



MINUTES

ROCK COUNTY LAND CONSERVATION COMMITTEE
Wednesday January 5, 2021, 7:15 P.M.
USDA Service Center, 440 N Hwy 14 and Virtual via Zoom

1. **Call to Order:** Chair Bostwick called the meeting to order at 7:20 pm.

Committee Members Present: Stephanie Aegerter, Rich Bostwick, Mike Mulligan, James Quade and Alan Sweeney.

Committee Members Excused: Wes Davis, Janelle Crary and Genia Steven

Others Present: Andrew Baker, Director
2. **Approval of Agenda:** Supervisor Sweeney moved to approve the agenda as amended, seconded by Supervisor Mulligan. **Motion carried unanimously.**
3. **Approval of Minutes – December 1, 2021 LCC meeting.** Supervisor Mulligan moved the approval of the minutes as presented, seconded by Mr. Quade. **Motion carried unanimously.**
4. **Citizen Participation, Communications, and Announcements.** Andrew noted that the staff are planning to meet as a group on a monthly basis. Today they discussed in particular the need to focus more on the implementation of NR 151 agricultural standards. This is an obligation of Conservation Departments statewide, subject to staffing levels and access to cost share funding. The Land and Water Resource Management Plan, recently updated, specifically references this goal and our staff grant from DATCP dictates that NR 151 should be one of the focuses of the department. This includes “voluntary” implementation of the standards and a concerted effort from staff to identify concerns. The first step will be to send out general correspondence to landowners noting the various conservation programs that are available and our focus on NR 151 implementation. Internally, staff has begun the process of identifying priority farms to proactively address. The LCC will staff informed in the process.
5. **Review Bills Paid:** There were no questions about the bills paid in November and December.
6. **PACE Program Update**

Andrew informed the Committee that the three applications from 2021 (Sayre, McNall and Watson) will likely be funded by NRCS. However, in recent weeks the Watsons have decided to take on some additional family planning for the farm, therefore they decided to withdraw the Easement acquisition at this time. It will just not work out. They do plan to continue on the acquisition approved in the last application cycle.

Staff is moving forward on five acquisitions from past years; two for Barlass, Watson, Vanthournout and Conway. One Barlass acquisition is planned to close on January 14th.

Groundswell Conservancy (formally National Heritage Land Trust) reached out about the possibility of another partnership on an easement acquisition near Evansville. Similar to the Sayre Easement from a few years ago, Groundswell would apply for DNR wildlife funding as the local match to NRCS funds (the property would be open for hunting). Since the property is eligible for the program, but not in a priority area, the County would process the easement similar to a donation, i.e. pay for all the administrative costs, such as the appraisal, and agree to long term monitoring.

Andrew also noted that he sent information to two interested landowners in the last month, one for the purchase program and one for the donation program. Both would be good applications.

7. **Discussion Item:** Groundwater Nitrate Workgroup Update

Andrew updated the Committee regarding the status of the Nitrate Workgroup, which met this morning. Primary discussion was in regard to options for field test plots that would include sampling of water that leaves the root zone. Chris Murphy reported on the potential cost of doing so based on information from a recent installation by Discovery Farms. Staff is going to ask state staff to attend the next meeting to explain to the group the process, etc.

The group also reviewed the drafted Resolution that for the nitrate mitigation assistance program. The program would be target toward the highest risk citizens (infants and expecting mothers) in the areas of the County that have historically had high nitrate levels. The resolution will come to LCC and Health Board in the February, but the program would primarily administered by the Health Department with assistance from LCD for outreach, analysis of watershed areas, etc.

8. **Report of Conference Attendance.** Andrew reported that no staff attended training in the second half of 2021 that exceed \$1,000.

9. **Adjourn:** Supervisor Sweeney made a motion to adjourn at 7:52 pm, seconded by Mr. Quade. **Motion carried unanimously.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Andrew Baker
Director

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

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