

**WOODBURY COUNTY, IOWA, CONSERVATION BOARD
MINUTES OF THE THURSDAY, APRIL 9, 2020 BOARD MEETING
VIA TELECONFERENCE**

The following is a true copy of the minutes of the meeting of the Woodbury County, Iowa, Conservation Board held on Thursday, April 9, 2020, at the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center via teleconference beginning at 4:00 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT (VIA PHONE)

Chris Zellmer-Zant, Cindy Bennett, Neil Stockfleth, and Suzan Boden

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

Aaron Gehling

STAFF PRESENT

Dan Heissel, Brian Stehr, Dawn Snyder, and Dawn Bostwick

OTHERS PRESENT

None

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Bennett called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

CORRESPONDENCE ITEMS

None

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None

ITEM R1. Approve Consent Agenda

MOTION by Chris, second by Suzan.

To approve the consent agenda.

ROLL CALL VOTE: Aye: Chris Zellmer-Zant, Cindy Bennett, Neil Stockfleth
& Suzan Boden

Nay: None

Absent: Aaron Gehling

The consent agenda was approved and involved the following items:

ITEM C1. Approve Minutes of the March 19, 2020 Monthly Meeting.

ITEM C2. Approve the March 2020 Claims and Expenditures.

ITEM C3. Receive and Place on File the March 2020 Financial/Budget Report.

ITEM C4. Acceptance of Gifts/Donations

- Framed photo by Sarah Hubert
- \$1,250 from Iowa Native Plant Society for prairie rescue equipment grant

ITEM R2. Approve Starting Date and Salary of Tyler Knight, Assistant Resource Manager, Southwood

Dan stated that Tyler Knight had been hired as Assistant Resource Manager at Southwood Conservation Area effective Monday, April 6, 2020. His salary will follow the department matrix for an Assistant Resource Manager. He has been started at the first level of \$46,203 and will be increased to \$47,474 after successfully completing a six-month probation period.

MOTION by Suzan, second by Neil.

To approve the hiring of Tyler Knight as Assistant Resource Manager at Southwood Conservation Area effective April 6, 2020, with a starting salary of \$46,203.¹¹⁻²⁰

ROLL CALL VOTE: Aye: Chris Zellmer-Zant, Cindy Bennett, Neil Stockfleth
& Suzan Boden
Nay: None
Absent: Aaron Gehling

ITEM R3. Approve Cooperative Grant Agreement - Fish Habitat Grant Browns Lake Shoreline Project

Dan reported that the Fish Habitat Grant application for \$50,000 to aid in Phase II of the Brown's Lake shoreline improvement project was partially funded at \$41,868 due to available funds. He asked for approval of the standard Cooperative Agreement to receive those funds.

MOTION by Chris, second by Neil.

To approve and enter into the Cooperative Agreement for the Fish Habitat Program with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and receive grant funding of \$41,868 for Phase II of the Brown's Lake shoreline improvement project.¹²⁻²⁰

ROLL CALL VOTE: Aye: Chris Zellmer-Zant, Cindy Bennett, Neil Stockfleth
& Suzan Boden
Nay: None
Absent: Aaron Gehling

It was noted that this was Brian's first time writing a grant application, and he was commended for his good work.

ITEM R4. Further Discussion for Flood Plan for Snyder Bend Park

Brian stated that he had obtained a quote from Dale Hoefling of Hornick to relocate the four Snyder Bend cabins for \$24,000 and to also move the four decks for an additional \$3,000. Additional infrastructure, such as foundations, water and electrical work, would be required to complete the project. It was noted for comparison that the Aqua Dam barrier to protect just one side of the cabins was estimated at around \$20,000. Brian will get an estimate from Secondary Roads for building the earthen dike as discussed previously. Dan stated that current flooding forecasts are down, but one rain could change that.

¹¹⁻²⁰ To approve the hiring of Tyler Knight as Assistant Resource Manager at Southwood Conservation Area effective April 6, 2020, with a starting salary of \$46,203.

¹²⁻²⁰ To approve and enter into the Cooperative Agreement for the Fish Habitat Program with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and receive grant funding of \$41,868 for Phase II of the Brown's Lake shoreline improvement project.

ITEM R5. Capital Improvement Projects Update

1. Brown's Lake – Concession Stand & Beach Plans

Dan stated that he had given notice to JEO to terminate their services on the Brown's Lake concession stand project, but the contract called for a lump sum payment of \$11,200 for the services provided to bring the project to the bidding stage. Dan will submit the invoice for payment and terminate further services with JEO on this project.

Dan also reported that a contractor gave a verbal estimate, including changes to the areas felt to be overengineered, of \$135,800 for the building and the cement under it and \$30,000 for the concrete work outside. There will be additional costs for dirt work and seeding.

Dan has started a list of the suggested plan changes. Plans will be amended and sent out for bids again at some point. He noted that the current pandemic and potential for extended closing of cabins and campgrounds could affect the project timeframe as capital improvement projects are funded by user fee revenues.

ITEM R6. Board member/staff reports

1. Administrative items

Dan reported on the following items:

a. May Meeting Date

The next meeting will be held at 4:00 p.m. on Thursday, May 14, 2020. The location will be determined later.

b. Southwood Residence Update

Dan presented pictures of the Southwood residence remodel and gave an update on several issues incurred during the project. Water leaked into the house during a hail storm due to a combination of plugged gutters and a problem with an old wood chute leaking to where the electrical service enters underground. The wood chute was removed and filled with cement, wires were checked, and new electrical housing was put in place. During the water cleanup, longstanding black mold was discovered in the ceiling. Drywall was removed and replaced after the area was treated for mold and dried out. Gutter guards will be added to prevent plugging, and the landscaping will be sloped away from the building.

