

ENVIRONMENT AND LAND USE COMMITTEE
Department of Land Management
MEETING MINUTES
February 3, 2010 9:00 AM
COUNTY BOARD ROOM

Chair Halderson called the meeting to order at 9:05 AM.

Committee members present: Paul Halderson, Gerry Van Tassel, Roland Thompson, Dave Quarne, Michelle Haines and the new Farm Service Agency Chair, Ed Patzner. Chuck Zauner and Dick Kiekhoefer were absent.

Staff/Advisors present: Kevin Lien and Virginette Gamroth and Scott Laurie, County Forester.

Chair Halderson stated that the Open Meeting Law had been complied with through notifications and posting.

Approval of Agenda – Van Tassel made a motion to approve the agenda, Thompson seconded, motion carried unopposed.

Approval of Minutes – Van Tassel made a motion to approve the January 6th, 2010 regular session meeting minutes as presented, Thompson seconded, motion carried unopposed.

Approve Meeting Minutes – Town of Dodge Public Hearing-January 12th, 2010 – Quarne made a motion to approve the public hearing meeting minutes as presented, Van Tassel seconded, motion carried unopposed.

Forester-Scott Laurie - Laurie distributed a “Proposal to Modify Tree Planting Program in Trempealeau County” to Committee members. (Report is on file in DLM office). Laurie explained the steps of the current tree planting program as outlined in the proposal. Laurie stated he has been instructed by the State office to reduce the mileage on his State vehicle and the tree planting program plays a big part in doing so. Laurie voiced concerns that his office may even lose the State owned vehicle. Laurie added that in the biggest tree planting years, 800 – 1000 miles would be put on the vehicle. Presently, Laurie stated he is using his personal vehicle to cover work in the Southern part of the County and the other Forester, Dan Dehmer is using his personal vehicle to cover work in the northern half of the County. Laurie stated he would like to see the maintenance, repair, and storage of the three county-owned machines and the transportation of the tree planting machines, to the planting site, turned over to the County. Currently the tree planters are stored by the Highway Dept. in a shed outside of Arcadia and it has never been an issue. There is very minor maintenance on the machines. Laurie stated about ten years ago he replaced the heavy duty coulters. Lien inquired whether that was on all three machines. Laurie responded that all three machines are pretty much ready to go. Laurie mentioned that one machine, which was purchased from Gale Gabriel, may need a new seal or cylinder at some point. Laurie stated he would still do the billing, reconcile the bills, and assist any persons inexperienced in tree planting. Laurie provided information on LaCrosse County’s tree program and recommended that our County “mirror” that program. Halderson stated he has been on the Committee for four years and inquired as to how this DNR program got connected to the County? Laurie responded that the County has always owned the tree planting machines. Lien added he had found meeting minutes from the 1940’s when tree planters were purchased. Laurie continued that it has been tradition that the County owned the tree planters but the Forester managed the tree planting program.

Van Tassel stated that in previous years the Forester had been located in the Courthouse so working together was physically easier. Laurie suggested if a landowner has used the tree planting machine before, that the County have them pick it up either at the Courthouse, in Arcadia or at the USDA building parking lot. Lien provided the Committee with a report of income from the tree planting program for the past several years which showed that tree planting is declining. Lien inquired as to whether most of the people planting trees are “absentee landowners” or people who have historically done a lot of tree planting? Lien stated after last months’ E & LU Committee meeting where the Committee had discussed letting the tree planters sit for a year, Lien received two calls to rent the planters, so there is still definitely a need. Lien explained that spring is the busiest time for DLM staff, especially in the last couple of years when the DLM received close to \$1 million in Target Runoff Management (TRM) projects to be installed. Laurie stated the program is entirely driven by tree planting numbers, if the numbers stay like they were last year, there may be four or five jobs, however Laurie had heard recently of a proposed CRP signed up for May or June. If that comes to fruition, the tree planting numbers will definitely go up and six to eight weeks could be spent on tree planting. Quarne inquired as to how many trees Laurie expected to plant this year? Laurie responded that at last count it was about 15,000 and most of those people are ordering 500, 800 or 1,000 trees. Laurie voiced his opinion that the Committee needed to address the current cost associated with renting the planters, regardless of how the program goes. Trempealeau County charges \$10.00 per thousand trees for machine rental. LaCrosse County currently charges \$15.00 per thousand trees with a \$30 minimum. Laurie stated that when Gene Berg had been hired to assist with the tree planting, expenses such as labor, maintenance repair and mileage had all been paid from the rental fees. Discussion followed as to how the expenses are paid. Halderson inquired whether or not Laurie would be able to run the program if rates were raised? Laurie responded it would get kind of complicated because he wasn’t sure how the State vehicle pool would get reimbursed for mileage. Lien questioned how expenses were handled when Laurie had hired someone to do tree planting? Laurie responded that, at that time, he had access to seasonal employee funds and mileage was being charged to the CRP program. Laurie suggested if tree planting numbers stay where they are right now, he doesn’t have a problem getting new people started with the tree planting machines. If numbers escalate, then the DLM would need to look at hiring some help. Quarne questioned if this would free Laurie up to do more forestry plans? Laurie responded that the issue is not time but mileage. Halderson suggested Laurie use one of the DLM vehicles to transport the tree planters. Van Tassel suggested charging landowners mileage from the County to the planting site. Lien stated he would work with Laurie on vehicle use, however Lien would have to talk to Personnel about the County’s liability insurance. Lien asked for Laurie’s recommendation on tree planting rates. Laurie commented it could be anything. Laurie had previously suggested mirroring LaCrosse County. Discussion followed about the rates charged by persons who offer custom tree planting. Laurie discussed the Tree Planter Rental Agreement form and stated he felt it was very important that it be signed when renting the planters. Quarne made a motion to raise the tree planter rental rates to \$20.00 per thousand seedlings planted with a \$50.00/minimum charge, Thompson seconded, motion carried. Lien added he and Laurie would work together on the vehicle arrangement. Van Tassel suggested Lien send the Tree Planter Rental Agreement to Corporation Counsel for review. Lien stated Corp. Counsel had reviewed it previously, but agreed that the changes would be made and then it would again be sent to Corp. Counsel for review.

