

Watershed Assessment Group Minutes
Story County Administration Building, Conference Room A
Monday, December 2, 2019

Present were Leanne Harter, Margaret Jaynes, Keith Morgan, Matt Boeck, Mike Cox, Jerry Moore, Linda Murken, and Scott Wall.

Harter called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m.

Jaynes moved, second by Morgan, to approve the agenda. Motion carried unanimously.

A discussion of the notes from the previous meeting on October 18 was tabled as no one had reviewed them yet.

Cox said he is requesting a Watershed Coordinator position from the Conservation Board. The request was first made last year, late in the budgeting process. The position would assist with the implementation of this group's action steps and with setting agendas, coordinating meetings, writing grant proposals. Cox requested input on a draft job description.

Jaynes said she's seen shared positions created before in which one person serves two or more departments and that person invariably has more and more of their time taken up by one department. How will Cox keep the Watershed Coordinator from becoming just another Conservation employee?

Cox said that is a valid concern and he doesn't have the answer. This situation is similar to IVRM which is shared by Conservation and Secondary Roads and is generally a good relationship.

Other comments were that Conservation is the logical location for this position to be housed. The job description should specify that the coordinator takes direction from the Watershed Assessment Working Group (WAWG). It should state that the coordinator will work with Watershed Management Authorities (WMA's).

Murken stepped out of the room as the Board of Supervisors will approve or disapprove requests for funding new positions and did not want to influence the discussion.

Jaynes moved, seconded by Moore, to support Cox's request for the Watershed Coordinator position. Jaynes asked if there was an alternative if the position was not approved. Would Cox consider sharing a person with another department or accepting a 1/2-time or 3/4-time position?

Cox did not want to limit the hours too much as he felt it would be sacrificing quality if the approved hours weren't sufficient.

Motion carried unanimously. Harter will write a letter of support for the Watershed Coordinator position.

Murken returned to the meeting and was apprised of the group's decision.

The group went through the items on the implementation matrix and provided updates on the status of items where progress has been made.

Item 1.1 – Storm Water Ordinance – Moore said Planning & Development is working on their first application to be submitted under the new storm water rules. It is a two-home development off Highway

69 just south of Ames. Planning & Development expects to have begun working on all the matrix items assigned to them by February 2020.

Item 1.2 – Flood Plain Ordinance. Harter said this is on tomorrow’s Board of Supervisor’s agenda for transferring authority to Planning & Development.

Item 2.5 – Native Prairie Remnants. Cox said the county’s pioneer cemeteries contain small remnant prairies. He is working with Ethan Anderson in the Attorney’s Office on an agreement to manage vegetation in pioneer cemeteries.

Item 2.7 – Nutrient Reduction. Cox and Murken said this would be an item the Watershed Coordinator should focus on.

Item 2.9 – Water Quality Monitoring. Cox said he is asking the Conservation Board to approve a water quality monitoring agreement with Prairie Rivers of Iowa. Prairie Rivers has received grants of \$6,000 and \$10,000 plus some money from the City of Ames and they are requesting an additional \$24,000 from Story County. The funds will be used as start-up fees for the initial year of a ten-year plan to monitor water quality countywide.

2.11 – WMA Collaboration. Murken and Cox are both on the WMA board which is made up mostly of persons from Story County. They are working to get more participation from Hamilton and Hardin Counties.

2.12 – Erosion Control/Storm Water Management. Cox and Moore are coordinating a September 2020 conference with conservation boards across the State of Iowa to focus on environmental protection.

2.13 – Nutrient Reduction, Cox said this is the same as 2.12.

2.14 – Floodplain Management. Cox said Ames is expanding their well fields. He has offered to have Conservation manage any additional lands the city might purchase for the expansion.

Morgan noted that Debra Shildroth is still identified as a staff lead on some of the matrix action steps.

Jaynes asked if Sandra King should replace Debra.

Harter said recruitment of members to the WAWG had been based on people, not job positions. She did not feel it was warranted to bring on a new member simply because another person had left.

Harter asked what to do with action items that are completed. Should they be removed from the list? Should we look for new items to replace them? Should lower priority items be moved up in priority as high priority items are completed?

Morgan and Moore said completed items should remain on the list so progress on the implementation matrix can be seen.

Murken said we shouldn’t look for new items for the list until more progress has been made on what is there now. She doesn’t want to dilute what we’ve done so far by adding more.

Jaynes talked about the Iowa Department of Natural Resources new (2018) impaired waterways assessment report. It has not changed too much for Story County but there are some peculiarities. The lower half of Ballard Creek was listed as impaired in 2016 but now it is not while the upper half has been

added to the list. The Skunk River is listed as impaired where it enters and leaves Story County but not in the middle of the county. Neither of these listings appear reasonable. How can the same water be impaired upstream then not impaired downstream? Jaynes will speak to the IDNR about this.

Harter said the next regular meeting will be in February. She would like to go through the implementation matrix in detail and wants a four-hour meeting over the lunch hour with food provided. The two-hour meetings are not long enough to delve into the matrix in detail and it needs to be reviewed in depth as many of the people in the group were not involved in its creation.

Murken said for the February meeting she wants to assign working groups to address details or progress on areas where we need help to complete implementation matrix items.

Jaynes asked for an update on the drainage district improvement in Grant #5.

Wall said the last meeting was to approve annexing additional lands into the district and awarding a contract to install a new main tile to serve the western part of the newly annexed area. Due to landowners' objections the west annexation and tile is a dead issue. The west annexation was only part of the proposed repairs/improvements in the report on Grant #5 which is valid for 10 years. It also recommended a cleanout of the existing open ditch which is a repair and must be done along with improvements to the district tiles north of Lincoln Way. The district balance is more than \$200,000 in arrears, mostly for engineering fees, and the trustees need to decide on levying the district to pay those fees as interest is accruing on the debt.

Jaynes said she will take minutes at the next meeting.

Morgan moved, seconded by Harter, to adjourn. Motion carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 11:25 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Scott T. Wall

Note: Following the meeting Murken spoke to Penny Brown Huber of Prairie Rivers. They have agreed to continue their support of the Squaw Creek WMA but need additional resources to take on the Headwaters WMA. Prairie Rivers will be applying for an NRCS grant for conservation innovation and water quality practices. The RFP should come out in March with potential funding available in June.