

# BLACKHAWK HILLS



Resource Conservation and Development  
Jo Daviess • Stephenson • Carroll • Ogle • Whiteside • Lee

COUNCIL MEETING  
Monday, November 23, 2009  
Lanark Heritage Center  
106 South Board Street  
Lanark, IL

## MINUTES

### Attendance

Edie Block, Carroll County Board  
Ed Juracek, Carroll County SWCD  
Cathy Brunner, Carroll County Area Rep.  
Kim Monk, Jo Daviess County Board  
William Tonne, Jo Daviess County SWCD  
Isaac Mercer, Lee County Board  
Ed Uphoff, Lee County Area Rep.  
Ron Colson, Ogle County Board  
Lynne Kilker, Ogle County SWCD  
Samuel Newton, Stephenson County Board  
Della Moen, Stephenson County Area Rep.  
Charles Moen, Stephenson County SWCD  
Tim Keller, Whiteside County SWCD  
Dave Dornbusch, RC&D Coordinator  
Theresa Wittenauer, Economic Development Professional  
Julie Jacobs, RC&D Program Assistant

### Call to Order

William Tonne, RC&D President, called the meeting to order at 6:04 PM.

### Introductions

There were no new introductions.

### Minutes

Minutes to the September 28, 2009 Council Meeting were presented to the Council Members. Chuck Moen made a motion to approve the minutes as written. Isaac Mercer seconded the motion. Motion carried.

### Finances

The Financial Report was handed out. William Tonne pointed out that we are five months into our fiscal year. Cathy Brunner asked if Blackhawk Hills had been reimbursed for the IL Association of RC&D Areas (IARCD) Annual Meeting. Julie Jacobs replied that she has invoiced John Almer but is expecting that the invoice will not be paid until the next IARCD's teleconference. Julie also pointed out that the RC&D Council's budget shows extra income and meeting expenses because the IARCD's Annual Meeting income and expenses were run through our bank account. Julie added that since Karen

Nelson, Treasurer, has been on vacation that she has not received that last bank statements to do the reconciliation. If there are any changes to the Financial Report, they will be shared with the Council Members at the January meeting. Chuck Moen made a motion to place the Financial Report on file. Edie Block seconded the motion. Motion carried. The Financial Report will be placed on file. Dave Dornbusch stated that Whiteside County SWCD did not pay their dues and that the Whiteside County Board has appropriated \$4,000 less in their budget for our Economic Development District.

### **Unfinished Business (Progress Reports and Actions)**

*Coordinator's Report* – Dave Dornbusch's report was shared with the Council Members prior to the meeting. Dave added to his report that he recently met with Russ Simpson, Jo Carroll Energy, concerning their Biomass Project. Russ is hoping to know by Thanksgiving if this project will move forward or not. Dave helped out with the Outdoor Stewardship Days for Carroll/Whiteside/Jo Daviess County SWCDs and the Lee/Ogle County SWCDs. Dave is working with Kim St. John, Prairie Rivers RC&D Coordinator, on developing a training session for employees on several new Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) initiatives. The training would take place in January. The plans for the Biomass Conference are moving forward. A contract has been signed with the River Center in Dubuque, Iowa. Training on the Energy Efficiency Block Grant program will take place in December. With the Energy Efficiency Block Grant program Dave would like to get the Budget Committee together to discuss how the Council will handle management of the program. Dave still has not heard anything new on the Small Business Development Centers. If we don't hear anything by the first of January, we will drop this project. Dave also announced that he has a new addition to his family, Hala Ann. He is hoping that Hala will be at a future RC&D Meeting. Della Moen asked about guidelines for the Energy Efficiency Block Grant. Dave replied the guidelines are being worked on now and we should hear something in the near future.

William Tonne reflected back to Dave's comment about Whiteside County not paying/cutting our donation. Everyone felt that we should make a presentation to both the SWCD Board and the County Board as to what we do.

