

IKC Spring Director's Meeting Minutes

Saturday, February 12, 2005

Bloomington, Indiana

Board members present:

Richard Vernier, President

Bob Sergesketter, Secretary

Keith Dunlap, Treasurer

Bruce Bowman

Bruce Devore

Dave Haun (proxy by Bambi Dunlap)

Don Ingle

Kriste Lindberg

Steve Lockwood

Nick Noe

Tom Sollman

Bill Tozer

Bob Vandeventer

Sue Vernier

Jamie Winner

The meeting was called to order at 6:25 PM at the home of Kriste Lindberg in Bloomington, President Richard Vernier presiding. Bambi Dunlap was accepted as proxy for Dave Haun. The minutes of the December, 2004 meeting have not yet been published so they could not be approved.

Treasurer Dunlap reported a cash balance of \$48,256.97. Land holdings amount to \$183,000. Total IKC assets stand at \$231,256.97. IKC membership stands at 184. Dunlap said that membership has been pretty flat. Very few new members have joined in the last six months. Vernier asked if we need to have a membership drive. There was a brief discussion but no action taken. Sergesketter asked what is the Deferred Dues Fund. Dunlap explained that when members pay their dues, whether for one or multiple years, the money goes to the Deferred Dues Fund. Every three months, one fourth of each member's dues for the current year gets transferred into the General Fund. The theory is that if the IKC folded, there would be money set aside to repay the unused portion of each member's dues.

Grotto Liaison Agreement Status

Signed agreements have been received from the Saint Joseph Valley Grotto, the Evansville Grotto, and the Bloomington Grotto. Dunlap said that the Central Indiana Grotto lost the paperwork in the process of changing officers and the new chairman has the agreement and it will be signed very soon. Gene Pelter said that he handles the mail for the Northern Indiana Grotto and does not remember ever getting the new agreement. Vernier said that he will send another one. Ingle reported that the Western Indiana Grotto is defunct. Dunlap said the WIG divided their treasury and donated half to the NSS and half to the IKC. The IKC received a check from the WIG for \$94.57.

Buckner/Isom Property

Vernier said that there was an e-mail sent out from someone asking if the IKC had any information about Buckner Cave or the Bull's Eye entrance on the Isom property. This person was interested in possibly buying the property. Dunlap said that he talked to the wife of the person making the e-mail inquiry and she said that they were interested in building a house on the property.

Documentary Video

Vernier said that he sent some information on the proposed video to the Hoosier National Forest because he knew that they had some funds for karst related projects. He talked to Cynthia Basile who is a wildlife biologist and is now the karst specialist. Vernier said that she sounded quite enthused about it but wasn't sure about getting it in the budget for this year. He gave her McGowan's contact information. She has not contacted McGowan but she still seems interested. If the HNF turns out to be a source for funding a karst video, there would be a question of ownership of the rights to the finished product.

Ingle has been in contact with the NSS seeking funding but has been unsuccessful. Although they asked him to keep in contact, it appears that the NSS will not be a source for funding at this time or in the near future.

Lindberg said that the IKC is now included on the list of organizations eligible to receive funds from the Supplemental Environmental Program, but it would be a long shot since she said that developers can pick where they want to spend their "fines". Vernier said that he has a meeting with the HNF on February 19, and he will find out if they will be able to help. He thinks that the HNF is our best bet for funding for now.

Education and Outreach

Lindberg reported on a Hoosier National Forest karst program a couple of weeks ago. She gave a preliminary presentation and then Dr. Lewis talked on cave biology. That was followed by a presentation by Steve Harriss about bats on the Forest. During the meeting, the IKC was presented an award acknowledging our partnership with the HNF on karst issues. Also, Ken Day, Forest Supervisor, signed off on a Significant Cave list, accepting the first twenty-eight caves that were nominated.

Lindberg said that she has been working with students at a local high school on a Science Olympiad program called "Awesome Aquifers". The program includes building a small karst aquifer model for water quality demonstrations. She is also still working with developer and recently traveled to Muncie to see some alternative septic systems. She has written an article for the upcoming NSS News Conservation Issue.

Lindberg said that Virginia has recently designated a "State Bat" and she thinks that Indiana should also make such a designation. We already have a species of bat anxious to accept the title. Noe said that we must first get a state legislator to write up the proposal and introduce it. Then we all have to get behind it and keep lobbying until the designation is made.

There will be a Project Underground on September 10, 2005, at Harrison/Crawford State Forest.

Indian Cave

Dunlap said that there has been no contact with anyone concerning Indian Cave. The matter is in the hands of The Nature Conservancy to pursue.

Hancock Property

Dunlap said that he has heard rumors that the appraisal still hasn't been accepted by the Federal Government appraisal reviewers. He has talked to others who have a stake in this matter and they are all equally frustrated. Basically, there is no change in the status.

