

**REGULAR DRAINAGE MEETING**  
**Wednesday, February 17, 2021 11:30 AM**

**This meeting was held electronically and in-person due to Covid-19 concerns.**

2/17/2021 - Minutes

1. Open Meeting

Hardin County Drainage Chairperson BJ Hoffman opened the meeting. Also present were Trustee Renee McClellan; Trustee Lance Granzow; Landowners Morgan Vierkandt; Robert Smuck; Merv Vierkandt; Jack Runge; Dave Sweeney; Shirley Carolus; Lee Gallentine and Zeb Stanborough of Clapsaddle-Garber Associates (CGA); Michael Pearce, Network Specialist; and Denise Smith, Drainage Clerk.

2. Approve Agenda

Motion by McClellan to approve the agenda. Second by Granzow. All ayes. Motion carried.

3. Introductions/Attendance

Introductions were made and attendance verified.

4. DD 11 WO 294 - Discuss W Possible Action - Engineer's Opinion Of Costs

Smith stated in our last meeting back in November we had discussed having CGA draw up the estimated costs of replacement of the Main Tile from Prairie Ave. on the northeast to the outlet of the same, DD 11, we started there on the north edge of Buckeye and Clapsaddle-Garber Associates (CGA's) estimate is based on 5,100' of tile replacement w 24" tile for a construction cost of \$375,000 for the total project, some of this cost would be paid by Secondary Roads for the crossing on G Ave. Smith stated just to note the estimate does not include engineering, damages, legal, publication and costs to date and Smith does have a breakdown of estimated costs per parcel if anyone would like one of those today, Smith passed out copies of the breakdown.

Gallentine stated at the last Landowners Meeting there wasn't a huge amount of interest in this replacement but there was some curiosity as to what that cost would be, so we went ahead and drew that up, and that is what we came up with, and if you want to go forward with it, you are looking at about a mile of tile. Hoffman asked what the condition of the tile is currently. Gallentine stated this one is cracked and is the one that has the void on the side of it, and when you try to chase it, it collapses into that void on the side of it, but there hadn't been a huge amount of work orders in the past filed on this one. Smith stated we have some images on the screen you can look at; Pearce is going to share those. Gallentine stated as you can see it is cracked on the top and sides, they typically all are, once you start digging it up that crack will collapse into it, but it is still flowing.

Smuck asked the other reason we wanted to get the estimate was if there were any grants or anything like that that has come about, like some wetlands further on down the line, we would have a number we could use to apply for some of that, is that correct. Gallentine stated yes and pointed out an image that showed a piece of the side void where it has collapsed into it, Gallentine thinks the best bet would be a CREP type program or a wetland kind of thing, obviously that would probably have to be initiated by a landowner north of Prairie Ave, and asked if that is Smuck or if it is tenant, Smuck stated that would be him. Gallentine stated the other thing to keep in mind is that DD 21 is right next door and just a little south of this, Smuck stated they outlet in the same place, Gallentine stated if your wetland project was big enough you could outlet both those into there to feed it. Gallentine pointed out a good picture of the void on the side, that is more problematic than the cracked tile probably. Granzow stated there was a CREP program over there in New Providence, that was about a \$1,000,000 savings. Gallentine stated yes, in DD 102, they were talking about doing a decent replacement and instead they put in a wetland and IDALS replaced the main tile downstream of the wetland too at their nickel, so it saved the district quite a bit of money, Gallentine thought it was about 50 some aces. Hoffman stated he did not know what the Stolee project ended up being, but it was a significant savings as well, IDALS has been very helpful and generous to Hardin County. Gallentine stated wasn't it on Perry's property, Hoffman stated it was Steve Perry's. Hoffman stated if it was something you wanted to pursue Mike Bourland at IDALS would be very helpful. Smith stated she can provide Smuck with Bourland's contact information.

Smuck stated he would like the contact info, and it can't hurt to explore that and Smuck can chat with Bruce a little bit as it would be either on Bruce's place or Smuck's folks place that would be in the wetlands and Bruce's is already halfway in it anyway, so he does not see that there would be a really huge drawback. Granzow stated being a wetland they also got paid annually through this program. Smuck thought it was somewhere near \$300/acre. Granzow stated it does take the ground out of production.

Gallentine stated typically with IDALS, they are just like NRCS, most of that is typically landowner driven versus district driven, Smuck stated yes it is coming out in the next two to five years and this would be a great way to drain a whole lot of that with that benefit.

