

**WOODBURY COUNTY, IOWA, CONSERVATION BOARD
MINUTES OF THE THURSDAY, JANUARY 20, 2022, BOARD MEETING**

The following is a true copy of the minutes of the meeting of the Woodbury County, Iowa, Conservation Board held on Thursday, January 20, 2022, at the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center beginning at 4:30 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Aaron Gehling (via Zoom), Chris Zellmer-Zant (via Zoom), Cindy Bennett, and Neil Stockfleth

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

None

STAFF PRESENT

Dan Heissel, Brian Stehr, Dawn Snyder and Dawn Bostwick

OTHERS PRESENT

Jeremy Taylor, County Supervisor/Conservation Board Liaison
Steve and Suzan Boden

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Gehling called the meeting to order at 4:38 p.m.

CORRESPONDENCE ITEMS

None

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None

ITEM R1. Approve Consent Agenda

MOTION by Cindy, second by Neil.

To approve the consent agenda.

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

The consent agenda was approved and involved the following items:

- C1. Approve Minutes of the December 9, 2021 Regular Meeting.
- C2. Approve the December 2021 Claims and Expenditures
- C3. Receive and Place on File the December 2021 Financial/Budget Report
- C4. Acceptance of Gifts/Donations:
 - Scheels for \$1,000 for intern program
 - Outdoor Environments Inc. for balsam garlands
 - Pizza Ranch for boxes for Winter Fun Day
 - Jeremy Taylor family for \$550 for owl adoption for a year
 - Rosie Kuehne for furs
 - Lucinda Tryon for \$250 for outdoor combo dog water fountain project

- Alex Uhl for \$100 for turtle adoption
- Hawkinson family for \$100 for animal adoption
- Constance Hoag for \$50 for nature center

ITEM R2. Election of Board Officers and Committee Assignments for 2022

It was acknowledged that Tom Limoges has been appointed to fill the board vacancy, but he was unable to attend the January meeting. He will be sworn in at the next meeting.

Dan reviewed the traditional rotation of officers stating that Neil Stockfleth would take the position of Chair, Chris Zellmer-Zant would move to Vice Chair, and Cindy Bennett would serve as Secretary.

MOTION by Neil, second by Cindy

To accept the slate of officers for 2022 as presented.²²⁻¹

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

Neil assumed the role of Chair for the remainder of the meeting. A service award plaque was presented to Suzan, and board members extended appreciation for her service from 2014 through 2021.

ITEM R3. Southwood Assistant Resource Manager – Acknowledge Hire and Salary

Dan reported that two additional applicants were interviewed and tested. Both easily passed the physical test, but Brodie Skinner came out on top with more experience in management and with chainsaws, etc. Brodie was offered the job and started on Tuesday of this week with an annual salary of \$48,779 which is the bottom of the matrix for that position.

MOTION by Aaron, second by Cindy.

To acknowledge the hiring of Brodie Skinner as Assistant Resource Manager at Southwood Conservation Area effective January 18, 2022 and approve his starting salary of \$48,779.²²⁻²

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

Brodie started studying for his CDL right away and is set up to test on the 27th. He has until Feb 7th to get a permit and be grandfathered in. After that time, a federal rule comes into place which will require college training at a cost of \$5,000.

ITEM R4. Budget FY 22-23 – Budget Review

Dan reported that the department's budget review went very well. As expected, the technician position was not approved due to the new jail and the supervisors' efforts to cut \$2.1 million from the overall budget. Although Dan was concerned about the vehicle/equipment line item, so far it was left

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²²⁻² To acknowledge the hiring of Brodie Skinner as Assistant Resource Manager at Southwood Conservation Area effective January 18, 2022 and approve his starting salary of \$48,779.

intact. The supervisors indicated that they might consider using American Rescue Plans Act (ARPA) funds to pay for it. Jeremy added that the board's position is better than it was initially because of a delay in hiring for the jail, as well as recent approval to sell the county farm which could act as a two-year bridge. He stated that there shouldn't be a problem funding the vehicles and equipment.

Dan stated that a 2.75% cost of living adjustment was assumed early on in the payroll budgeting process but that the supervisors are considering a higher percentage due to the current high inflation rates. Dan stated on record with the supervisors that if a higher cost of living adjustment is approved, a matching adjustment will also need to be made for the conservation employees since the conservation board always follows the percentage decided on by the supervisors.

Dan presented an example of the salary matrix and explained the process of adjusting for step increases and cost of living adjustments.

