

Polk County Conservation Board
5:30 p.m. - Polk County Administration Bldg., Room 120
111 Court Ave., Des Moines, IA

PROCEEDINGS OF THE POLK COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD

The Polk County Conservation Board met in person for regular session Wednesday, March 9, 2022. The meeting was called to order at 5:35 p.m.

- #22-0301 Roll Call
Members Present: **Crane, Lewis, Mollenhauer (ZOOM), Altringer**
Members Absent: **Cataldo**
- #22-0302 Public Comments
- #22-0303 Solar Energy Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) Presentation – PCC Sustainability Committee member Adam Fendrick
- #22-0304 New Employee Introduction
a. Jessica Lown – Community Outreach Supervisor
- #22-0305 Financial Reports
- #22-0306 **MOVED BY Mollenhauer** to approve the February 9, 2022 meeting minutes.
Vote Yea: **Crane, Mollenhauer (ZOOM), Lewis, Altringer**
Members Absent: **Cataldo**

CONSENT AGENDA

- #22-0307 **Approving** bill list.
- #22-0308 **Approving** the 2021 Polk County Conservation Annual Report.
- #22-0309 **Recommending** to the Polk County Board of Supervisors to approve a Temporary Easement for construction and construction-related activities to the City of Des Moines for the Easton Boulevard reconstruction - E. 33rd Street to Fourmile Creek on land known as the Fourmile Creek Greenway.
- #22-0310 **Authorizing** transfer of additional properties from the City of Des Moines to Polk County Conservation ownership within the Fourmile Creek Greenway following guidelines and restrictions set forth in the previously approved Fourmile Creek Greenway Management and Maintenance Agreement and 44 CFR part 80.19.

LET THE RECORD SHOW it was moved by **Altringer, Lewis 2nd** to approve the consent agenda.
Vote Yea: **Mollenhauer (ZOOM), Lewis, Crane, Altringer**
Members Absent: **Cataldo**

ACTION ITEMS

N/A

BOARD DISCUSSION

Director's Remarks

Rich Leopold – Kami would you like to start?

Kami – Dew Tour – can't announce dates yet – **HANDOUT** – 2021 Dew Tour Sustainability Report
Last year when the Dew Tour was in town it operated like a well-oiled machine – they brought a sustainability team and do this process every place they go. PCC received the report last month – the Dew Tour won the BizBash Style Award for Best Sustainability Program of 2020 – this is a worldwide event show and the report goes through every single thing they did to practice sustainability. Hopefully many of our future events can incorporate lots of these initiatives.

Rich – Next month is the RFQ process – as the first bond passed in 2012, PCC went through a process where firms were solicited to submit RFQ's and then pre-approved. By doing this, PCC could use those firms going forward without having to do bids on every project. Now that the 2021 Bond has passed PCC is doing the same process again. RFQ's were due today and Kami received all that were submitted. Communication will be sent out to staff for review and recommendations will be presented in April.

Trail's End Mitigation Bank – Adam is shining on this project! Good things are happening – PCC entered an agreement with the DOT for soil to save us \$3,000,000. The cost of restorations have skyrocketed, however, and there are lots of moving pieces. Adam and Rich are putting together a narrative on how things will move forward.

Rich – 5 Year Staffing Plan – when Rich first came on as Deputy Director then as Director, he did a staffing review and evaluated/made changes. Existing departments at the time included NR, CMO, and Law Enforcement so a Parks Division was created which encompassed Law Enforcement. For this next phase of staffing changes, PCC will be creating a Leisure Services unit. 1/3 of PCC's mission is outdoor recreation, but right now all divisions share responsibility for ensuring "leisure services" are handled successfully. Now that PCC has Lauridsen Skatepark & Sleepy Hollow the focus is even more magnified on leisure services and it has been determined that designated staff are necessary to keep things on track, on time, and running smoothly. Current revenue projections are estimated to make \$350,000 in the first year. Currently, PCC's total annual revenue is at \$1,000,000, but we anticipate generating around \$1,500,000 soon after Sleepy Hollow is fully under PCC's operation. Leisure Services can help with the kickoff. Additional staff have been requested and approved by the Polk County BOS for the Leisure Services unit: 2 FTE – Leisure Services Division Manager and a FTE Leisure Services Operations Technician. There are additional staff requests in the 5-7 Year Staffing Plan and Rich/Kami will be working with Polk County HR on those.

2022 Budget Decision Package Proposed to Polk County BOS – most of the proposed increases/staff requests were approved which resulted in the best outcome in the history of

County Conservation Boards! Requests approved:

- 2 FT Leisure Services positions (Sleepy Hollow), 1 FT Water Quality Coordinator (water trails, DNR partnerships, facilitating studies), 5% across-the-board increase on Services, Supplies & Extra Help – PCC hasn't had an inflationary increase in a long time.

Lewis – 5% is in line with what's been done with Polk bargaining units – they usually get an increase and we don't so this is good!

- Paid internships will be scattered throughout PCC's multiple departments.

Ryan – this is in addition to the thing we do with Drake University/Keith Summerville? Rich – Yes.