## 5. Comments/Discussion

Smith stated Shirley Carolus had some comments for the Trustees. Hoffman stated let's open everyone up, and we can start with Carolus, Sweeney and Runge. Hoffman invited Carolus to comment, to voice her opinions, comments, questions, or concerns. Carolus stated her concern is that she has 3 lots in town that are involved in this, one of them is a bare lot and according to an estimate Carolus will be paying \$900 for one lot and a couple thousand for the other two, and Carolus stated beings this is a retirement town how many people are going to be Able to afford this. Granzow stated plus your streets. Hoffman stated just so Carolus understands, and this is purely educational only, the Trustees have both a fiduciary responsibility but we also have a hydrology responsibility to maintain these tiles, and they have to be in operating conditions, if the conditions get worse or if the system fail, we have to by Iowa Code, maintain the facility so it is in operating condition. So at some point our hands may be tied that we have to do something and it does not bring Hoffman any pleasure to have to spend someone else's money on something that they see very little value in, and wanted to let Carolus know that we may have to do something at some point. Hoffman stated the second thing he would say, if a project does occur this current classification that has those estimates would very likely change, it could reduce your liability while increasing others or it could be vice versa, so just from an educational standpoint Hoffman thinks it is important that he lets Carolus know that as well.

Carolus stated what she has seen is that the figures that are out there now do not include everything like engineering and so on and so forth, and it could be higher. McClellan stated that was correct. Hoffman stated it will definitely be higher because he does not believe we would call them hidden fees but the estimate for engineering, damages, any legal expenses and publications, those are really hard to estimate on the front end, Hoffman believes our Drainage Engineer and Clapsaddle-Garber do a really good job to minimize those expenses and having them involved reduces the damages that could be potentially incurred, and having them involved helps with the legal issues that can potentially come up. Hoffman stated the publication costs those are fixed by the Iowa Falls Times-Citizen and the Eldora Herald newspapers so it is pretty tough to regulate those, but in the past 4-1/4 years, Hoffman has had very few complaints of excessive charges for engineering. Gallentine added that at this point is if everyone wanted to do the project, which Gallentine is not saying anyone does, it is a high enough cost we would still have to drop an Engineering Report and have a formal hearing, since there wasn't a huge amount of interest in the project the district just didn't want to spend the money to do that, so actually the Trustees are trying to save some money and not do that. Hoffman stated we have been very frugal and fiscally responsible in the project thus far and Hoffman thinks Smuck's comments about looking at some alternative options that have historically proven to be significant cost savings while, being environmentally friendly and good stewards of the land, could also be an option to save significantly.

Carolus stated her lots for the drainage district are going to cost 10 times more than the lot is worth. Hoffman stated he understands that and we have similar issues in the city of Radcliffe, where we are anticipating a project as well, there is no excuse for it, the classification is the classification, and asked Smith how old the classification is. Smith stated she believed it was the original classification which dates to around 1910 to 1912. Hoffman stated so we have a classification from 1910-1912, so it probably needs to be looked at again and see if there is equity that needs to be changed from party to party and parcel to parcel, that is something with this project would likely occur. Gallentine stated if the project were to occur.

Carolus stated she is part of another drainage ditch just southeast of town and Carolus had a large assessment, people were paying \$5 or \$10 and Carolus ended up in the thousands of dollars, Granzow asked if we reclassified that one, and Gallentine stated he did not think we had that wrapped up yet. Carolus stated she does not like to see here we go again. Hoffman stated there has been no decision to do anything, if anything we have spoken about today it is actually reducing the fiscal responsibility for landowners and like Smuck's idea if there is a means of allowing the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship to do a project minimizing the expense to the landowners, Hoffman thinks that is a great option if it is feasible it could be looked at. Merv Vierkandt stated it absolutely should be looked at. Gallentine stated he does not know how the Department of Ag will view it, but actually where you are downstream of Buckeye, which is a city, they may view it as a benefit as you are helping to treat the storm water that comes off of Buckeye, because typically urban storm water is more concentrated than ag with contaminants. Smuck stated and essentially it is the sole waste-water system for the town of Buckeye, Gallentine stated that is another issue too. Hoffman stated so at this point there is no pulling a trigger on a project we are just here to discuss all options and get valuable input today. Carolus stated she was told on the other drainage ditch if she had something earlier it could have been, the word isn't re-evaluated, it was some other word. McClellan stated reclassified is the word Hoffman stated the reclassification is what he was talking about earlier, the equity between parcels and property owners, at the end of the day the sum of all the parcels has to equal

100% so if you have a 10% classification and % of benefit today, and yours goes to 5%, someone else's has to take that 5% so the sum at the end of that classification has to equal 100%.