ITEM R5. Receive Bids on Brown's Lake Road Project

Brian presented the tabulation of bids for the Brown's Lake road project. He noted that Ben Kusler was happy with the bids received and thinks this would be a good price all factors considered. Dan stated that the Engineer's office reviewed the bids and checked them against the plans. They recommended going with Knife River who had the low bid of \$783,821.62. They are putting the contract together to be sent to Knife River.

Dan reported that Dennis Butler decided to go with a \$1.2 million loan rather than a bond. The first payment will be \$140,000 due on September 1, 2022 and will decrease by \$2,000 each year thereafter. This road project will be paid from that loan and will be paid back with user fees, as was done with the nature center and Snyder Bend roads. The project is set to be completed by May 20th.

MOTION by Aaron, second by Cindy.

To approve and accept the proposal from Knife River for the Brown's Lake road project in the amount of \$783,821.62.²²⁻³

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

ITEM R6. Receive Bids on Brown's Lake Concessions Building

Dan presented the bids received for the Brown's Lake concessions building project. Two bids were received from HCI Construction at \$685,000 and Brandon Deeds Construction at \$394,121.87. He reminded the board of the bids received two years ago which ranged from \$477,300 to \$540,000.

MOTION by Aaron, second by Chris.

To approve and accept the proposal from Brandon Deeds Construction for the Brown's Lake concession stand building project in the amount of \$394,121.87.²²⁻⁴

²²⁻³ To approve and accept the proposal from Knife River for the Brown's Lake road project in the amount of \$783,821.62.

²²⁻⁴ To approve and accept the proposal from Brandon Deeds Construction for the Brown's Lake concession stand building project in the amount of \$394,121.87.

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

Dan noted that Brandon has modification ideas for additional building cost savings. He will lock in materials with his suppliers first thing tomorrow, and a down payment will be made to cover material costs and secure current pricing. There could be approximately \$30,000 remaining from the loan, which will be used to purchase additional items such as, docks, sand, paddle boats, and kayaks.

ITEM R7. Capital Improvement Projects Update

1. Brown's Lake Projects

a. Campground – Sewer, Water, Electrical

Brian reported on the Brown's Lake campground project and noted that progress has slowed due to weather. Mike Barkley has been working with the electrician to move or remove pedestals as weather permits. Most trees have been dropped as planned other than the narrow strip between the cabins and the boat ramp. A tree contractor may be needed to remove those trees with a crane. Rock is stockpiled for the pads. Washed concrete sand is being hauled in to tie in the sidewalk which was a little higher than the beach. A ground plane was used to break up some of the chunks, so it can be seeded before spring if possible. A week's worth of nice weather would probably finish it up.

Discussion was held regarding the need to close the road to public traffic for a period during road construction. Dan and Brian will meet with the Knife River foreman and Ben Kusler to discuss the ingress/egress. An informational letter will be sent, and a public meeting will be held with the land owners to explain the plan.

ITEM R8. Board member/staff reports

1. Administrative items

Dan reported on the following items:

a. February Meeting Date

Dan proposed changing the meeting time from 4:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. to better accommodate board member schedules. After brief discussion, however, no change was made. The next meeting will be held at 4:00 p.m. on February 10, 2022, at the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center.

b. Salsness – PF Council Grant - \$20,000

Dan reported that he went to Ames for the Pheasants Forever state council grant review and had to defend his \$20,000 grant request. Three projects were submitted requesting a total of \$50,000 with only \$23,000 available. Due to technicalities, the other two grants were rejected, and the WCCB grant was fully funded.

c. Long Range Planning Sessions

Dan provided the project list from the last long-range planning session in 2021. Discussion was held regarding when to have the next planning session, and the consensus was to wait until January of 2023.

After reviewing the project list, Jeremy asked for more information on the goal of hooking Snyder Bend and Brown's Lake parks up to the Sioux City water and sewer system. Dan reviewed the history of WCCB attempts to get water and sewer from Salix and Sioux City and the reasons for continuing to pursue it. Jeremy mentioned that there is a category for water and sewer infrastructure in the second allocation of \$10 million in ARPA funds. Dan will work with Jeremy to pursue that.

d. Presentation of 2021 User Fees Report

The 2021 user fees report was presented and reviewed. Dan stated that 2021 was a banner year for camping fees, also noting that Little Sioux Park had almost half of the camping revenue. He stated that Bellamy campground at Little Sioux is electric only and needs to be renovated to include both water and sewer. Brown's Lake had lower numbers in 2021 due to lower lake levels and the beach being closed. Snyder Bend was also down because of low lake levels and extensive fish kill.

e. Old Business

Breise Property Memorandum of Understanding: Dan stated that the Breise property memorandum of understanding that was signed in November had the October Board of Supervisors meeting date on it in error. The Engineer's office called yesterday asking for a new form to be signed which will then be presented to the supervisors on Tuesday.