*Economic Development Professional Report* – Theresa Wittenauer's report was shared with the Council Members prior to the meeting. Theresa touched on two items, the Economic Development Administration (EDA) evaluation and the Thomson Prison. EDA did an evaluation on our District and it went well. Bill Warren, EDA, performed the evaluation. He suggested some bylaw changes for us but he liked the way our Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy groups work. In comparison, to other districts we are above average. Theresa also spoke about the Thomson Prison being considered for sale to the Federal Prison system. She attended a meeting at the Prison last week. The IL Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) is asking for letters of support that the Thomson Prison be sold to the Federal Government. Theresa handed out a copy of an email she had received from Kathy Kurtenbach, DCEO Northwest Regional Manager. Attached to the email was a Thomson Correctional Facility Preliminary Economic Impact Analysis. Theresa also passed around an impact study that she had just received. She will email it to the Council Members. William Tonne recommended that the information be sent to all the communities and to the economic development professionals in our area. Theresa asked the Council if they would like to write a letter supporting the Prison to be sold. Della Moen made a motion that Blackhawk Hills RC&D write a letter of support that the Thomson Prison be sold to the Federal Government to improve the economy in our area. Chuck seconded the motion. There was much discussion on the plus and minuses of selling the prison. Lynne Kilker called for question. All approved the call for question. The motion to write a letter of support that the Thomson Prison be sold to the Federal Government to improve the economy in our area was voted on. Motion carried on a 13-1 vote.

*Executive Secretary Report* – Julie Jacobs' report was shared with the Council Members prior to the meeting. Julie added to her report that Blackhawk Hills should become a member of the Circle of Diamonds program. The National Association of RC&D Councils is encouraging all RC&D Councils to become a member. The program is set up to be proactive approach for Councils to simply demonstrate that they are complying with the basic requirements of the RC&D statute. Donna Hunter from the National Office spoke about the Circle of Diamond Program at the IARCD's Annual Meeting. The IARCD has a goal that every RC&D in Illinois become a Circle of Diamond member. The Circle of Diamond designation will be looked at when deciding future funding for RC&D Councils. Cathy Brunner made a motion that Blackhawk Hills RC&D Council become a Circle of Diamond Member. Ron Colson seconded the motion. Motion carried.

## New Business

*New Measures* –The following measures were presented to the Council for approval.

*Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant* – Dave Dornbusch reported that Blackhawk Hills RC&D has been asked to serve as the grant recipient for a Department of Energy grant. The \$749,640 grant will be used to support communities under 35,000 population with upgrading their community building with energy improvements. Up to twenty percent of the money can be set into a revolving loan fund that can be used past the two years of the grant.

*NRCS Initiatives* – This project will provide training to NRCS and SWCD personnel on the four new NRCS Environmental Quality Incentive programs. The four programs include Organic Initiative, Conservation Innovation Grant, Conservation Partnership Initiative and Agriculture Water Enhancement Program. This training will be conducted in January of 2010 with a follow up Outreach meeting that will be held in February. Those meetings will be targeted to farmers either interested in becoming a certified organic grower, are in or are currently a certified Organic Grower.

Chuck Moen made a motion to approve both measures presented. Sam Newton seconded the motion. Motion carried.

*Route 20 Lookout Tower* – Tim Keller would like to have the Route 20 Lookout Tower, which is located near Route 84 and Route 20 reopened. Tim had contacted the IL Department of Transportation (IDOT) to discuss with them what can be done to have it reopened. The tower had been closed because it was unsafe. For IDOT to reopen it, it would cost about a million dollars. It would have to be built handicap accessible. Dave Dornbusch also contacted IDOT and learned that they would be willing to let a private group to take it over. Kim Monk made a motion that Blackhawk Hills RC&D approve this as a new measure and to work with a local group to get the lookout tower reopened. Della Moen seconded the motion. Motion carried.

## *Committee Reports*

*Marketing Committee* – Cathy Brunner reported that a copy of Blackhawk Hills RC&D Marketing Plan was in the Council Members packet. The Marketing Committee met to discuss how to handle some of the tasks outlined in the plan. Julie Jacobs stated that the items that the committee decided to work on were listed in her written report. Julie Jacobs and Dave Dornbusch met with Marty Cox of Legacy Prints last week. Blackhawk Hills RC&D has a credit with Legacy Prints so they will be designing a brochure and another marketing piece for us. Legacy will also provide us a quote on a tabletop display.

*Chicago/Rockford International Airport* – Ron Colson reported with the GM Plant closing in Janesville, WI the Airport Director is trying to find an airline to fly to Kansas City to accommodate the employees that have taken assignments in Kansas City. The Director always thinks out of box.

