

Minutes of the Warren County Conservation Board

- i. The Warren County Conservation Board held its regular monthly meeting on Wednesday, January 11, 2017, in the auditorium of the Warren County Administration Building, 301 North Buxton Street, Indianola, Iowa. Meeting called to order by President Kreidler at 6:07 p.m.

Those present:

Absent:

Mick Kreidler, President

Sue Boll, Vice-President

Joe Gavin, Secretary

Ace Hendricks

Ron Miller

Comprising a quorum of the board,

Also present:

Absent:

Jim Priebe, Director

David Youngblut, Op Coordinator

Karen Johlas-Szalkowski, Naturalist II

Mark Wilson, Natural Resources Specialist

Doug Gaumer, Conservation Technician

Logan Roberts, Naturalist I

Tyler Seuferer, Conservation Technician

Guest(s): Approximately 79 people attended, including Warren County Board of Supervisors Crystal McIntyre and Dean Yordi, and the following people that signed the speakers list: Tim Lane, Carolyn Langenwalter, Nancy Forrest, Michael Neubauer, Kathy Beck, Steve McIntyre, Mark Ackelson, Kent Newman, Ruth Randleman, Jared Morford, John Hagener, William McKibben, Marlys McKibben, Tony Pfaff, Kari Carney, Troy Zeleznik, and Pat Boddy.

President Kreidler welcomed those in attendance. She informed them that the Great Western Trail discussion and possible action (Old Business 4) would be moved up in the agenda with all other items coming after. She said the Board would be taking public comment, and asked that anyone that had addressed the board on the matter previously allow new comments first. She said, if time allows, those who have addressed the Board previously would then be granted time.

- iv. b. 4. Possible Action: request for use of Great Western Trail right-of-way for Veterans Parkway
- Using the speakers list signed by those requesting time, President Kreidler began calling on those that had not previously addressed the Board.
- Nancy Forrest asked what process was being used to formulate decisions. Is the world better for whatever decision is taken by the Board. Does it benefit human health, psychological health, ground water, species inventory. She asked the Board to take more time and stated she preferred that the trail be preserved in its present state.
- Michal Neubauer observed that the Board is in a no win situation. He would prefer that no road be built. He asked what assurances have been received from West Des Moines and questioned the need for the road to drive future development.
- Kathy back said she is a landowner adjacent to the Great Western Trail and that she would be affected by the road project regardless of what alignment is chosen. She worries about losing clients for her horse boarding business. She asked for a decision so people can move forward. She also state the taxpayers are those on the land, bicyclists would be affected in three minute intervals.

Steve McIntyre said the road does not have to be built. He feels that neither adjacent landowner nor bikers want it. A road will not improve the lives of area residents. He prefers the trail as is, and sees a road creating future safety issues. He said, as a Warren County taxpayer, he supports the county funding future trail upkeep.

Kent Newman noted the major taxpayer investment in the Microsoft site and does not want to see further degradation of the Great Western Trail.

Mayor Ruth Randleman, Carlisle, said she is an avid trails supporter. She said she supports choosing Alternative D.1 or D.2 to achieve the best balance between recreation and economic development interests, protecting both the asset (the Great Western Trail) and economic development. She said resources gained because of development could provide great help to Warren County trails in the future. She also encouraged the Conservation Board to insist on an ongoing voice on trail and trail safety issues.

John Hagner read the Conservation Board's mission and asked the Board to use that as the guide for their decision.

William McKibben is an area landowner that does not want to split or sell his property. He said Alternative A splits multiple properties. He asked the Board to consider the tax base, development, and cooperation in their decision.

Kari Carney, who lives on 25th Avenue south of Cumming said there is a better way to promote economic development, citing that 1000 Friends of Iowa and other sources do not support 6-lane urban highways as avenues for growth. She asked the Board to say no and ask West Des Moines to rethink the entire project from a responsible development perspective.

Troy Zeleznik asked that the Board not convey any right-of-way to West Des Moines. He also noted that the 2008 West Des Moines comprehensive plan shows a 300 foot right-of-way rather than the 165 right-of-way that has been shown in the alternatives.

Pat Boddy (former Polk County Conservation Board Director asked that the Board consider that the right alternative may not yet have been proposed, and that the Board keep safety, character, habitat, and agriculture in mind as they deliberate.

Marlys McKibben, area landowner does not want to see her family farm split by Alternative A. She noted that landowners would be affected by such a change every day, all day, while bikers will be affected for only a few seconds per ride. She prefers no road, but, if a road is built, that minimizes landowner impacts.

Brandon Webb, area landowner (not on speakers list), prefers the original proposal. He said his family's land is a family farm, not development property, and that Alternative A would be the most disruptive.

Tim Lane asked those in attendance if any of them favored a 6-lane road. He said he does not see the need for the road. He said that modern urban planners do not promote roads like this. He would like to see more recreational and trail opportunities, not less.

Carolyn Langenwaller asked the board to think 20-years out and asked if there were any guarantees from West Des Moines.

