

**WOODBURY COUNTY, IOWA, CONSERVATION BOARD
MINUTES OF THE TUESDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2020 BOARD MEETING**

The following is a true copy of the minutes of the meeting of the Woodbury County, Iowa, Conservation Board held on Tuesday, October 6, 2020, at Brown's Lake-Bigelow Park beginning at 4:00 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

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

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

None

STAFF PRESENT

Dan Heissel, Brian Stehr, Dawn Snyder, Josh VanVoorst, Dylan Bales, and Dawn Bostwick

OTHERS PRESENT

None

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Bennett called the meeting to order at 4:04 p.m.

CORRESPONDENCE ITEMS

None

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None

ITEM R1. Approve Consent Agenda

MOTION by Suzan, second by Neil.

To approve the consent agenda.

VOTE: Aye: Aaron Gehling, Chris Zellmer-Zant, Cindy Bennett, Neil Stockfleth
& Suzan Boden

Nay: None

Absent: None

The consent agenda was approved and involved the following items:

ITEM C1. Approve Minutes of the September 10, 2020 Meeting.

ITEM C2. Approve the September 2020 Claims and Expenditures.

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

ITEM C4. Acceptance of Gifts/Donations

- Ellen Shaner/Hauff Sporting Goods for archery quivers
- Addison Ziska for \$20 cash for salamander adoption
- Gene & Ginger Martin \$750 for Scarlet Red-tailed Hawk adoption
- Elaine L. Brown for \$500 cash for Nature Center (via WCCF)
- Jeff & Rose Pilgrim for \$60 for raptors

ITEM R2. New Naturalist Position Information

Dan reported that interviews were conducted last week for the new naturalist position. He stated that 80 applications were received, and seven candidates were selected for interviews with the position ultimately being awarded to Kari Sandage. Kari is completing her pre-employment physical today and has an anticipated start date of November 1st.

ITEM R3. Salsness Property Discussion

Dan reported that the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation made an offer on the Salsness property of \$3,250/acre as approved at the last board meeting. The Salsness family countered with \$885,000 or \$3,847/acre. After discussion with the INHF rep, Dan decided it would be best to obtain an appraisal to determine a base value. Potential offer options were discussed, but the board opted to wait for the appraisal before making another offer. Dan will provide the appraisal to board members as soon as it is available so a decision can be made.

ITEM R4. Nature Center Room Rentals – COVID Discussion

Dan provided a report from Siouxland District Health showing a recent spike in local COVID-19 levels. He explained that the Nature Center classrooms have not yet opened for rentals or groups for monthly public meetings due to the virus concerns. Dawn applied for a MHRD grant that was available specifically for COVID-19-related expenses. Her submission included purchase of an ionization system for the Nature Center HVAC system which would make it safer to open the classrooms for public use. He noted that staff members have been wearing masks when interacting with the public and that many guests are wearing masks even though they are not officially required. After discussion, it was decided that the classrooms will be opened for rental beginning November 1st with a reduced capacity limit and masks being strongly encouraged, if not required. Staff will determine the appropriate capacity for each classroom to allow for proper social distancing.

ITEM R5. Budget FY 21-22 – Discussion

Dan presented the preliminary FY22 budget and reviewed the line items that varied from the previous year. The total proposed operating budget has an increase of \$37,050 or 8.26%.

Dan stated that he is working on a new salary matrix for a few employees who have taken on new job responsibilities. He will bring these to the next board meeting and present them along with the FY22 budget proposal. He recently met with Rick Schneider to review the salary matrix process to better understand how it works since Rick was directly involved in the initial development of the matrix.

Dan is also working on a new job description for Tyler Flammang as GIS and Resource Tech now that the new Naturalist has been hired. This was discussed with the Supervisors when the new Naturalist position was funded. Dan will present it to the board next month to take effect in the current fiscal year, and a budget amendment will be done in the spring, if needed.

ITEM R6. Miscellaneous Projects Review**1. Oak Ridge Structure – Hungry Canyons**

Dan recently visited with Ben Kusler at the engineer's office regarding the Oak Ridge water control structure which is anticipated to be funded by the Hungry Canyons grant program. Ben sits on the Hungry Canyons design and review committee and has indicated that funds should be available next year.

2. Snyder Bend Dike

Dan reported that the dirt from the Brown's Lake shoreline project will be stockpiled to be used for the Snyder Bend dike and that Secondary Roads has agreed to help with the project. The next step is to meet with the landowner on site to show him the proposed dike location and footprint. Aaron will contact the landowner and set up a meeting.

Additionally, staff will investigate options for water-filled flood barriers to tie into it. It was noted that even with a dike in place, the leach field will not work if the ground is saturated. A secondary leach field was discussed.

3. Little Sioux Park – North End Engineer Gravel Plans

Dan presented Little Sioux Park maps and discussed the engineer's plans for mining gravel north of the campground. They will do the work keeping in mind that it will be used as a recreational area once completed. Brief discussion was held regarding possible uses for the area.