- Fleet normally gets \$280,000/year to help with equipment needs. Now that we need to switch to EV – got a \$40,000 increase approved which equals \$320,000/year.
- Easter Lake North Shore Project was awarded \$1,000,000 by the Polk County BOS.
The Easter Lake North Shore Campaign Leadership Team has a huge donation ask into the Iowa Governor's Office – \$3,800,000 has currently been raised – need to get to \$6,800,000 – may overshoot goal so need to create endowment for EL programming.
- Lauridsen Skatepark – PCC leadership knew that there would be phases to finish it – Snyder & Associates schematics contained around \$500,000 in additional improvements to the Skatepark. Polk County BOS approved \$500,000 to do these improvements (which will probably only cost around \$400,000 so there might be extra funds left over).
- Trestle to Trestle Bridge – \$250,000 approved to complete the funding gap for replacing the Trestle to Trestle Bridge since FEMA funding didn't come through.

Capital Improvement Requests denied:

- The Ape Trust fence was not approved – next month we would like to have a conversation on the Ape Trust land in Closed Session (April 13, 2022 PCC Board Meeting)

Jill – Do we get to keep all revenue from Leisure Services Division?

Rich – No – we have been awarded 4 FTE positions to be hired in next 2 years – the projected revenue (\$350,000) from Sleepy Hollow will pay for all four positions. Any revenue shortfalls past \$350,000 will have to be negotiated with the BOS.

The Leisure Services manager will help us manage third party vendor contracts – Jester Park Golf Course/Jester Park Lodge/Easter Lake Concessions & Rentals. The Equestrian Center operations will also be moved under the Leisure Services division.

Endowment with GOF – next month you will see an action item on the PCC Board Meeting agenda regarding the creation of an endowment. An endowment has been in the works since the construction of the Jester Park Nature Center. It was planned that extra money from the Jester Park Nature Center would fund an endowment for the Nature Center. Three years have passed – now PCC is looking at what an endowment would look like for the whole organization. Seed money already retained: \$1,500 Friends of Jester Park donations, \$4,500 Jester Park leftover money, \$30,000 from Easter Lake, \$60,000 from Jester Park Nature Center. PCC needs to decide what the goals are and build the endowment until it reaches a certain level. Rich is working on how this will operate.

BOND – **HANDOUT** – sent with Director's Remarks – PCC staff have been doing a lot of internal discussion on the first Bond \$ distribution request to Polk County Bond Council. \$21,000,000 has been determined as an appropriate amount for the first PCC distribution request, which will be

submitted tomorrow morning. If approved, PCC will get the money in May.

\$21,000,000 Breakdown:

- Sleepy Hollow \$3,500,000 (assuming \$5,000,000 total price tag = (\$1,750,000 land acquisition + \$1,750,000 capital improvements). There will also be a \$1,500,000 campaign (will need to raise funds for the campaign). As the ELNS project comes to a close we can start another fundraising campaign – has to be now – come winter of 2022, Rick & Mary Platt are done so we have to operate the winter sports at Sleepy Hollow.
- Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt improvements - \$1,000,000 - purchasing Speck property – potential location of a visitors center/campgrounds/bison herd relocation (PCC will have 2 years to spend the money).

Jill – What if we don't spend the money in time?

Rich – Polk County gets penalized financially – Deb Anderson and other Polk County staff are involved with planning the Bond \$ distribution schedule.

PCC can do a distribution request that would need to be spent in three years but it is better financially if PCC does a request every two years (save on administrative costs).

- ICON (water trails) – \$1,500,000 – a total of \$10,000,000 to go directly from PCC to ICON with an agreement of owning or managing whatever PCC is involved in for water trails – what will this look like? More direction is starting to form and the focus has been switched from the Center St dam area (Women of Achievement Bridge) to the Fleur site (soccer stadium future site/Hubbell Development at old brownfield site). This site will most likely have a major water trails facility (large concession building/bathrooms) which could potentially cost upwards of \$20,000,000. The ICON committee wants our PCC bond money to start that process. PCC is aligned with that but we have to own/manage whatever we pay for so what operations interest will we have as that moves forward? \$1,500,000 will go towards design/engineering, but the other \$8,500,000 will go towards...?
- PCC water trails – Submitting \$1,000,000 ask with first request. \$5,000,000 total price tag for our direct involvement.
- Yellow Banks Park Cabins – \$1,000,000 with a \$500,000 fundraising campaign. This will not be an all-out fundraiser – it might consist of some larger naming opportunities and that's it.
- Capital improvements & minor bond projects – \$2,000,000 - there are several projects in the parks right now that need addressing. These include trail & road improvements, shower house improvements, pit latrine replacements, etc.
- Copper Creek Mountain Bike Trail – \$1,000,000 (the ask was \$750,000 but conversations with the City of DSM revealed that they are not doing trailhead improvements, so we asked for the land (which they approved) and then allocated \$ for a modern bathroom which is estimated to cost \$250,000 and will be located at the trailhead.
- Broadway to Neil Smith Trail – \$2,500,000 - the Broadway Trail is happening! The Gay Lea Wilson Trail intersects with the Chichaqua Valley Trail just north of NE Broadway Ave. PCC plans to create a connection from the Neil Smith Trail that will run south of the Bridgestone Firestone plant then go along NE Broadway until it connects with the Gay Lea Wilson trail. This trail connection is projected to cost \$2,500,000. There is currently a

four mile section of the Neil Smith trail between where the City of Des Moines ends management and the US Army Corps of Engineers begins management that the DNR is in charge of managing. The DNR has neither the funds nor the resources to manage it and it is in extreme disrepair. PCC was informed recently that the USACE is taking over that four mile section and will begin to make the necessary repairs so that will be a cost savings for the project.