Dan read the information provided by the Engineer's office on the Board of Supervisors agenda request form which stated that they recommend approval of the Memorandum of Understanding which would give the conservation department the first right of refusal to purchase the 77 acres on the north side of Little Sioux Park upon completion of mining.

Dan confirmed that no motion is needed because this was previously approved and signed at the November meeting, but a new signature is needed on the copy with the corrected date. Neil signed as Chair.

O'Connell Property: A question was raised about the status of the O'Connell property, and Dan stated that there is nothing new to report.

f. Other Business

Dawn asked to revisit agenda item R2 because the 2022 committee assignments were not addressed. Dan stated that Chris Zellmer-Zant has been serving on the county REAP committee and the Woodbury County Conservation Foundation board. Chris confirmed that she is willing to continue serving on both. It was noted that the entire board serves as the Endowment Fund Committee.

2. Nature Center Activities

Dawn reported on the following Nature Center activities:

- The programs and visitors report was presented.
- Foundation memberships have been coming in. The annual meeting is being planned for Sunday, February 20th, at 2 pm. The Foundation board will meet next Tuesday. The speaker at the annual meeting will be Deb Lewis, curator for the Iowa State University herbarium.
- Position announcements for summer naturalists have been posted with applications due on the first Monday in February. Three naturalist interns and one AmeriCorps intern will be

added this summer. With the shifting of Tyler's duties causing uncertainty of him being available to supervise a habitat intern, discussions were initiated with the Iowa DNR and Stone State Park. It was agreed to share a habitat intern who would work three days at Stone and two days at the nature center each week. Dawn stated that the naturalist interns will be hired at \$12/hour this year, but she would like to see this adjusted next year to be more competitive with even fast food positions. Dan added that the rates for summer security guards will need to be adjusted next year also.

- Dawn has been submitting grant requests and reports.
- Dawn noted several recent and upcoming nature center staff anniversaries with Betty West at 14 years, Theresa Kruid at 25 years, Tyler Flammang at 6 years, Pam Pfautsch at 26 years, Marilyn Milbrodt at 25 years, and Dawn Snyder at 34 years.
- Dawn asked for insight and ideas about the volunteer banquet which hasn't been held since the onset of Covid.

3. Park Activities

Brian reported on the following park activities:

- Staff has been working on vehicle maintenance with colder weather, especially those vehicles that don't reach the hour limit but are serviced once a year.
- Brown's Lake staff has been doing tree work and helping with the campground renovation.
- Little Sioux staff has been using the forestry grinder to finish clearing the fence lines around the shooting range. They also worked with Tyler and Thomas to practice for their CDL driving tests. As of yesterday, both are fully licensed CDL drivers. Brodie is studying and will test soon also.
- Southwood staff has been working on grinding and cutting trees at Oak Ridge by Snake trail.
- During a high wind storm, the roof was torn off of the building located on the Salsness addition. Southwood staff took the rest of the building down. They will get it all cleaned up and recycle the steel.
- Electricians have been installing new conduit and wire to replace the underground wire supplying power to the lights and gate on the nature center road as there have been several breaks in the old wire over the years. A new pole and light was added by the entrance sign. A second conduit was also run to add security cameras. Dan stated that he talked to Jeff Zyzda at FiberComm, and he agreed to run the fiber and provide internet for a security camera in the lower lot. He also gave recommendations for cameras. More lighting and a security camera should help deter issues.
- Field staff will be taking pesticide refreshers the next couple of months. There is also a new state law requiring lodging providers to take human trafficking training and be certified for state funds to be used at their establishment. Affected staff members have taken the training, and WCCB has been certified.
- Seasonal park positions have been posted. The deadline for rangers is in February, maintenance in March, and security guards in April.
- Neil asked about the status of new equipment. Brian stated that he received a call from Knoepfler today with an update. The order for the half-ton truck was cancelled, but they put it in again. The cost will be higher, but they will honor the bid. The build date is February, but they have been taking longer. The chassis cab order was accepted but could still be cancelled. Brian stated that there is also a mower that has been on order since last August, but he has been assured that it will be in by summer.
- Jeremy stated that there are 50% rebates through MidAmerican right now.

4. Board Information

None

5. Other Business

None

ITEM R9. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:25 p.m.

The above minutes were recorded by Dawn Bostwick.

Recording Secretary, Dawn Bostwick

Board Secretary, Cindy Bennett

Board Chair, Neil Stockfleth