Merv Vierkandt stated she is talking about her is being reclassified on the other district and someone should let her know that Merv Vierkandt addressed Carolus, one thing you may have missed on your other parcel there east, that is so expensive for you, that is being reclassified, that is what you meant to say when you said re-evaluated, so you are not done on that one yet. Carolus thanked Vierkandt for putting the right words there. Hoffman thanked Carolus for her comments, Carolus stated you guys go ahead and she will listen.

Hoffman stated let's move on to Sweeney if he has input. Sweeney stated he does not have a lot to say, it sounds like this is more informative and Sweeney appreciates that and would ask if Smith could send Sweeney the estimate breakdown in an email after the meeting. Smith stated she would email it to Sweeney. Sweeney stated secondly it seems like there is two concerns: one is this tile is failing and that is one concern, secondly Sweeney would ask Gallentine, this tile as it exists in working condition, is it adequate capacity for the land that feeds into it, the way things are today. Gallentine stated he would say it is not, and he hasn't done an exact calculation, but based of Gallentine's experience, most of those original tile were designed to handle maybe an 1/8" per day and everyone is hoping for 1/2" to an 1" anymore, so Gallentine would assume it is not at capacity. Sweeney asked if we did do a repair thing, we would also be looking at more capacity and a larger tile. Gallentine stated he thinks if a replacement gained some more traction, he would look at recommending looking at an up-sizing too, this is just kind of a talking point.

Merv Vierkandt stated he had one thing that might be pertinent to Sweeney, Sweeney's cost of the \$375,000 is a little over \$60,000, on your two parcels, Merv stated he believed that was correct, \$42,000, and \$18,000. Sweeney stated it is more informative and he is learning more and more. Hoffman invited Runge to comment. Runge stated he is almost echo the comments he said on the previous meeting, his problem with this system as a personal benefit to Runge is not what is downstream, Runge realizes you have to have an outlet to make it work, Runge's problem is going through Buckeye, most of us on the west side of Buckeye, our issues are pretty much going through town, realizing we need to start on the bottom and you have got to bring it up. Runge stated he does not think we are experiencing a large amount of failure in the area, he knows there was one last year, Runge stated his initial thought was fix as fail, and did communicate that to Smith when we visited yesterday, Runge would in some way and maybe Smuck is going down the right track looking at the USDA, the descriptions we saw when we viewed the video going through Buckeye, the gross issues with the size of the tile were probably directly related to raw sewage, and Runge thinks he asked that question at that meeting and thinks Gallentine would reaffirm that and the issues with the plugging and stuff that were going on were probably closely tied to sewage. Runge stated realizing you have to start at the bottom and bring it up, Runge's biggest problem is getting water through the town of Buckeye. Smuck stated to address that if we got any sort of traction with the USDA and some money, Smuck does not know why for the most part we couldn't tee in or circumvent Buckeye with basically a landowners tile that would just drain agricultural ground and then tee Buckeye back in, nobody in Buckeye can afford for us to tear out and go underneath some of these buildings, to go under the railroad tracks, in a lot of these places and redo that so maybe we can do like what has been done on this drainage ditch in a couple different places, bring a tile around Buckeye to tee back in and drain the agricultural ground.