- High Trestle Trail to Polk City - \$1,500,00 – Polk City wants a connection to the High Trestle Trail.
- Natural Resources - \$1,000,000
- Water Quality - \$1,000,000
- Land Acquisition – \$4,000,000 - some land is being held by INHF and PCC is expected to liquidate those properties as we get bond \$. PCC is trying to plan \$2,000,000/yr for 10 years for future acquisitions (Brenton slough, etc).

Cassie Cook/Amanda Brown/Doug Sheeley are great at finding \$ for restorations!

\$21,000,000 Total – PCC has to spend this amount in two years! Rich feels this is a safe amount for the first distribution.

Jill – it seems way too easy to spend \$21,000,000! I still don't see a trail from JPNC to Granger yet!

Rich – we could possibly build through Brenton slough on an old railway bed.

Jill – to your point there's 10 years to spend the \$65,000,000 which equals \$6,500,000/year but PCC is taking \$21,000,000 for the first distribution? Are we sure this is the right way to proportion this?

Rich – the same kind of discussion happened 10 yrs ago with the previous bond. There were lots of infrastructure/capital campaign projects that were ready to go at that time and then Trails were gradually worked on over the remainder of the 10 years. PCC is probably not going to have a Sleepy Hollow project 10 yrs from now...

Jill – we don't know that! We didn't know we would be doing this five yrs ago....

One nice thing about shifting money around – partners like INHF can be utilized to work within a two year timeframe.

Rich – if anything is inflated on the strategic plan it's the land acquisition amounts. We still have the expectation of PCC needing to spend a significant amount even if investors/partners help with land acquisition costs.

Doug – PCC will be getting an appraiser to determine land acquisition starting points and what we can afford to keep or not keep in the plan.

Rich – PCC desires ARPA money to buy Brenton slough which would offset the amount allocated but we don't know if we'll get any of that. Thoughts/concerns about the overall plan? I wanted to put the plan before the PCC Board for feedback.

Lewis – let's roll with it and see how it goes – Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt is a great area – the opportunity to obtain Brenton slough is not to be missed!

Jill – we can do \$21,000,000 but we have fantastic financiers to find grants/\$ - should we be putting more emphasis on finding leverage money and reduce our first request amount? It's just a lot of money...often a project will cost us \$1,200,000 but by the time we figure out

grants/leverage funding we can reduce our initial PCC investment to less than a million...so can we leverage the money better and reduce the first request amount?

Lewis – this is just a pie in the sky request, right?

Jill – no - if we ask for this amount, this is what we get. This first request includes the consideration of leveraged funds.

Ryan – these are good stories to tell and get us good publicity.

Rich – once the Bond is approved people start to expect good stories and action right away.

Lewis – maybe we need to pat ourselves on the back a little bit more – let's have better advertising to promote what we've done vs just a headline in the Des Moines Register...

Jill – is it public knowledge that PCC is considering the purchase of Brenton slough?

Rich – people are talking already and there are 20 different individuals involved with the transaction. Once these individuals started having mass meetings word has gotten out.

Ryan – regarding the current legislation being proposed to halt land acquisition for public use – do we have an idea on what direction the legislation is going?

Rich – I think it is dead in the House of Representatives.

Ryan – \$4,000,000 will buy a lot less if this legislation goes through, or it will buy a lot more if we can find land owners to sell it to PCC at the proposed discount!

Rich – concerning the overall list of projects we just went through - we talked about these at the PCC Board Strategic Planning Retreat and wanted to make sure board members were aware of the final requested amount. I told Deb Anderson that we would give her the final number Thursday morning (3-10-22).

Ryan – ok – if anyone has anything else, text Rich at 3 am with any additional thoughts! ☺

Board & Chair Remarks – see above

CLOSED SESSION

#22-0311 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: **Crane, Mollenhauer (ZOOM), Altringer, Lewis**
Members Absent: **Cataldo**

Closed Session: Katie Stoklasa, Rich Leopold, Kami Rankin, Ryan Crane, Cassie Cook, Doug Sheeley, Greg Lewis, Jill Altringer, Natalie McFarlane, Pam Mollenhauer, Kate Clark

Action on closed session:

Moved by Altringer to return to open session.
Vote Yea: **Crane, Lewis, Mollenhauer (ZOOM), Altringer**
Members Absent: **Cataldo**

Adjournment - Meeting adjourned at 6:56 p.m.