

LINN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
CEDAR RAPIDS, LINN COUNTY, IOWA
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2017 4:00 P.M.

The Board met in joint session with the Linn County Farm Bureau, 1323 Boyson Rd., Hiawatha, IA. Present: Chairperson Oleson, Vice Chairperson Harris, Supervisors Houser and Walker. Absent: Supervisor Rogers (other county business). Board members voting "AYE" unless otherwise noted.

Other County staff present: Steve Tucker, Finance Mgr., Dawn Jindrich, Budget Dir., Les Beck, Planning & Development Dir., Steve Gannon, County Engineer, Brad Ketels, Asst. County Eng., Dennis Goemaat, Deputy Conservation Director and Hillary Hughes, Conservation Board Pres.

Tim Keegan, Farm Bureau County Action Committee Chair. and Jason Russell, Pres. Of Farm Bureau welcomed everyone and the following topics were discussed:

Land & Water Legacy Bond Issue - Farm Bureau explained reasons for opposing the bond issue which was partly due to components being unclear and uncertainty about where the money could go. Estimated property taxes were presented for a couple farms based on information provided by the Auditor's Office (25 cents/thousand). It was explained that the 25 cents/thousand is the Finance Director's best way for someone to estimate their taxes noting that no bonds have been issued and the entire \$40 million will be issued over a period of 20 years. Farm Bureau pointed to lack of communication on the bond issue, however, Ms. Hughes gave an extensive explanation of the process that started in May, 2016 between the Conservation Board and Board of Supervisors. She also stated that several public meetings were held.

Purchase of Dows Ground - Supervisor Oleson presented a map of the land purchased by Linn County (they plan to close on the land in late April). Farm Bureau asked for clarification regarding the county's policy to purchase land only to sell part of it back for development, noting that they paid an average of \$14,000/acre when farm ground sells for \$8,000/acre. Supervisor Oleson explained that they got a better deal buying all of the Dows land knowing that they could turn some back to the private market. That practice, however, is not their normal process but they took the opportunity. Tucker clarified that the county does not have the money to do this without bonding up front (Conservation bond money).

Five to Three Supervisors - Farm Bureau was in favor of five supervisors with districts (existing plan). Supervisor Walker stated that if the voters choose to return to At Large, they will be in the exact same position as 10 years ago. A petition can put the representation plan on the ballot. There are some forces out there that are making a lot of noise about 5 to 3 and a lot of them come from rural areas. He advised Farm Bureau members to be careful when those same voices come to them. If they want to encourage the Farm Bureau to go At Large, question their motivations and he recommended that they reach out to the rural areas and educate them.

Mental Health Funding - Farm Bureau was not in support of raising the counties cap from \$114 million to \$142 million noting that only 50 counties levied their maximum in 2015. Supervisor Houser suggested that they need more discussion on the Mental Health issue, noting that Supervisor Rogers could not be in attendance this evening and he is the Board's representative on the MHDD Region's governance board. He suggested more meetings on this topic to get a dialogue going to try to get something accomplished this year.

Prospect Meadows - Supervisor Oleson stated that Prospect Meadows has a business plan. They received a \$1 million Vision Iowa grant and will be giving a presentation to the Hall Perrine Foundation. They will then be able to construct eight diamonds (half of it) to get some cash flow going (Perfect Game). Jon Gallagher is working on a conservation plan.

Update on Land Use Policy - Les Beck presented copies of Planning & Development's Annual Report specifically noting tools used to protect land and data on farm exemptions.

Animal Agriculture in Linn County - Farm Bureau is concerned whenever the county is hostile towards animal confinements, noting that the Board was not supportive of the Ditch and the Shulista applications. Les Beck explained the process used by the County when an animal confinement application is submitted. In the Ditch case, staff felt that points were achieved. Staff felt that points claimed on the Shulista application were not earned. That application was withdrawn and a new application was submitted below the Master Matrix threshold.

Road and Bridge updates - Farm Bureau is relatively satisfied with the roads they drive on. Steve Gannon explained that they are not changing the cost of dust control and the county will be applying more dust control on county roads and lowering the vehicle count. There are 16 bridges listed in the deficient category. Brad Ketels presented Key Performance Indicators focusing on countywide initiative of customer satisfaction.

Lighted rail crossings - Supervisors Oleson and Harris viewed the crossing where the most recent fatality occurred. They have talked to the railroad company and County Engineer. The Engineer has done a good job communicating, however, it takes a long time. Farm Bureau asked what they could do to help and they were encouraged to do an awareness campaign among rural residents that take the same routes every day and do not feel at ease with their routes.

Education on invasive Palmer Amaranth Seed in Ditches/Prairies - Farm Bureau is interested in knowing what the County knows about this species. Gannon stated that it has been discussed in the Roadside Committee meetings. Linn County buys Iowa seed which should keep it from spreading.

In conclusion, the Farm Bureau thanked the Supervisors for attending the meeting and asked that they continue with the open lines of communication.

Adjournment at 6:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

JOEL D. MILLER, Linn County Auditor
By: Rebecca Shoop, Deputy Auditor

Approved by:

BRENT OLESON, Chairperson
Board of Supervisors