

Draft
Buffalo County Minutes

Committee/Board: Land Conservation & Ag and Extension Committee

Date of Meeting: October 5, 2020

Call to order: Meeting called to order by Dwight Ruff, Chair, at 6:02 p.m.

Members present: Dwight Ruff, Steve Nelson, John Sendelbach appearing in person. Dave Linse attending via video. Brad Schmidtkecht and William Bruegger, Sr., excused.

Others present for all or parts of the meeting: Sonya Hansen, Carl Duley, Alec Sundelius, Kristin Foehringer and Tim Wucherer.

Attending via video for all or parts of the meeting: Abby Nicewander, Mary Wood, Pat Malone and Annie Lisowski.

Public Comments regarding Agenda Items: None

Review/Discussion/Action – Minutes of the Previous Land Conservation and Ag & Extension Education Committee Meeting: Motion by Mr. Nelson seconded by Mr. Sendelbach to approve minutes of the September meeting as presented. Motion Carried.

Review/Discussion/Action – 2021 Wildlife Damage & Abatement Budget by USDA Alec Sundelius: Alec Sundelius from USDA introduced himself and his role with the committee. He oversees the Wildlife Abatement and Damage program. He shared the 2021 budget with the committee. This program doesn't require county dollars. It is pass through money from the DNR. The budget is only slightly increased from 2020. Motion by Mr. Sendelbach seconded by Mr. Nelson to approve the deer damage budget as presented. Carried. A copy of the signed budget should be sent to Sonya Hansen, Administrative Coordinator.

Review/Discussion/Action – Extension 4-H Associate Position: Mr. Duley highlighted our requested support position and its importance for the office. Ms. Hansen shared the document prepared by the Extension Office showing the benefit Extension provides to the County. Motion was made by Mr. Nelson seconded by Mr. Sendelbach to re-affirm the committee's support for hiring the county-funded part-time position for Extension. Motion Carried.

Review/Discussion/Action – 136 Contract: Ms. Malone presented the 136 Contract to the committee. No action is needed tonight but wanted the committee to have time to look over the contract. Mr. Ruff directed Ms. Malone to present the 136 Contract to the full board so any questions can be asked and to maintain transparent communication.

Educator Reports: The Extension report was shared with the committee. Mr. Duley highlighted the work he has been doing on industrial hemp. He is very pleased with how the essential oil plot has turned out. Ms. Wood shared an update on her special project for Veterans involved in the criminal justice system. They are interviewing candidates for a position to facilitate the program. Ms. Lisowski shared that this is National 4-H week. She highlighted some of the signs and windows 4-H clubs have put together to recruit and promote 4-H countywide.

Review/Discussion/Action ~ Outdoor Recreational Plan Update & Services Provided by Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission by Abbey Nicewander, Senior Planner:

Abbey Nicewander, Senior Planner with the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission (MRRPC) informed the Committee that as part of our county contributions for joining this commission, their office can assist Buffalo County in updating their Outdoor Recreational Plan which is due to expire at the end of this year. She indicated that typically they hold an initial meeting with whoever would like to be involved in the plan update to identify our goals and vision for the future. They can provide the updated data. Ms. Nicewander stated that it is important to have a current plan as many grant opportunities require an Outdoor Recreational Plan. Mr. Duley stated that the County had previously had an intern complete a Silent Sport inventory that may be helpful. Ms. Nicewander indicated that this is typically a six-month process. Mr. Nelson volunteered to be a member of the Committee to work on the plan and would have a conversation with Ms. Nicewander.

Ms. Hansen indicated that she would work with Ms. Nicewander and Mr. Nelson to start the process.

Review/Discussion/Action ~ Closed Session: The Committee did not go into closed session.

Review/Discussion/Action ~ Tell Farms Reimbursement Process for Outstanding Invoices:

Ms. Foehringer updated the Committee on the status of this project. She indicated that this project is not your typical cost-share project and is under the Notice of Discharge Grant with the DNR. She wanted to make the Committee aware that the project work needs to be completed by the end of November and signed off by the engineer. She stated that this is a reimbursement grant and that some of the major contractors are requesting payment before they will do any additional work. She stressed that it is important that the work get completed timely to reduce any risk to the County. A motion was made by Mr. Sendelbach seconded by Mr. Linse to approve paying the outstanding contractor bills and to have Administration, Land Conservation and Corporation Counsel review the file for any additional action to reduce the risk exposure on this project. Motion Carried.

Review/Discussion/Action ~ DATCP Funding for the Land Conservation Department:

Ms. Hansen indicated that the 2020 staffing grant is set in the amount of \$115,814. The former Conservationist salary before she left can be covered by this grant. Any other county staff doing conservation work can also be covered. The salary of the benefits of administrative assistants working on conservation work would be eligible to count towards this grant as well, along with the technicians' salaries and benefits. The County would not financially gain from not filling the Land Conservationist position as funding is based on prior costs. She indicated that not filling the position would also have an impact on developing and continuing conservation activities or practices in the County. Ms. Foehringer verified that the first position is paid in full, or \$75,000, whichever is more, the second position is paid at seventy percent and the third position is paid at 50% under the current

structure. She stated that if the position is not filled, funding would be substantially decreased as verified by DATCP. No action is required by the Committee.

Review/Discussion/Action ~ Land Conservationist Vacant Position:

A motion was made by Mr. Sendelbach seconded by Mr. Nelson to fill the Land Conservationist position. Motion Carried.

Mr. Ruff, Mr. Sendelbach and Mr. Nelson were interested in serving on the Interview Committee. The Committee has tentatively scheduled interviews on Friday, October 16th. The Administration Office will inform the members of the actual dates and times when set. Mr. Ruff stated that due to the small department size that it would be beneficial for current staff to have the opportunity to meet and ask questions of any final candidate(s) prior to hiring. Ms. Hansen indicated that we could accomplish this with a second interview process. Ms. Foehringer indicated that Ms. Olson had also recommended bringing in outside expertise from NRCS and Pepin County to attend the interviews.

A motion was made by Mr. Ruff seconded by Mr. Sendelbach to approve awarding additional compensation to the two technicians presently covering the duties of the Land Conservationist retroactive to when Ms. Olson departed under the current employee policy until the position is filled. Motion Carried.

Review/Discussion/Action ~ Land Conservation Project Planning, Authorization and Workload Prioritization:

Ms. Foehringer and Mr. Wucherer indicated that they wanted to develop a ranking system for awarding cost share projects and have been working on a draft. Ms. Foehringer indicated that NRCS has guidance that she felt could be beneficial for the County. She indicated that they will present a draft for consideration at the next meeting.

Review/Discussion/Action ~ Land and Water Resource Management Plan: Ms. Foehringer indicated that this plan needs to be reviewed before the end of 2022 and takes at least a year to develop. A motion was made by Mr. Nelson seconded by Mr. Sendelbach to table this item for a future meeting.

Chairperson Report: The Chair had nothing additional to report.

Review/Discussion/Action – Determine Next Committee Meeting: The next meeting date is scheduled for November 2, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. Land Conservation will be first on the agenda.

Public comments not regarding Agenda items – There were no public comments.

Adjournment: Motion by Mr. Nelson seconded by Mr. Sendelbach to adjourn the meeting. Motion Carried. The meeting was adjourned at 8:12 p.m.

Submitted by:

Patricia Malone,
Area Extension Director

Sonya J. Hansen
Administrative Coordinator