Merv Vierkandt stated what Smuck was talking about only pertains to those people on the east side of the railroad tracks if you are trying to avoid the railroad tracks. Smuck stated you would still have to cross the railroad tracks at some point, you just wouldn't have to do it in the middle of town. Vierkandt stated yes, but most of Runge's will still have to go across the railroad tracks, same with Sweeney's and Merv's own also. Merv Vierkandt stated one thing he wanted to bring out here that all of us should know is, what worries Merv is we might be opening up a can of worms, with the USDA and talking about the town and putting things that way, unless we don't care about Buckeye leaving as a town, if for instance we do something that requires a water treatment plant, for instance for the sewer Merv almost hates to bring it up, and asked if the others understood what he was saying. Merv Vierkandt stated if we are all willing to kill the town of Buckeye, that would be a great way to do it, Merv asked if Gallentine had any thoughts on that. Gallentine stated he does not know either, Gallentine thinks it just depends on who you talk with to start with in what their kind of personal opinions are and how they steer it, Mike Bourland with IDALS is pretty objective and thinks that would be a great place to start with. Gallentine stated Buckeye is like a lot of small towns, if they could have afforded a storm sewer system, they would have already had it, if they could have afforded a waste-water treatment plant, they would have already had it, the way it is they can't afford repairs to a tile, and that is just the honest truth, like Carolus said, the value of the repair exceeds the value of the land. Merv Vierkandt stated he may be mistaken and asked Runge if he happened to say that raw sewage was a big part of the blockage, and Merv does not know if Runge did say that, maybe Merv misunderstood or misheard Runge, but Merv thinks that was almost all gravel, we have got flat drains that were in Buckeye and people with road stones, especially on the west side of Smuck's shop there, it is just a flat drain, well that tile coming from the west side of Buckeye, from my bin site and from Carolus's was 3/4 full of gravel, there was a hole there at one time the size of a Volkswagen, it completely plugged up, well Don Fraser went down there, and if Don wasn't going to Merv was going, and Merv had called City Council member, he had gone down there and put those blocks in to keep the

gravel, it will fill in again, you can't have a flat type of drain, 1" road stone stand on top of it, and any time you have a big rain the road stone washed down and plugged the tile. Merv stated he felt that was the main issue, and Merv was sorry but did not know about any sewage there.

Runge stated maybe Gallentine can comment on this, when they were showing the videos, there was growth, and for lack of a better word, Runge asked the question at the time. Merv Vierkandt stated he does remember that now, Smuck stated he thought that was under the Co-Op and was agricultural fertilizer, Merv asked if that was under the Co-Op. Gallentine stated he thought it was under the Co-op and thinks the one that had a lot of possible sewage issues was DD 21, which is the east side of town, because all of those houses on the east side of town went out to that tile and connected to that tile, Gallentine stated there are some unique things with that tile that runs through Buckeye, and remembers possibly that fertilizer plant being one of them. Merv Vierkandt asked if we still have the blockage going underneath the feed shed, draining Carolus's and Merv's that have never been addressed, Merv does not know how bad it is because he hasn't had a problem, since the monsoons stopped, and probably will only happen then, we may be in for a dry period here, we may not see the diminished capacity with what we have got, we may not have a blow out for 5 years, we have had 3 in 5, but those 5 years have been the wettest years on record, so Merv stated if it is his turn and sorry if he interrupted but Merv is for fix the sails and is still for getting the information we need but is afraid it could put up a red flag there and get us into something we didn't want or at least Merv doesn't.

Hoffman asked for any other comments on the issue at hand and stated it has been good discussion and engagement on the issue. Runge stated he wanted to reiterate what he said earlier in his comments, Runge is pretty much fix as fail for right now, Merv Vierkandt stated he is also. Granzow stated he has heard that from pretty much everyone here now, just fix it. Gallentine would like to reiterate, it is flowing at this time to his knowledge, the issues we see did not stop flow. McClellan asked Smuck if he is going to continue to look into what can be done on his property. Smuck stated he thought it would be stupid not to, if we can cut this project in half, Smuck plans on living long enough to pay for it someday. Gallentine stated with a 100-year-old system it is just a matter of when. Smuck stated if the money is out there now and we can do potentially, and wondered if there was any assessments as far as dollar amounts in the other drainage district as far as what it would take, Smuck stated he knows there was some talk on that as well within the last year. Gallentine stated he would have to look, he does not recall. Smuck stated both of those numbers would be valid if we were to talk about wetlands, Smuck thinks that was at least a \$2,000,000 project if he is not mistaken. Gallentine stated probably it doesn't take much to wrap up a million dollars, the other thing is you are wise if you are ever going to think about doing a wetland to be on the front end of it, because it is kind of like ag drain wells and there was money to do that, the people were like I am never doing it, are getting to the point where there is no money and you have just got to do that, they are making them do that, Gallentine stated as he was thinking about it, you might as well do it while there is still grant money out there. Smuck stated with the current administration we have we are going to be headed down the part where if you want to use X amount of nitrogen you need to show that you can treat that and if have no treatment wetlands that your farm is drained into you are going to be limited on how much nitrogen because they want to keep everyone safe and healthy, so if you did the wetlands you might be able to put on 200 units and if you don't, you might be limited to 150. Gallentine stated the net neutral will be the new thing. Smuck stated he thinks we are headed there, if we can get ahead of this before that is a law and actually have the wetlands in place, the government will pay for it and after the fact we are going to want to pay for it because all of a sudden it cut our yields by 20%.