Andrea Bolton (not on speakers list), responding to a question from President Kreidler, noted that land for trails cannot be obtained via eminent domain.

Mark Ackelson said he thought that the Board is in a great position to accomplish more than it is being offered. He noted that, since there are no federal dollars in the project, mitigation for parkland is not required. Losses to parkland should be replaced. Safety, habitat, recreation, and connectivity are all central to the high value of the Great Western Trail. He

said he does not see a suitable alternative has yet been proposed. He also offered to sit on a stakeholder group to work on the issue. He asked the Board not to give up and to demand more.

Jared Morford (not on speakers list) stressed the Board's mission.

Traci Bochensted (not on speakers list) does not want the road. She asked for more research, sighting the lack of cost estimates on the proposed alternatives.

L Taylor (not on speakers list), asked that the onus be put on the Warren County Board of Supervisors to say no to West Des Moines, asking the board to not placate developers and stating a preference for no road.

Tony Pfaff said the road does not have to go through and that many are willing to stand with the Board if they say no.

An unknown person (not on speakers list) said this should not be framed as bicyclists against landowners.

Pat Spain (not on speakers list) said that, even if the Conservation Board is removed from the discussion, people can still fight for the trail.

Andrea Bolton (not on speakers list) asked the board to protect its mission and move forward.

At this point, President Kreidler closed public input, noting that this would be the first opportunity that Board Members have had to discuss the issue amongst themselves.

Vice-President Sue Boll read her attached statement about her stand on the issue. Her conclusion was that Alternative A is the only choice she can support.

Ace Hendricks noted that this dilemma was not of the Conservation Boards making or choosing.

Hendricks cited Iowa's open meetings law in noting that this is the first chance the board has had to discuss the issue. He stated that his thoughts are for anyone that uses Warren County's trails and parks.

He noted the September 14, 2106 WCCB meeting, held at Cumming City Hall. It was the Conservation Boards first opportunity to have feet on the ground and see the real issues. (He also noted the trail traffic that evening and that the Board missed taco night due to the meeting.) At that point, the plan was still for a road with a ten-foot side path. He also noted that many trail users that night looked at the Conservation Board vehicles on the trail like they were invaders, noting that trails users and Board Members alike are passionate about the trails and other parks in Warren County.

Hendricks noted the limited funds and staff of the WCCB and that it is a top priority to make all Conservation Board facilities safe and enjoyable. He said that in spite of the limited resources available, the dedication and professionalism of the Conservation Board staff, often using "MacGuyver" tactics to solve problems that keep Conservation Board areas running. He assured those in attendance that, no matter the resolution, there will be a trail

He asked trail users to acknowledge Conservation Board staff when they see them working on the trail, even if that work is a small inconvenience. He encourages users to stop and talk, wave, or give staff a thumbs up. He assured the public that the focus will continue to be on safety, conservation, and recreation for as long as possible and thanked the attending public for their interest.

Joe Gavin said he feels the trail needs to stay where it is.

President Kreidler noted that there have been four meetings with West Des Moines to work on issues and that there are still four alternatives to the original plan under consideration.

She noted that the trail means a great deal to her personally, as well as from a conservation and recreation perspective.

Kreidler briefly discussed the alternatives and outlined the recommendation the Board had received from staff (attached to the minutes). She said that she can support Alternative A. Ace Hendricks moved that, due to inadequate guarantees, the Warren County Conservation Board accept Alternative A at this time. Motion was seconded by Sue Boll.

Director Jim Priebe asked if this motion would preclude further discussion with West Des Moines about additional alternatives. Hendricks said it would not.

On a roll call vote, the motion passed 5–0.

President Kriedler called a short recess.

ii. Reading of Minutes.

Ron Miller moved to accept the November 2016 and December 2016 minutes as presented. Joe Gavin seconded. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

iii. Staff reports for November 2016 and December 2016 were given.

iv. Business Agenda:

a. Organization

1. Election of 2017 officers

Ron Miller moved to retain the 2016 officers for 2017. Ace Hendricks seconded. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

2. Review of bylaws

Ace Hendricks moved to add tracking of volunteer hours to the Operations Coordinator and Naturalist II duties and to change the designation of Naturalist II and Natural Resource Specialist from Exempt to Non-Exempt. Ron Miller seconded. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

b. Old Business:

1. Friends of Warren County Conservation report presented

Membership mailing is ready for 2017.

A temporary snake exhibit will be up soon in the Annett Nature Center.

2. Iowa DOT mitigation sites

First for driveways for parking at the two areas has been brought in.

The Iowa DOT has been contacted regarding the 28E management agreement for NRII.

3. The web report was not included with the meeting packet.

4. Taken earlier

b. New Business: None

c. Other Business: None

v. Financial reports were distributed.

vi. Bills were approved and signed.

vii. Sue Boll moved to adjourn. Joe Gavin Seconded. Motion carried by unanimous vote at 8:58 p.m.

Joe Gavin, Secretary

Warren County Conservation Board