Wayne Cave

Robert Sollman reported that there has been no work done since the November work weekend. At that time campsites and fire rings were established and a clearly marked trail to the cave was put in. No workdays are planned until sometime in late spring. He said that in looking over the management plan for the Wayne property, he noticed that a lot of the plan is written in future tense. He wants to make some changes to the plan and he had a copy of the proposed changes in hand. Vernier advised him to distribute the proposed changes to the Board for study and then bring up the subject at a future meeting.

Robinson Ladder Cave Acquisition

The Robinson Ladder Cave property is a forty-acre tract of land in Crawford County, Indiana. It is about four miles north of Milltown and a quarter mile east of State Road 66. It is partially wooded and has two large open fields. The property contains Robinson Ladder Cave, which is a listed Indiana bat hibernaculum, and another small cave of unknown size. The property is square and is accessed by a twenty-foot wide easement from SR 66. The tract is for sale and the asking price is \$74,000. The Nature Conservancy is officially supportive of assisting the IKC with the purchase and has offered up to \$34,000. TNC owns a ten-acre adjoining tract.

Dunlap reported that on January 27, 2005, he made the following motion to the Board by e-mail and telephone. "I move that the IKC pursue acquisition of the forty-acre Robinson Ladder Cave tract, expending not more than \$40,000 for the land, and not more than \$2,000 for other related expenses including an appraisal, closing costs, etc., but excluding a legal survey." All fifteen members of the Board voted for the motion and so Dunlap made an offer of \$70,000 on the property. The offer was quickly rejected. The realtor told Dunlap that if the IKC would offer \$73,000, he would kick in the extra \$1,000. That offer was accepted. Dunlap ordered an appraisal the same day the offer was accepted. The appraisal is not done yet so we are still not sure if the purchase can go forward but assuming the appraisal comes in satisfactorily, Dunlap said that he is targeting a March 4 closing date.

If we close on March 4, we're going to need up to \$74,500, depending upon closing costs. TNC will be contributing \$33,500 but it could be six weeks before that money becomes available so the IKC is initially going to have to foot the entire cost. In the past, IKC members have volunteered to make short-term interest-free loans to carry us through situations like this and Dunlap proposes doing that again. He wants to borrow, from external sources \$53,500. When the \$33,500 of TNC's money comes in, that will be used to pay down some of the external loans, leaving \$20,000 to be paid off. If we do that, we will still have to come up with \$21,000 internally. We have \$9,600 in the Land Acquisition Fund and we could "borrow" \$11,400 from the General Fund. At this time, the General Fund has \$23,145 in it, so we would be borrowing about one half of it. We also have \$13,548 in the Stewardship Fund as well as \$1,920 in the Deferred Dues Fund so we will still have significant cash reserves in the treasury. Dunlap moved to have the IKC borrow \$53,500, interest-free, for a term not to exceed one year. The loan will be secured by a promissory note from the IKC. Proceeds from TNC, when received, will be used to pay down that loan. Bowman seconded. Noe asked how close the appraisal has to be to the selling price. Dunlap said that it should be close, within five to ten percent, but the final decision is up to the Board. Vernier asked how past appraisals have worked out. Dunlap said that the Buddha property was appraised higher than what we paid. If the appraisal comes in much lower than \$73,000, we'll have to discuss what we want to do. Dunlap said he thought that TNC has a policy that they will not pay more than the appraised value, however, since the IKC is actually buying the property, he doesn't think that rule will come into play. Tozer asked if our offer contained anything about the appraisal. Dunlap said that there was a contingent that the appraisal has to match the offer. That gives us a way out if the appraisal comes in much lower than the asking price. There being no further discussion, the vote was taken. The motion passed, 15-0-0.

Dunlap moved to use the full amount, (about \$9600), in the Land Acquisition Fund for the acquisition of the Robinson Ladder property. Tozer seconded. The motion passed, 15-0-0.

Dunlap moved to borrow not more than \$12,000 from the General Fund for the acquisition of the Robinson Ladder property. Ingle seconded. The motion passed, 15-0-0.

Dunlap suggested we discuss what we'll do if the appraisal comes in much lower than the asking price. Vernier said that we also need to discuss what we'll do if The Nature Conservancy withholds their funding because of the appraisal. Dunlap said that without the TNC contribution, we will also have to back out of the deal, however, he thinks that TNC will still put in the their \$33,500 because the IKC is the purchaser and if we want to go ahead with the deal, even if the appraisal is low, that's our business.

Noe asked how much time would elapse between the time that the appraisal is available and the closing date. Dunlap said that the appraisal is to be completed within twenty-one days of the accepted offer. He said that he expects to hear something in the coming week. Vernier asked if there would have to be a separate timber appraisal. Dunlap said that he thinks the appraiser should have taken the timber into account when he did the inspection of the property but if the appraisal comes in low, a separate timber cruise might be used to bring the appraisal figure up.

