

Allamakee County Conservation Board Minutes March 2024

The Allamakee County Conservation Board met in regular session March 5, 2024 beginning at 1 p.m. at the Driftless Area Education and Visitor Center in Lansing, Iowa. Board members who were present were: Marilyn Clark, Jeanie Carroll, Jesse Delaney and Dennis Koenig. Attending from the Allamakee County Conservation Board staff was Ross Geerdes, Emma Jacobs, Erin Cubbon and Brody VanderKolk Present from the Allamakee County Board of Supervisors was Mark Reiser and from the public Francis Garret. The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. and the day's agenda and minutes from the February 6, 2024 regular board meeting were approved with a motion by Clark and a second by Carroll with all members in favor.

During public comment time Francis Garret spoke about the Cecilia Sanders Garrett Greenbelt property and the work that had been done in the past and the habitat improvements that he thinks would be beneficial in the future. Garret also spoke of potential partnerships with Ducks Unlimited and other conservation organizations to obtain funding and volunteers for projects.

The board approved claims and revenues from the month of February 2024 with a motion by Koenig and a second by Clark. All in favor.

The Board moved into an update on the geothermal system at the Driftless Area Education and Visitors Center. Director Geerdes and members of the Allamakee County Conservation Foundation had met with the Board of Supervisors on March 4, 2024 to discuss payment of the repairs on the system. At the time of the meeting the total cost of repairs was \$19,933.75 with an additional bill expected from Winona Controls for a follow-up visit to assess the system and how it was performing after it had been operational for a period of time. Options for paying the expenses were discussed including how the foundation would contribute and using monies in the Conservation Reserve account. A need for a feasibility study by an independent mechanical engineer was discussed to determine the cause of the issues, how the issues could be prevented in the future or if a new system needed to be considered. Members of the board asked to have on the April agenda consideration to approve the use of funds from the Conservation Reserve fund for the payment.

The Board moved onto discussion and consideration of the management agreement with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources at the Harpers Ferry Boat landing and shops, Heytman's Landing, The Harpers Slough Fishing Access and Nobles Island Boat Landing. Director Geerdes informed the board he had presented the contracts to the Allamakee County Board of Supervisors at the February 12, 2024 Board of Supervisors meeting and the Supervisors asked the board to remove the Harpers Ferry House from the contracts. Geerdes asked the Iowa DNR to revise the contracts to exclude the Harpers Ferry House. The DNR had returned the updated agreement to reflect the decision of the Board of Supervisors. Koenig and Delaney spoke on the importance of the relationship between the Liaison to the Board of Supervisors, the Conservation Board, and the Board of Supervisors to ensure that what is being discussed in the meetings is accurately portrayed and approved as the Conservation Board intends as it was the intention of the Conservation Board to move forward with the agreements including the house with the option to remove at a later date if necessary.

Discussion continued with the board on what will happen to the house going forward and the possibility that the board may have to act on the sewer and the water lines for the shop if the Iowa DNR decides to sell or demolish the house. A motion was made by Koenig and seconded by Clark to table the Iowa

Department of Natural Resources management agreements until the April meeting for the Heytman's Landing, Harpers Ferry Boat Landing shops, the Harpers Slough Fishing Access and Nobles Island Boat Landing in order to better reflect the change in the contracts with the DNR excluding the house. All in Favor.

In Informational items and old business Geerdes gave an update on the Lansing Bridge and its impact on visitors and field trips at the Driftless Area Education and Visitors Center. Geerdes informed the board that Allamakee-Clayton Electric Cooperative had asked the board to sign a Good Neighbor Agreement. The agreement is for the cooperative to use in securing grants for upcoming projects. Vanderkolk informed the board that he was beginning prescribed burns at areas when the conditions were right and he was going to be moving the docks into the water at Harpers Ferry Boat Landing and Nobles Island Boat Landing as people have been using the landings. Cubbon gave an update on education programs and field trips for the Spring season.

The time and date for the next meeting was set for April 2, 2024 at 1 p.m. in the Driftless Area Education and Visitor Center.

With no additional business the meeting was concluded at 1:59 p.m. with a motion by Clark and seconded by Carroll to adjourn. All in favor.