

Northwest Illinois Forestry Association

Minutes of February 20, 2008

President Tom Arnold called the meeting to order at 7:07 pm in the basement meeting room of the Stockton Public Library.

President Arnold asked if there were any changes or additions to the January 14th minutes. Hearing none, he called for a motion to approve them. Dave Harrison moved to approve the minutes as mailed. Lee Freedlund seconded the motion. Motion passed.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Treasurer, Keith Arnold, was unable to attend, but he sent a report saying the only NIFA financial activity for the past month was the incoming 2008 dues. He had received about \$1,000 so far.

OLD BUSINESS

President Arnold reported one addition to the 2008 NIFA agenda. It is a tour of Lant Huntley property near Oregon on October 25th at 1:00 pm.

President Arnold reported on a sub-committee meeting with Christie Trifone, Land Stewardship Specialist with the Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation. The sub-committee went over the proposed new 5 year agreement partnership with NIFA and the Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation for the management of Schurmeier Forest. A few wording changes were made to clarify and make the agreement more acceptable to NIFA objectives. A brief discussion followed. Dick Pouzar moved to approve the agreement. Alvin Wire seconded the motion. The motion passed.

NEW BUSINESS

Dave Harrison informed the group that Tim Keller wishes to resign as Vice President of NIFA. President Arnold expressed regret over Mr. Keller's decision and asked if anyone would like to volunteer to fill the position until the next election. No one volunteered. President Arnold then suggested that the Directors and Officers meet at the Annual Dinner Meeting to choose a new Vice President.

Ray Herman, President of the Illinois Forestry Association (IFA) was present and thanked the NIFA for their cooperation in getting this new organization started. He also asked if the NIFA had any key issues they would like the IFA to assist them with. Mr. Herman said the IFA has a legislative lobbyist and the IFA was instrumental in getting Senate Bill 18 passed which allowed for reduced real estate taxes for forest land with management plans. The IFA is now trying to get some IDNR Forestry positions filled that are vacant. Mr. Herman said with the current budget situation that will be difficult and he would like broad based grassroot support. The IFA is also investigating what happens to the 4% harvest fee collected during timber sales. By legislation, this money is to be used for a forestry cost share program but this is not happening.

The group assured Mr. Herman that all 3 of the issues he mentioned are supported by NIFA. President Arnold asked Mr. Herman to keep him informed on any actions that NIFA could take to assist the IFA. Mr. Herman suggested that these 3 issues be briefly discussed at the NIFA Annual Dinner Meeting to make more people aware of the situation. Hopefully then individuals could then make legislative contacts to get the needed action.

President Arnold introduced Russell Simpson from Jo Carroll Energy. Mr. Simpson discussed the proposed biomass electric plant and gave the reasons why Jo Carroll Energy is favoring the construction of this plant. He sees the project as a win for the local economy, a win for local farmers and foresters, a win for the Coop members as users of electricity and a win for the Coop itself.

Mr. Simpson then introduced Ed Smith, the Consulting Engineer for the project. Mr. Smith has been with Jo Carroll Energy since they came up with the idea for the biomass plant. He has had wide ranging experiences with these types of operations.

Mr. Smith then addressed some of the questions that the NIFA members had. Briefly, the biomass plant will need about one million tons of woody biomass and 200,000 tons of other biomass materials each year of operation. Jo Carroll Energy has contracted with a supplier for 800,000 tons of woody biomass yearly. He would like to see the local Coop members supply the rest of the material needed. The plant prefers to have the wood delivered as wood chips up to 3 inches in size, but will accept wood in log form at a reduced price. There will be a tub grinder at the plant to chip the logs. Plans call for a 15 day supply of chips at the plant because after that there is the possibility of spontaneous combustion. The plant will be prepared to accept biomass shipped by truck, rail or barge. All of the woody material must be "clean" that is free of preservatives like what is found in telephone poles and railroad ties. Mr. Smith said the plant would accept woody material from demolition of buildings and that nails and other small metal objects would be removed by magnets before going into the furnace. He continued that green wood chips are acceptable and leaves can be included, but cautioned that no pine needles could be used because they mat together and plug the delivery system to the furnace.

Mr. Smith also explained that anyone delivering biomass to the plant would be welcome to take back ash at no charge. The ash would not contain any heavy metals and would be a good fertilizer if spread back on the land. He said he will try to get a nutrient analysis of the ash produced by similar plants that are now in operation.

After responding to all of the questions posed to him, Mr. Smith said he will continue to work with NIFA in any way that he can and if we have questions, to give them to Mr. Simpson who will forward them to him.

Dave Dornbusch, Coordinator of the Blackhawk Hills RC&D, spoke to the group. He is working with producers to supply the non-woody portion of the biomass needed for the Jo Carroll Energy plant. Mr. Dornbusch has secured some funding from the Driftless Area Initiative to promote use of biomass materials. He welcomed the NIFA members to join with his group in developing a plan to supply the material. Presently they are targeting corn stover and switchgrass. Plans are to spend some of the funds in establishing and harvesting switchgrass. Mr. Dornbusch can be contacted at 815-625-3854.

President Arnold asked if there was any more business. Dick Pouzar brought up the issue of capital gains tax and said it would be treated well in this tax year. Tom Sleeter was present and added that the 10% and 15% capital tax rates would be in effect until 2010. Then if no new legislation is passed, it would revert back to the 28% rate.

Jerry Misek called attention to an article in the latest issue of "The Woodland Scoop". It was written by Jay Hayek and offers a free listing of wood products and services to be put on the internet. Interested people should email Jay Hayek at il.urban.wood@gmail.com

There being no further business, President Arnold called for a motion to adjourn. Dick Pouzar made the motion and it was seconded by Alvin Wire. Motion Passed. The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jerry Misek

NIFA Secretary