During a separate incident, a water line broke which was not tied into the shut-off system causing more water to get into the basement and under the kitchen flooring. Flooring was pulled up and dried up, and everything has been put back together.

c. Southwood Storage Building Update

Dan stated that the walls and rafters are in place on the storage building at Southwood Conservation Area. The metal is expected to be delivered next week, and then the roof and siding can be installed. Window and door placement has been determined with the contractor. Quotes ranging from \$7,000 to \$10,000 have been received for the two 16' x 20' overhead doors. Overall the building is progressing nicely and is looking good.

d. COVID-19 Discussion of Policies in Place, Future

Dan reported that he has been involved in several meetings with county department heads, the county supervisors, and Iowa county conservation board directors regarding the COVID-19 situation. He stated that on Monday the Iowa Governor ordered that all campgrounds, cabins and yurts be closed through April 30th, and it is likely that date will be extended. Dan stated that WCCB campgrounds, Nature Center and all playgrounds were already closed, and educational programs have been cancelled through the end of April. Registrations are being taken for summer day camps acknowledging that there is a good chance some will need to be cancelled. Reports suggest that there has been an increase in park usage in Iowa of 49% and in Nebraska of 109%. Governor Reynolds also ordered that citations be issued for any gathering exceeding ten people.

Dan explained that regardless of any closures seasonal staff will still be needed due to the nature of their work and the constant need for mowing, tree clearing and other outdoor projects. Nature Center interns could also be utilized for trail and grounds maintenance if educational programs are delayed or cancelled. He noted that efforts are being taken to keep employees safe with social distancing and increased cleaning and sanitizing practices. It is up to the conservation board to determine which positions are essential. It was agreed that seasonal staff hiring will continue as planned.

e. Other

Dan reported that the County Engineer has asked for assistance with a FEMA project to preserve and display a section of an old bridge with pin construction. They would like to locate the 6' x 4' section near a trail at Little Sioux Park. It would be installed on a slab of concrete and be marked with a bronze historical sign. They would do all the work, and it would be funded by FEMA. The board was in favor of the project. The Engineer will send a letter to be presented for action at the May meeting.

Dan also noted that he had gotten a notification from Jim Redmond that Lieber Construction has begun dirt work on the land behind North Middle School and a request to discuss it with the board. Dan attempted to call him but hasn't made contact yet. He will call him and explain the stance taken by the board when discussed previously.

2. Nature Center Activities (Snyder)

Dawn reported on the following Nature Center activities:

- Theresa has been tracking program cancellations and impact due to COVID-19. So far, a total of 50 events have been cancelled resulting in a loss of over \$300 of fees and interactions with close to 3,000 people.
- Camp registration is open, and 32 campers have been registered to date. This is down from the average of 100 registrations at this point in other years. Various strategies are being discussed, including cancelling early camps and changing camp size limitations.
- Theresa and Oliva have added self-guided bird egg and Easter bunny scavenger hunts on the trails for visitors.
- Education videos are being put together for YouTube and will go live soon.
- AmeriCorps is opening grants for the next cycle to start in September. Applications are due at the end of May.
- Staff is working on a job description for the new full-time naturalist, and the position opening will be posted by the end of the month.
- Dawn presented a proposed letter to be sent to previous Nature Calls sponsors explaining the decision to cancel the event due to COVID-19. It was suggested she add a subtle invitation to

donate as they desire or are able and include information about how Nature Calls funds are used. A revised copy will be sent to board for approval.

3. Park Activities (Stehr)

Brian reported on the following park activities:

- Even though the campground opening date is up in the air, staff is making all necessary preparations to open.
- Staff is happy to have Tyler Knight on board at Southwood. His experience with habitat projects through the Iowa/Minnesota Conservation Corps will be an asset to the department.
- Johnston Earthmoving is finished with excavation and grading for the Brown's Lake beach project. Staff has seeded the area with oats and rye to protect the site from erosion and installed erosion control wattles to prevent sediment from washing into the lake.
- The leftover dirt from the Brown's Lake project was taken to Snyder Bend to build up the road shoulders in the park and make them easier to maintain.
- Snyder Bend staff has been reseeding areas affected by last year's flooding and will also seed the road shoulders once grading and packing is finished.
- Erik has been busy on the Southwood residence renovation and has performed some burns.
- Derek finished up with his law enforcement training. His paperwork has been received by the Iowa Law Enforcement Academy, and they will be mailing his certificate.
- Little Sioux staff has been cleaning up trees and getting the entrance ready for seeding. They have also been doing some forestry grinding on Shagbark to reopen some pockets of prairie.
- Josh has finished wiring his new truck lights. Nathan has been building the console to mount the equipment in his new truck, and then Josh will help him with the wiring.
- Dan noted that staff at Little Sioux and Southwood have burned more acres in the last year than has been done in the previous seven years.

4. Board

Neil asked for a status update on the reseeding at Riverside Bluffs due to the infringement by the contractor for Sacred Heart School. Dan stated that he has had communication with Lieber Construction, and they will be working with him to put the dirt back and reseed the area.

ITEM R7. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

The above minutes were recorded by Dawn Bostwick.

Recording Secretary, Dawn Bostwick

Board Secretary, Suzan Boden

Board Chair, Cindy Bennett