

**WOODBURY COUNTY, IOWA, CONSERVATION BOARD
MINUTES OF THE THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2021 SPECIAL BOARD MEETING
VIA ZOOM VIDEO CONFERENCE**

The following is a true copy of the minutes of the special meeting of the Woodbury County, Iowa, Conservation Board held on Thursday, February 18, 2021, at the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center via Zoom video conference 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 and Dawn Bostwick

OTHERS PRESENT

None

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Gehling called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m. and did a roll call vote to confirm who was present. Chris Zellmer-Zant – Aye, Cindy Bennett – Aye, Neil Stockfleth – Aye, Susan Boden – Aye

CORRESPONDENCE ITEMS

None

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None

ITEM R1. This special meeting was called to discuss the purchase of the O’Connell property and determine if the board wants to honor their original offer of \$3,200 per acre now that the seller has decided that he is willing to accept it.

Discussion was held regarding the estimated property value, the location in relation to other WCCB properties, and whether it fits into the department’s long-range plan. Dan stated he had received a verbal windshield appraisal of \$3,200-\$3,300, and that the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation is also confident that it would appraise at that. It is within a mile of other WCCB land and has been targeted in long-range planning from years ago.

Much discussion was held regarding funding the land purchase and whether it would delay other park projects. Dan stated that the decision to bond for the Brown’s Lake roads, beach and concession stand project will require an approximate \$120,000 annual payment from the CIP fund, leaving \$180,000 for CIP development. He also reported a balance of \$206,000 in the REAP fund with another \$32,000 coming in the fall. Dan will apply for a REAP grant in August and a Habitat grant in May, and again in November if necessary, for the O’Connell property and the Salsness parcel. LAWCON can also be applied for once a year with a 50% match.

Concerns were raised about public perception of taking the property off the tax roll and the economic development impact. It was noted that Iowa has the smallest percentage of public lands in the United States and that tax dollars are not being used to purchase the land. It will be purchased with money generated from the parks and with grants. A couple board members also reiterated that the WCCB mission statement mentions preserving natural resources.

MOTION by Neil, second by Suzan

To authorize the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation to proceed with the purchase of the 116-acre O’Connell property at \$3,200 per acre, subject to Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation Board approval.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

Aye: Aaron Gehling, Cindy Bennett, Neil Stockfleth, Suzan Boden

Nay: Chris Zellmer-Zant

Absent: None

Dan stated that he will inform the INHF of the board’s decision and ask them to put it on their agenda for approval. He told board members to reach out to him if they need any information as this project moves forward. He expressed respect for all board member opinions and appreciation for the board’s confidence.

Dan noted that he has compiled the staff’s prioritized top five projects from the long-range planning and has asked board members to also prioritize the list. He hopes to send it out next week.

Dan reported that the Nature Center has had major HVAC problems the last week or so. Pipes were frozen on Tuesday, and it was 34 degrees in the front office. He put space heaters in each office to get by. Company representatives from Aon came out, and they have it up to normal temperatures in the office now. There was an issue with compressors, circuit boards and communication to the preheaters. Dan told them that the repair costs should be covered as it hasn’t worked right since installed two years ago.

ITEM R7. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:53 p.m.

The above minutes were recorded by Dawn Bostwick.

Recording Secretary, Dawn Bostwick

Board Secretary, Neil Stockfleth

Board Chairperson, Aaron Gehling