Merv Vierkandt asked Gallentine if there was any way we could explore this without opening a can of worms. Gallentine stated as he said before, he would recommend if you want to go down that road, to talk to Mike Bourland at IDALS – Iowa Department of Land Stewardship, don't call DNR because the DNR does not do these CREP programs, you would be putting a round peg in a square hole, they would be like oh you want to put in a treatment plant, no we want to put in a wetland and oh we don't know anything about that, Gallentine stated he would start by talking to IDALS and exploring it that way. Sweeney stated the Southfork Watershed Alliance has got some grant money and they are looking for farmers to do saturated buffers and stuff, maybe as part of the grant maybe CREP wetlands or any wetlands are a part of that too, Sweeney will inquire to that group. Merv asked Sweeney if he stated that was the Southfork Watershed Alliance. Sweeney stated the Southfork Watershed Alliance has grant money and is looking for farmers to do conservation practices as part of their nutrient reduction strategy, they were hand money and they are having trouble getting rid of it. Smuck stated he thinks we can help. Sweeney stated in terms of saturated buffers they will basically do that for free and pick up the tab, Sweeney will inquire about that to see if wetlands could be part of that grant, because that does go straight to the South Fork.

Merv Vierkandt asked if these landowners will have to do it on their own to look into that. Smuck asked if it would either have to be him or Bruce that would check into that because it has to be the location where the wetland would be at. Gallentine stated yes it would because the other ones that were done successfully in the County, the agreement wasn't with the Drainage Districts, the agreement was between IDALS and the landowner, the landowner got an agreement with the District, it is just like NRCS it is all with the producer and the landowner. Smuck stated we have to start at the bottom and work up. Granzow asked if that was about a two-year process.

Gallentine stated his probably was, it seemed like it went faster than that but that was probably because the Perry's did all the work. Hoffman stated once IDALS sees it is a really feasible project, they will work quickly, from what Hoffman has heard they were very good to work with the landowners. Smuck stated he knows with the other project we did right across from Loerger's house they were awesome, they went out of their way to make some improvements out there that were not their responsibility to start with. Gallentine stated they were very generous in replacing a 30" tile for quite a ways downstream of the wetland, when really they could have just said that is your problem District, just fix it, Gallentine thought it was a 1/2 mile of tile. Granzow stated he recalled it was 1/4 of a mile. Gallentine stated they replaced a 1/4 or 1/2 mile of tile on their nickel. Granzow stated we had just talked about doing the backfilling of the tile with rock, Gallentine stated we didn't even have to do that. Granzow stated it is a good program if someone is willing to take ground out of production. Gallentine stated it is not meant for every spot but where it works, it works well. Granzow stated it was a huge cost savings to the district.

Granzow stated so what he is hearing, let's go ahead and fix, and Smuck will initiate IDALS. Hoffman asked Smuck if he would do us a favor, and we would host it if Mike Bourland wants to come up and do anything, just make sure you include Smith and Gallentine in the conversation, because Hoffman thinks with previous experience that might lend you guys a hand too. Gallentine agreed. Smuck stated he would hate to miss an opportunity to do something that A: is right and B: would save us all a bunch of money that we could end up spending in the next 20 years regardless, it would really suck if this was a \$3,000,000 project in 2040 that we could have got done for \$500,000 in 2023. Gallentine stated if you could incorporate DD 21 in there also it is two birds with one stone, the one to the east. Smuck stated they are not 400 yards apart where they enter.

6. Possible Action

Granzow stated at this time, there is no action. Gallentine stated there are no repairs to be done, what had to be repaired, has been repaired and as more work orders come up, we will fix them as they come up. Hoffman asked for any further comments, hearing none, Granzow thanked the group for their participation today. Hoffman stated we had a lot of good information and dialogue. The Trustees thanked all participants.

7. Other Business

8. Adjourn Meeting

Motion by McClellan to adjourn. Second by Granzow. All ayes. Motion carried.