ITEM R7. Capital Improvement Projects Update

1. Brown's Lake – Phase II – Update

Dan reported that construction on the Brown's Lake shoreline project will start in November. Once dirt work is done, they will need to drive the pilings.

2. Brown's Lake Concession Project Update

Dan stated that the Brown's Lake concession stand project is on hold temporarily due to limited revenues. An estimated \$60,000-100,000 has been lost in cabin, shelter and camping revenues since the beginning of COVID. The possibility of proceeding in phases was discussed.

ITEM R8. Board member/staff reports

1. Administrative items

Dan reported on the following items:

a. November Meeting Date

The next meeting will be held at 4:00 p.m. on November 12, 2020, at the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center.

b. REAP Grant Results

Dan distributed REAP grant scores for this year and last year. The Briese property scored 5th out of 20 projects but was not able to be funded.

2. Park Activities (Stehr)

Brian reported on the following park activities:

- Park staff has been staying busy with nice weather.
- Southwood staff has been cutting trees to make good progress before Tyler goes to the law enforcement academy. They are also working on pollinator plots on Oak Ridge Unit 1.
- Bigelow/Snyder Bend staff has been finishing up at OWEGO and installing pads around well heads to make it easier and safer to set up the drive unit.

- Pesticide training is being scheduled for October and November.
- CCPOA qualification was held today at the shooting range because the fall conference had been cancelled in Des Moines. Brian will be looking for other opportunities for officers to earn additional CEUs.
- The new Kubota UTV has been delivered to the Nature Center. The new mower at Snyder Bend is working well.
- Little Sioux staff put up a new shooting range sign because the old one blew down in an August storm. They have also been cutting trees out of the prairie and fence lines at the shooting range.
- Tyler Knight finished his licensing and pesticide training and is currently working on his CDL.

Josh VanVoorst also reported on the following Bigelow Park/Snyder Bend Park activities:

- Bigelow Park had their busiest September of camping.
- Josh felt that the camper demographic changed positively due to the beach being closed this summer.
- The Bigelow/Snyder staff inherited the maintenance responsibilities at Owego and have really stepped up and put in a lot of work.
- Josh has been looking for a used planter, so one will be available when needed.
- Josh stated that the ditch at Owego road is a remnant old railroad and has prairie blazing star there, but it is not registered in Woodbury County. He is talking with Doug Chafa about possibly getting grant dollars.

3. Nature Center Activities (Snyder)

Dawn reported on the following Nature Center activities:

- Siouland Big Give is happening today. Donations to the Nature Center will be earmarked for animal care. Donations totaling \$1,875 have been made online by 22 donors so far. Another \$1,000 has been received in cash at Nature Center. The event was publicized on Facebook and Instagram. Dawn also participated in a live radio broadcast at HyVee with Charlie Stone.
- The 25th anniversary of Nature Center is August 22nd. Kay Newman of SOAR will provide three birds of prey to be released that day in a virtual Facebook live event. In-person attendance is not being encouraged due to coronavirus concerns, but news media has been invited. Other celebration activities are planned, such as a trail scavenger hunt, historical picture display and posts on Facebook.
- Theresa and Dawn went to Buena Vista County for a naturalist swap get-together and professional development opportunity to learn about their reptiles and amphibians. IAN will host a virtual meeting in November.
- Woodbury County Conservation Foundation is set up on the Amazon Smiles program and will receive a 5% donation on any purchase made by going to smiles.amazon.com and selecting WCCF.
- The Foundation annual membership campaign will get going in the next month or two.
- Once Kari is on board, staff will start planning additional virtual and in-person programming.

ITEM R9. Director's Annual Evaluation

The board went into closed session for the Director's annual performance evaluation at 5:35 p.m. by motion from Chris and second by Suzan. Chairperson Bennett held the roll call vote: Suzan Boden – Aye, Cindy Bennett – Aye, Aaron Gehling – Aye, Neil Stockfleth – Aye, and Chris Zellmer-Zant – Aye.

The board discussed Director Heissel’s performance for the past year and goals for the future. The session was recorded.

At 6:10 p.m., Aaron moved to come out of closed session, which was seconded by Suzan and carried unanimously by roll call vote: Suzan Boden – Aye, Cindy Bennett – Aye, Aaron Gehling – Aye, Neil Stockfleth – Aye, and Chris Zellmer-Zant – Aye.

MOTION by Aaron, second by Neil.

To approve Director Heissel’s performance appraisal as discussed with a recommendation for a \$2,500 step increase, effective with the start of the pay period closest to November 1, 2020.³¹⁻²⁰

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

ITEM R10. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:15 p.m.

The above minutes were recorded by Dawn Bostwick.

Recording Secretary, Dawn Bostwick

Board Secretary, Suzan Boden

Board Chair, Cindy Bennett

³¹⁻²⁰ To approve Director Heissel’s performance appraisal as discussed with a recommendation for a \$2,500 step increase, effective with the start of the pay period closest to November 1, 2020.