2009 Budget Resolution – Each member was provided a copy of a resolution for the Trempealeau County Land Management Department 2009 Budget Revision – II. The purpose of the budget resolution is to adjust the budgeted amounts to the final grant amounts received. Lien went through the budget changes with the Committee. Lien reiterated that the accounts adjusted involve state grants only. Van Tassel made a motion to forward the 2009 Budget Resolution II onto County Board, Haines seconded, motion carried with no opposition.

TRM/LWRM Cost Share Payments/Requests- There were no cost share payments/requests.

Approval of Zoning & Sanitary Specialist Job Description – Lien stated the Committee had talked about this job description at a previous meeting. Due to the timeline involved with posting, interviewing and filling this position, Lien had received verbal consent from Committee Chair Halderson, at that time, to go ahead with the posting, interviewing and filling of the position, but the Committee had not formally approved the job description. Lien stated the only thing that has changed is the job title which was originally Zoning & POWTS Specialist has been changed to Zoning & Sanitary Specialist. Quarne made a motion to approve the job description for the Zoning & Sanitary Specialist, Thompson seconded, motion carried unopposed.

Memorandum of Understanding with Health Dept. – Certified Lead Risk Assessor Services and Memorandum of Understanding with Health Dept – Emergency Public Inspections/Human Health Hazard Investigations - The Committee consensus was to table any action on the two Memorandums until the matter regarding the merger of Human Services and the Health Department is settled.

Vehicle Purchase and Vehicle Disposition – Last month Lien had discussed with the Committee the replacement of vehicles; trading in two trucks and getting one sport utility vehicle and another crewcab truck to replace the trade in. Lien stated he gave the two new car dealers in the County; Nels Gunderson Chevrolet and Arcadia Motors, a chance to come back with better offers. Lien went over the bids he had received with the Committee. Discussion followed on the specifics of each vehicle. Van Tassel questioned why sealed bids are no longer required? Lien responded he had reviewed the County Purchase and Property Disposal Policy and the DLM has an exclusion along with the Highway Dept. which states the DLM only has to go to the new car dealerships in the County and get written bids. Lien stated he had talked with Corporation Counsel regarding the disposal of the vehicles and the vehicles would have to be offered for sale to the general public. Thompson made a motion to approve the purchase of the Ford vehicles, Quarne seconded, motion carried with Van Tassel abstaining from the vote.

Surveying Update – Lien provided each Committee member with two survey reports; Township 20 North, Range 7 West and Township 20 North, Range 8 West, prepared by Joe Nelsen, County Surveyor. In T20N, R7W Nelsen has all the positions controlled, and in the southern part all positions are finalized from the Town of Gale remonumentation. Lien stated Nelsen is on target with the remonumentation schedule and is making good progress toward completion in 2012. Quarne made a motion to approve payment of the two survey bills as presented, Van Tassel seconded, motion carried with no opposition.

Director's Report- Lien informed the Committee that in December he received an e-mail from his counterparts throughout the State, that DATCP was going to take \$250,000 out of County allocation-SEG (segregated) money for staff. Lien provided the Committee with a copy of the letter he had written and forwarded to the State requesting that the funds not be taken from the county's. Lien stated he received an e-mail just this morning informing him that the State is going to restore the \$250,000 in SEG funds for the allocation for staffing grants.

Lien had recently been notified by Black River Falls Attorney, Mark Skolis that the lawsuit filed by the Winn's, regarding a conditional use permit for a wind turbine, has been "thrown out" by Judge Damon. Judge Damon stated it was "not ripe for adjudication" which basically means Winn's had nothing pending and were not denied anything. Lien stated Winn's could appeal.

Lien had previously discussed with the Committee a new computer program that would integrate the permits database in with the Arc View GIS program. Cindy Currier and Daryl Joten from the Information Systems Dept., Martin Goettl from Land Records and Lien had met with the vendor and were provided a demonstration tailored for what Trempealeau County is looking for. This new program will take care of integrating the Farmland Preservation records, NR-151 records, Non-metallic Mining files and the permits database with the Arc View GIS program and any records needed for fiscal reporting can also be retrieved. Lien reported it will take a lot of staff effort from all three departments to get all information and any back-log of records into the computer system and up to date, but once the program gets to that point it will be a great asset. Lien stated that he, Goettl and Currier had met with the Exec./Finance Committee this past week and gave a presentation, as that is Land Records' standing committee and Exec./Finance gave Land Records permission to keep money for the computer program purchase. Lien stated the money remaining from employee litigation in the DLM budget would pay for the balance of the program. Van Tassel questioned if this will be presented to the County Board. Lien responded it didn't need to be, as it was presented to Exec./Finance and the money is already in Land Records and the DLM budgets, however the purchase of the computer program is contingent upon DLM being able to finance the balance of the purchase. Discussion followed. The Committee consensus was to put this item on next months' agenda so that formal documentation can be put in the meeting minutes.

Next Regular Meeting Date was set for Wednesday, March 3rd, 2010 at 9:00 AM in the County Board Room.

At 10:15 AM, a motion was made by Quarne to adjourn the meeting, Haines seconded, motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Virginette Gamroth, Recording Secretary

Michelle Haines
Secretary