



MINUTES

ROCK COUNTY LAND CONSERVATION COMMITTEE
Wednesday August 4, 2021, 7:15 P.M.
USDA Service Center, 440 N Hwy 14 and Virtual via Zoom

- Call to Order:** Chair Bostwick called the meeting to order at 7:15 pm.

Committee Members Present: Stephanie Aegerter, Rich Bostwick (via Zoom), Janelle Crary, Wes Davis (via Zoom), Mike Mulligan, James Quade and Alan Sweeney.

Committee Members Excused: Genia Stevens

Others Present: Bob Fayard (Burns and McDonald), Norm Tadt, Andrew Baker
- Approval of Agenda:** Supervisor Sweeney moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Supervisor Davis. **Motion carried unanimously.** At this time Supervisors and staff introduced themselves to new Supervisor Janelle Crary.
- Approval of Minutes – July 7, 2021 LCC meeting.** Mr Quade moved the approval of the minutes as presented, seconded by Supervisor Mulligan. **Motion carried unanimously.**
- Citizen Participation, Communications, and Announcements.** Andrew noted that the Department will be setting up a Facebook page soon as another method of education and outreach. In response to a question about the bill last month for Clean Sweep advertising cost (i.e. is the cost worth it?), Andrew check with staff and they stated it is very noticeable when ads run in the newspapers because there is an increase of registrations. Many people that use the service still read newspapers.
- Review Bills Paid:** Andrew explained the bills and pointed out a few specifics for the benefit of Supervisor Crary. There were no specific questions. At this time Andrew explained to the Committee the reference materials that were included in the packet handed out at the meeting. This includes a portion on the Land and Water Plan (full version on the website), a list of acronyms, staff listing and summary of staff responsibilities, copy of the fee schedule and the 2022 Department Charter. Additional materials will be added as deemed appropriated.
- Action Item:** Request for Erosion Control and Storm Water Management Six Month Permit Extension (In Advance Due to Project Scope). *ECSW 2020-18: Wisconsin Power and Light – North Rock Solar.* Bob Fayard, from Burns and McDonald (consultant for the project) was in attendance to answer questions about the request and the project as a whole. The permit extension will allow for additional time to ensure the project is completed and stabilized within the duration of the permit. Mr. Fayard explained that some of the gravel roads installed during construction will remain long term for maintenance purpose. Primary method of installed the posts for the panels will be driven unless bedrock is encountered, which will require drilling. There will be 20,000 individual panels that track/rotate based on the sun orientation. There is a bond in place to ensure proper dismantling and site restoration when the useful life is up. Supervisor Sweeney made a motion to approve the six month extension, seconded by Supervisor Aegerter. **Motion carried unanimously.**

7. **Informational Item:** 2022 Proposed Budget Summary. Andrew reviewed the PO3 Budget Preparation Spreadsheet with the Committee. Andrew generally explained the various sources of revenue in the Department budget which offset the levy amount. There was a question about why health care went down from 2021. Andrew explained that the health care costs on a county wide basis are equally distributed throughout each department. In other words, each department must budget for health insurance on a per staff person basis, even if not all staff members carry the coverage. The current cost is around \$16,600 annually per person. These numbers are provided for us from Administration. Cost went down slightly because of the Director position being shared with Planning. Overall, the proposed 2022 budget has a levy impact approximately \$250 more than 2021.
8. **Informational Item:** 2020 Yahara WINS Annual Report. Andrew explained to the Committee the agreement we have with Yahara WINS to contract with landowners to install conservation practices to reduce phosphorus in the Yahara River watershed. This process is an approved alternative to the sewer district making physical updates to the sewer treatment facilities in order to meet the terms of the discharge permit. Yahara WINS reimburses the County 100% for the cost of the contracts and pays the County approximately 18% of the contract value for administrative cost for the upfront work and monitoring for the contract period (10 years). This process is a very cost effective on a per pound basis of phosphorus reduced.
9. **Discussion Item:** Blackhawk Creek near Emerald Grove. Supervisor Mulligan asked for this item to be on the agenda so that he could update the Committee as to his efforts to work toward a solution to the drainage and flooding issues in the Emerald Grove area. Norm also explained the issues with pictures and maps that he put together in a Powerpoint presentation a few years ago. The main concern stems from the fact that there are thousands of acres of drainage area, which is the headwaters of Blackhawk Creek. Up until a few years ago, the area only had surface water flowage during high rainfall events because the subsoil is very well drained sand and gravel. Now the subsurface is saturated so the water flows on the surface more often. Additionally, much of the main drainage way east of Emerald Grove is now tiled. There is no mapped Floodplain east of Emerald Grove and the DNR has deemed this portion non-navigable. Flow would improve if the channel was cleaned up and/or expanded in Emerald Grove and downstream, but much of the area is on private land. The Town of Bradford and County Highway Department (on behalf of State) are looking into options. Overall, there is not much the County can do to resolve the matter because there is no County right-of-way involved and there is no regulatory mechanism to compel landowners to improve the flow on their own property. It must be a voluntary effort, with the exception of removing physical obstructions that flow in and block the channel. In that case, the Town can required property owners to remove an obstruction as per drainage law. Supervisor Mulligan will continue to work on this issue and possibly reach out to State Legislators for a fix. One option may be to ask the respective Towns (Bradford, Harmony and LaPrairie) to earmark a portion of the American Rescue Plan Act funds for drainage improvements.
10. **Action Item.** Land and Water Resource Management Program: Approval of 2021 Cost Share Agreements. None
11. **Informational Item:** Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement. Andrew provided a summary of the program and progress to date. The Committee reviewed the approximate fund balances for the program (including the ATC Fund balance and Sales Tax use). Based on the limited amount of partners funds at the Federal level, the previous estimate of acquiring two easements a year (80 acres each) at a cost of \$200,000 (including staff time cost allocation) as balanced well with the sales tax

revenue. Therefore, the ATC fund has not been used for acquisition for several years. As of now, the goal is to close on the two Barlass easements along with Watson and Vanthournout (2020 applications).

The 2021 application cycle will be starting soon. There are many applications from last year that will be renewed for 2021 along with at least one new application of approximately 300 acres. The program remains very popular despite limited federal resources for funding. Andrew explained how the application process starts with the PACE Council, which makes recommendation to the LCC. Applications approved by the LCC are then forwarded to the NRCS for funding considerations following the approval of a County Board resolutions authorizing the application.

12. **Adjourn:** Mr. Quade made a motion to adjourn at 8:50 pm, seconded by Supervisor Davis. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Andrew Baker
Director

Minutes are not official until adopted by the Land Conservation Committee.

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