*Illinois Association of RC&D Areas (IARCD)* – Cathy Brunner thanked the Council and staff for hosting the IARCD Annual Meeting. Overall it was a very good meeting. Della Moen had provided a written report on the meeting to the Council Members. Cathy Brunner and Jim Elliott will attend the Leadership Forum in Washington, DC again. Cathy and Della both stressed that Council Members need to know their responsibilities as a board member.

*Regional CEDS Committee* – Ron Colson reported that the CEDS Committee met last Friday. Michelle Miller from Tri-County Economic Development Alliance gave an update as to what they are doing. Their website is [www.TCEDAonline.com](http://www.TCEDAonline.com). The Broadband project and the Thomson Prison were also discussed at the meeting.

*Galena Trail & Coach Road Society* – Tim Keller reported that the Society is working on the details of their next meeting that will be held in Mineral Point, WI.

*US Route 20* – William Tonne recently spoke to John Cox and there is funding in the budget for the Freeport bypass. Kim Monk added that Mr. Cox presented at the County Budget Meeting. The Citizen Group is looking for donations. The group would like to keep a lobbyist in Springfield to keep an eye on this project.

*Highway 30* – Nothing new to report.

*Driftless Area Initiative (DAI)* – Della Moen reported that the DAI Board approved a job description for an Executive Director. She hasn't heard anything officially. There are funds available for two years for salary and to set up an office. There are funds available in the upper Mississippi watershed through the federal Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative. Ed Juracek has attended some of the meetings and is an asset to have at the meetings. Dave Wilson's, DAI Coordinator, last day will be December 31<sup>st</sup>. Della will keep us posted on everything. Chuck Moen stated that there is a Value Added Ag Conference on January 20-22 in Eau Claire, WI. Green housing produce will be discussed at the conference. Kim Monk added that he is intrigued that Cisco is contracting with individual farmers to package things up.

*Broadband Committee* – Bill Tonne reported our next step is to wait for our due diligence call. Of the 140 applications submitted there are 31 at the top of the list. Blackhawk Hills' grant is in the top 18 in the list that the Governor put out. Bill received a call from a reporter from Chicago. The reporter wanted to know why we are not getting an push back from the providers. Bill explained to him that we have gotten the providers involved early on in this project. If our grant is not approved in the first round the second round will be in January or February. Bill has heard that DeKalb and a community down south did receive their due diligence calls. If Blackhawk Hills' grant gets approved we would turn around an form another 501(c)3.

*Next Council Meeting* – The next Blackhawk Hills RC&D Council Meeting will be January 25, 2010 at 6:00 PM at the Lanark Heritage Center. William Tonne stated he would invite Janet Fisher from the High Speed Rail to speak at the meeting.

### **Round Table Discussion**

Della Moen displayed the I88 West Corridor pen that she received at the IL Association of RC&D Areas Annual Meeting. All the contact information scrolls down from the pen.

Chuck Moen reported that Della Moen had received an email from Steve Chick, NRCS State Conservationist in Nebraska. Steve had read one of Della's articles. Steve used to be the District Conservationist in Stephenson County.

Ike Mercer announced that Greyhound stops at the Dixon Senior Center. The Lee County Council on Aging is working with IDOT to store the buses in a building by the interstate. The new Dixon Riverfront development was vandalized.

Ed Juracek asked with him being appointed as chairman of Blackhawk Hills' Forestry Committee what does he need to do. Dave Dornbusch will visit with Ed. The Forestry Committee will be starting to meet again.

Sam Newton asked is anyone has any extra money in their budget to send it to Stephenson County.

Cathy Brunner wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving and holiday season. She appreciates everyone for being a part of the RC&D program.

Ed Uphoff reported the Wind Mill project in Ashton and Franklin Grove area is moving forward.

Theresa Wittenauer stated the Entrepreneurs and Inventors Club celebrated their 4<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on November 19<sup>th</sup>. Out of the four or five clubs that existed, ours is the only one still in existence. The owners of Famous Fossil Winery were presented with the 2009 Entrepreneurs of the Year Award. At this meeting those in attendance broke up into several small groups for roundtable discussion

### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 7:50 PM.