

Muscatine County Board of Supervisors
Wednesday, April 17, 2024

The Muscatine County Board of Supervisors met in a special meeting at Discovery Center Conference Room, 3300 Cedar Street, Muscatine, Iowa. at 6:00 P.M. with Chick, Kirchner, Sauer, Mather and Sorensen present. Chairperson Sorensen presiding.

On a motion by Chick, second by Sauer, the agenda was approved as presented. Ayes: All.

A Public Hearing was called to order by Chairperson Sorensen at 6:00 P.M. on a proposal to close Edgewater Road and portions of 245th Street in Orono Township.

County Attorney, Jim Barry explained the purpose of the meeting is to allow the public to give input on their support for or against the proposed closure of Edgewater Road and portions of 245th Street in Orono Township. Barry stated the County is required by State Code to post notice in the Newspaper, send notices to all affected landowners and have a public meeting. In addition, anyone authorized to submit a claim for damages can do so. Barry stated no claims had been received prior to the meeting.

Attorney Jay Schweitzer from Columbus Junction addressed the board, stating his firm represented twenty (20) property owners that would be affected by the proposed road closure. Schweitzer stated the property owners he represents would like the County to build & maintain the bridge and roads on Edgewater and 245th Street. Schweitzer stated the property owners understand that the financial cost of this maintenance may not be feasible for the County so they are also presenting their claims of damages that total \$2,234,966.00 should the road and bridge be closed by the County. Schweitzer stated the property owners would prefer the County build & maintain the bridge on 245th Street, however, are willing to negotiate with the County if the County would like to give the road and bridge to them to maintain.

Dyanne Roby, 2208 Oak Valley Drive, Muscatine asked why the County was considering the option of vacating the roads and bridge. Barry stated the Board is tasked with deciding if the expenditures of fixing the bridge is worth it based on the services of the tax revenue received from that area. Barry stated there are three (3) choices when it comes to what the County can do in regards to solutions to the issue as he understands it. The solutions would be 1.) The County pays to replace the bridge. 2.) The County can vacate the road and bridge and buy out anyone that would like to be bought out or 3.) People can keep their property and make a damage claim without being bought out, but the bridge would not be built by the County. The property owners and the County would come to an agreement on a solution that would allow the property owners to maintain the roads and bridge going forward. Roby asked what the County would have to pay to have the bridge repaired or replaced. Chick stated the lowest estimate the County received would be roughly \$1.4M. Mather stated the \$1.4M assumed the Board was able to achieve all the environmental requirements that would allow the bridge to be built.

David Roby, 2208 Oak Valley Drive, Muscatine stated for thirty-four (34) years he's be hunting, fishing and visiting friends that live in this area. Roby stated for the first ten (10) years the County

was maintaining this area but as time went on the County quit showing up to maintenance the bridge and roads.

Jerry Carson, 2440 Edgewater Rd, Conesville stated they brought what they were asked to bring tonight based on the letter sent to them by the County, however, that doesn't mean that the property owners in this area want to sell. They all want to stay there. Based on the damages presented it would be cheaper for the County to build a new bridge than to buy out all the property owners. The property owners would consider an option, if the County gave them some money, they would take over the bridge and have it replaced because the property owners have options available to them that the County does not. Barry stated the County would be happy to open up lines of communications with the property owners to discuss possible solutions to the problem. Barry stated because of Iowa Law the County was required to have this public meeting, however, going forward the County can use the committee they have put together to review all the damages and work with the property owners to come up with a solution with how to proceed.

Dale Maxon who represents The Nature Conservancy at 1620 231st Street, Muscatine addressed the Board. Maxon stated they would like the County to replace the bridge, but is willing to negotiate along with the other property owners should another option be viable. Maxon presented their claim in the amount of \$787,064.00.

Tom Furlong, 1745 231st Street, Letts stated he was previously on the Muscatine Board of Supervisors from 1991 to 1994 and again from 2006 to 2014. Furlong stated it is good to see the property owners are willing to negotiate with the County on the issue. Furlong said he is in favor of keeping the road open. He encouraged the Board to be the leader on the issue rather than letting the Muscatine County Attorney or the Muscatine County Engineer lead the negotiations. Furlong stated the Attorney and Engineer work for the Board not the other way around. Furlong stated the property owners really need a road so there has to be a solution to the issue.

Jannette Robinson, 1203 245th Street, Conesville asked the Board about the road vacation and how that would affect her driveway which was near the end of the bridge. County Engineer, Bryan Horesowsky, stated the vacation, if it was approved, would land between her driveway and the end of the bridge so her driveway would not be affected.

Andy White, 2466 Edgewater Rd, Conesville stated he has addressed the group of property owners several times using the words "fair" and "reasonable". He asks the Board also be fair and reasonable when discussing solutions to the issue. The property owners are fearful that they will be taken advantage of.

Sorensen stated he appreciates the time everyone has given to this issue. He is hopeful the Board and property owners can come up with a reasonable solution for everyone.

Mather asked if another option would be viable by using the Northern entrance to this area. Discussion was had regarding this and consensus was this option was not a viable option.

Chick stated in response to Tom Furlong's comment regarding leading the discussion, the Board absolutely leads this discussion, however, they rely on the expertise of the County Attorney and the County Engineer to ensure the County follows State laws and codes.

On a motion by Sauer, second by Kirchner, the public hearing was closed at 6:47 P.M. Roll call vote: Ayes: All.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:47 P.M.

ATTEST:

Tibe Vander Linden
County Auditor

Jeff Sorensen, Chairperson
Board of Supervisors