMO Manager, oversees the crew that fixes the potholes and resurfaces the trails. There is not one central person that deals with trails within the PCC hierarchy. We currently have a relationship with a contractor that used to be with the DNR and he is giving us great work on the projects he's hired to

consult on, but it's not enough. PCC needs a full time person for Trails management.

- A full-time Maintenance Technician position has also been built into the '23-'24 Decision Package. This role will be stationed in the northeast part of the county within Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt. Every PCC region has a maintenance technician except for the NE region. James Dotzler is the Park Ranger for CBG and currently oversees over 10,000 acres. He is doing far too much maintenance tech work due to the size of the park, so this additional help will enable him to focus more on law enforcement issues.
- The Fleet department currently has a Fleet Coordinator, a full-time Mechanic, and two part-time Mechanics. PCC is requesting to take one of the part-time positions and make it a full-time position. The Fleet department has plenty of work and a full-time position will enable the department to recruit and retain high-caliber candidates.
- PCC implemented a paid internship program last year, with \$25,000 that funded three internships. The demand for interns is high across the organization, and the return for investment is greater than hiring internally, so PCC is asking for double the amount of funding (\$50,000). This will enable PCC to increase the number of paid internships offered.
- Also included in the Decision Package is the request for permanent part-time and seasonal wage increases. PCC part-time and seasonal positions have been consistently listed at below-market wages, which makes recruitment and retention challenging. Many organizations are raising their wages to improve recruitment and retention, so this is to help PCC keep pace with current market trends.
- Following County-wide trends, PCC is asking for funding to cover "inflation increases" in areas like professional services, chemicals, fuels, and utilities. Prices continue to rise due to inflation, so additional funding is needed to prevent service outages and operational disruptions.
- Ron VanDenBroeke, CMO Manager, has recommended a request for \$300,000 to systematically start replacing a large portion of the 30 OLD septic systems hidden within PCC's infrastructure. Ron has been trying to figure out what needs fixing or replacing, and has discovered that the septic system within Jester Park Golf Course should also be included in these estimates. PCC does not know if the \$300,000 will cover all of the repairs or replacements, but it should cover a large portion of the 30 that need replacing.
- It is currently listed that the Lauridsen Skatepark parking lot improvements will cost \$3,000,000, but the revised estimate is \$2,000,000. Please note that reduction in cost.

- PCC has a number of bridges within the parks that are not in very good shape, but the focus has been narrowed to three of them:
 - a. Jester Park bridge by the bison/elk exhibit
 - b. Easter Lake bridge - a smaller bridge on the south side of the lake and to the left of the park entrance
 - c. Yellow Banks bridge at the bottom of "Kill Hill"

Rich is meeting with Polk County leadership (John Norris, Sarah Boese, and Angela Connelly) on 12/15/2022 to present pictures, one-page summaries, and provide context for the requested bridge repairs/replacements.

- In the interest of public safety and to align with project plans already in the works, PCC is deeply concerned about a pedestrian/bike trail that will be integrated into the Broadway Ave project. There are two 4-lane roads that cross each other, and current plans outline a bike trail that goes across the intersection and is only designated with pavement markings and flashing lights. PCC is petitioning for an overpass structure similar to the Oralabor Road overpass for the High Trestle Trail in Ankeny. Aesthetics do not have to be at the same level but it's imperative that pedestrians get across the large intersection safely (on E14th and 2nd).
- PCC's previous \$50,000,000 bond turned into \$100,000,000 in spending once leveraged – this is directly related to the amount of projects and work PCC is accomplishing. Currently PCC is averaging around four million visitors each year (more than the DSM Science Center, DSM Art Center, and Blank Park Zoo combined). PCC continues to pursue land acquisition on behalf of Polk County residents who have strongly indicated they wish us to continue appropriating land for outdoor recreational use. However, additional land equals higher operational costs and maintenance demands. It is difficult to quantify how many FTE's are required to maintain and manage the number of acres PCC owns. PCC is finding that identifying use patterns and expectations for the land is paramount to determining proper staffing levels. Strategic planning will be revisited in February 2023 to evaluate the proper approach for determining the correct staffing levels at PCC.

b) Bond Project Updates

- Refer to Power Point presentation on Bond project updates.

Board & Chair Remarks –

2023 Election of PCC Board Member Officers:

Board Chair: **Jill Altringer (Nominated by Crane, Seconded by Cataldo)**

Vice Chair: **Greg Lewis (Nominated by Cataldo)**

Secretary: **Pam Mollenhauer (Nominated by Cataldo)**

LET THE RECORD SHOW it was moved by **Mollenhauer** to approve the appointment of 2023 Polk County Conservation Board Officers by acclamation.

Vote Yea: Lewis, Cataldo, Mollenhauer (Zoom), Altringer, Crane

CLOSED SESSION

#22-1219 Moved by **Altringer** to go into closed session pursuant to Iowa Code Section 21.5(j) to discuss the purchase or sale of particular real estate only where premature disclosure could be reasonably expected to increase the price the governmental body would have to pay for that property or reduce the price the governmental body would receive for that property.

Vote Yea: **Mollenhauer, Altringer, Lewis, Crane**

Members Absent: **Cataldo**

Closed Session Roll Call: Katie Stoklasa, Rich Leopold, Kami Rankin, Cassie Cook, Doug Sheeley, Greg Lewis, Jill Altringer, Natalie McFarlane, Pam Mollenhauer, Ryan Crane, Adam Fendrick, Zoey Schorzmann, Andrea Petrovich

Action on closed session:

Moved by Altringer to return to open session.

Vote Yea: **Mollenhauer, Altringer, Lewis, Crane**

Members Absent: **Cataldo**

THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THE BOARD, THIS MEETING IS ADJOURNED.

Meeting adjourned at **7:50 pm**