

COMMITTEE REPORT

COMMITTEE: **Ad-Hoc County Park Committee
of the Jo Daviess County Board**

CHAIRPERSON:

DATE/TIME: **April 15, 2021 at 5:00 p.m.**

PRESENT:

☒ Hendrica Regez
☒ John Schultz

☒ Darcy Wild
☐ Vacant

Others: Steve Barg (JDCF Executive Director), Don Hill, Jim Johannsen (JDCF Director of Land Conservation), Ziggy Lebherz, Dan Reimer and Eric Tison

1. **Call to Order** – Hendrica Regez called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.
2. **Roll Call** – Roll call was taken by Dan Reimer and a quorum of members was present.
3. **Introductions** –
4. **Approval of Minutes**
 - a. **Minutes of the January 19, 2021 Ad-Hoc County Park Committee meeting** – John Schultz made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 19, 2021 Ad-Hoc County Park Committee meeting. Seconded by Hendrica Regez and motion carried following a roll call vote resulting in all ayes.
5. **Citizens Comments** - None
6. **Unfinished Business** - None
7. **New Business**
 - a. **Review Goals, Purpose and Charge of the Ad-Hoc County Park Committee** - Hendrica Regez stated per the Jan 19th meeting minutes that the goals/purpose/charge of the committee are to explore and develop possible options to acquire property located on South Rodden Road in Elizabeth Township, Jo Daviess County, Illinois for the purpose of a County Park and work with the Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation on a cooperative agreement to acquire the property and to provide the County Board with a report and recommendations by June 30, 2021. Hendrica Regez questioned if the committee had to wait before they could do anything until such date as June 30, 2021 and Scott Toot stated that the committee could go forward with research and appraisals in order to provide that information by June 30, 2021. Scott Toot stated that Jim Johannsen and Steve Barg were present and could provide appraisal information and process. Steve Barg and Jim Johannsen both stated they have appraisers that they utilize and could possibly have answers in 60 days. Dan Reimer did remind everyone that the report to the County Board can still be completed by June 30, 2021 even if appraisals were still under process or pending.

- **Review Memo from Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation** - See attached memo form JDCF dated April 9, 2021. JDCF (Steve Barg Executive Director and Jim Johannsen, Director of Land Conservation) stated they were excited to work with the County Board on this exploration. They explained it as a three main phase project regarding first, the land acquisition and second, the restoration and improvement and thirdly, the long-term maintenance. Project success depends on a plan that addresses all the phases and ultimate outcome or future influences as a result of any part of these phases. Several steps were suggested by JDCF such as independent third party appraisal, entering into a purchase agreement with seller, proper title search, boundary survey, inspection for environmental hazards and level of ecological restoration requirements, funding sources and site management plans and budgets.
- b. **Discussion and possible action on Process for Creating a County Park** - Jim Johannsen stated he is willing to volunteer to do most of the work on putting together proposal on how to design the project, how to get the project done and bring that back to the County Board no later than June 30, 2021. Jim Johannsen stated all the questions may not be answered by that date, but there would be a proposal to start the process. Hendrica Regez had a concern that the committee is so small and wondered if Scott Toot would be remaining on this committee and to see if Eric Tison from Zoning could be recommended to the committee. John Schultz agreed. Scott Toot and Don Hill agreed that additional member(s) could be appointed at next County Board meeting. Jim Johannsen stated that top two items are the appraisal because if that comes in lower than asking price, the project may be stopped right there and secondly, committee needs to have a fairly certain idea as to the funding source. JDCF has used and recommends Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation (ICECF) who may fund up to 80% of appraised value. It is important to compare funding sources to determine what the specs are going to be required and future requirements. Steve Barg stated JDCF stated there are other grant funds available like the Open Space Land Acquisition and Development Fund along with others via Department of Natural Resources. Recommend writing several grant proposals. Dan Reimer stated that County Grant Writer may have some ideas, also.
- c. **Discussion and possible action on Steps in Project Design Process**
- i. **Land Acquisition (Appraisal)** – Jim Johannsen stated that this process would be to decide what is the fair market value of the property and should be done by a certified appraiser. If the property appraises lower than asking price, then the project process should stop there per JDCF recommendation. Hendrica Regez asked if the appraiser looks or inventories the plants, animals, etc on the land and Steve Barg stated the appraiser does walk the land and survey it. JDCF stated they could offer a 50/50 split on that estimated \$3500 to \$5000 appraisal cost and JDCF noted that a boundary survey can run \$3000 to \$4000. JDCF does have a list of possible certified appraisers to contact. Dan Reimer recommended 3 quotes minimum.
 - ii. **Land Restoration and Improvement** – Steve Barg recommends working on a vision for this park and asked everyone questions like who will use it, what we think it would look like, is it a family park, is it a tourist attraction, etc. Jim Johannsen stated he would look at ordering 3 appraisals, checking into funding

options and talk to the seller about the land. Scott Toot stated that it is unique for park and trails and envisions a kiosk similar to Wapello in Hanover. John Schultz wants the flexibility to change future outlook of the project if needed and Hendrica Regez wanted it to remain simple and natural. Darcy Wild asked if it would be a wedding destination site, but that would not meet zoning requirements per JDCF and Eric Tison mentioned that we do need to ensure the project does stay within zoning requirements.

- iii. **Long-term Maintenance** – JDCF stated to look at long term maintenance issues and ensure funding includes that.

- d. **Discussion and possible action on Communications/Community Outreach** - Scott Toot emailed concerned citizens earlier this year and Steve Barg commended the County Board for handling this matter in public with open and transparent meetings. The Galena Gazette has been covering the meetings and wrote several articles.

- 8. **Citizens' Comments** – Ziggy Lebherz was concerned regarding Spirit Rock about water retention, storm water run-off, traffic and garbage, hunters straying onto his land, bathroom facilities and road upkeep as he owns farmland on the low side of this site. John Schultz stated that there would not be a paved parking lot, but maybe a gravel lot and gravel walkways. Hendrica Regez stated we may have to look at Rodden Road and asked him if he has been to the other parks. Ziggy Lebherz stated he had not seen the other parks and he stated he was concerned about “bad” hunters and those who suffer are those adjacent to the area. He favors leaving it natural. Steve Barg stated he does have a legit concern and invited him to come visit the other parks to see a similar model to what is being proposed for “Spirit Rock”. Ziggy stated he would love to do that and meet with Steve Barg.
- 9. **Committee Concerns** - None
- 10. **Next regular meeting** – The next Ad-Hoc County Park Committee meeting will be Wednesday, May 5, 2021 at 3:00 p.m. at the Jo Daviess County Courthouse, County Board Room.
- 11. **Adjourn** - John Schultz made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Darcy Wild. Motion carried following a roll call vote resulting in all ayes. Meeting adjourned at 6:24 p.m.