There was a discussion of how low the appraised value could be and still be acceptable. Sollman thought that a five percent reduction would be acceptable. Anything more and the Board should be asked for approval before proceeding with the purchase. Vernier said that the Board should be kept informed no matter what. It was finally decided that if the appraisal was low by less than five percent, we'll go ahead. If the difference is greater, we'll have to rethink the deal.

Vernier asked if we will get a firm commitment out of TNC before March 4. Dunlap said he's pretty sure we will. He said that they are definitely committed. Tozer asked if TNC will have input in how the property would be managed. Dunlap said that he thinks that TNC is confident that we know what we're doing. He said that they would probably expect a strong commitment from us to continue managing the cave for the benefit of the bats. Sollman said that his primary reason for supporting the purchase is managing the cave for the bats. Vernier agreed that this property is a worthwhile acquisition and the fact that TNC is helping to pay for it makes it a real good deal.

Dunlap said that if things go as we expect, at the next meeting we'll set up a committee to write up a management plan for the property.

Dunlap said that membership renewal notices and IKC election ballots will be mailed next week. Do we want to make an announcement of, the pending purchase in that mailing and maybe even solicit donations or wait until we have closed on the property? He thought that if we get an acceptable appraisal before the mailing goes out, there's little else preventing us from buying the property so it would be good to announce that we are buying it but making it clear that it isn't a done deal yet. If we don't have an appraisal, we won't say anything.

Devore said that he thinks that a separate letter, sent after the closing, announcing the purchase and seeking donations would be more effective. Vernier said that we should at least put something in the renewal letter about the need to build up the Acquisition Fund and that we are contemplating an acquisition and we need some capital to work with. Dunlap noted that the next IKC Update will go out after the closing so we can have something in there, either an article or a separate insert or both.

Another issue is if we want to have the property surveyed. Dunlap said we can discuss that at the next meeting. He thinks that the west boundary has been surveyed. Sollman asked if the power transmission line along the South side is on the property. Dunlap said that if it is, it just barely grazes it.

Election Ballot

Election of various Board positions will be held at the March meeting. President Vernier, Treasurer Dunlap, and Secretary Sergesketter agreed to run for re-election. In addition, four Director positions will be open. Lindberg, Tozer, Vandeventer, and Sue Vernier will all run for re-election. George Cesnik accepted a nomination to run for Director. Dunlap moved to accept the list of candidates as stated, seconded by Devore. The motion passed, 15-0-0. Dunlap said that if anyone else wants to run for a position, they must make it known within the next few days but the Board will have to approve each nomination. That can be done by e-mail or phone.

Under Earth Day

Dunlap asked if anyone had any suggestions for an Under Earth Day project. He said we could work on the trail at Sullivan. Bambi Dunlap suggested working on an outhouse but Keith didn't think we were ready to start on that. Bambi insisted that something needs to be done because of the heavy use of the property. Tom Rea said that they just completed building an outhouse at the Fiborn property in Michigan and they used a heavy plastic box buried in the ground as the pit. He thinks that there is another one available and we could probably get it if we want to use it. The box is about three or four feet square. Dunlap said that he'll do some more research. Vernier said that we'll discuss it at the March meeting. Tom Sollman said that there is work to be done at Wayne, but Dunlap said we probably should wait on that until we have a tractor available. Sollman asked about Buddha. Dunlap said there's nothing to do there but we do have about one hundred trees to plant at Sullivan plus some trail work. Sollman asked if we could hold Under Earth Day at the Robinson Ladder Property. Dunlap said we could. Under Earth Day is usually in April and we would own the property at closing which is planned for the fourth of March. There would be time to announce it in the IKC Update. There is some trash to clean up on the property. Tozer said it would be a good time to get people out to look at the property and see what we've bought. Sollman thought that the easement from the highway to the property should be opened up --there are a lot of overhanging tree limbs. Grapevine removal is another possibility. Dunlap pointed out that the cave would still be closed in April, but we could change the date. The cave is closed until the first of May. We finally decided that Under Earth Day will be at the Robinson Ladder Cave property on May 14. If, for some reason, that can't happen, plan B will be to plant trees at the Sullivan property in April.

Gas Drilling In Karst Areas

There was a final discussion of the problems associated with gas drilling in karst areas.

Items From The Floor

Vandeventer said that he needs to replace the locks at the Sullivan property due to normal wear and tear. Dunlap will buy new locks and distribute the new keys to the Grotto Liaisons.

Ingle said that he was on a trip to Clicks Cave and he just wanted to thank the Northern Indiana Grotto for working with the landowner and getting the cave open again. It was a closed cave but now it is gated and protected.

Next Meeting

The next meeting, the Annual Business Meeting, will be March 19, at 10:00 AM, at the Greenwood library. Sollman will be out of the country at that time. Bambi Dunlap agreed to be his proxy.

Dunlap moved to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 8:32 PM. After the meeting, Dunlap presented a photo tour of the Robinson Ladder Cave property.

Thanks to Kriste Lindberg for hosting the meeting at her home and for providing refreshments.

Respectfully submitted,

Bob Sergesketter Secretary