

**WOODBURY COUNTY, IOWA, CONSERVATION BOARD
MINUTES OF THE TUESDAY, MAY 11, 2023, BOARD MEETING**

The following is a true copy of the minutes of the meeting of the Woodbury County, Iowa, Conservation Board held on Thursday, May 11, 2023, at the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center beginning at 4:00 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Aaron Gehling, Chris Zellmer-Zant, Cindy Bennett, and Tom Limoges

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

Neil Stockfleth

STAFF PRESENT

Dan Heissel, Brian Stehr, Theresa Kruid, Josh Van Voorst, and Dawn Bostwick

OTHERS PRESENT

Mark Nelson, County Supervisor/Conservation Board Liaison

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Zant called the meeting to order at 4:15 p.m.

CORRESPONDENCE ITEMS

None

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None

ITEM R1. Approve Consent Agenda

Dan added an wind turbine setback update by Supervisor Mark Nelson under Old Business.

MOTION by Aaron, second by Tom

To approve the consent agenda.

VOTE:

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

The consent agenda was approved and involved the following items:

- C1. Approve Minutes of the April 13, 2023, Regular Meeting
- C2. Approve the April 2023 Claims and Expenditures
- C3. Receive and Place on File the April 2023 Financial/Budget Report
- C4. Acceptance of Gifts/Donations:
 - \$1,000 cash from Loess Hills Audubon Society Mini Grant for Screech Owl Aviary
 - \$1,000 cash from Gene & Ginger Martin for Raptors (i.e. Screech Owl Aviary)
 - \$50 cash from Dawn Snyder (Memorials for De Saulsbury & Thomas Mahaney) - Use for Screech Owl Aviary
 - Newspapers from Linda Bockelman

ITEM R2. Little Sioux Park Septic Update

Dan reported that by board request, he and Brian, along with a JEO engineer, went to Milwaukee, Wisconsin to visit several sites currently using the BioMicrobics septic systems. They looked at small, medium, and large systems used in mobile home communities, schools, and DOT rest areas. He stated that it looks like a regular septic system but above ground with a fan. Brian added that with regular maintenance on the mechanical portion (pumps and fan), they will pretty much last forever. They will need pumped out periodically like a normal septic tank. The company can monitor them remotely and advise if there is a performance issue. If any of the other old park septic systems fail in the future, they can be retrofitted using the original tank to lower the cost.

MOTION by Tom, second by Aaron

To approve using the BioMicrobics septic system for Little Sioux Park.²³⁻¹⁵

VOTE:

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

ITEM R3. Capital Improvement Projects Update

1. Brown's Lake Beach and Concessions

Josh gave an update on activities at Brown's Lake. Staff finished a small burn at Prairie Hill for the sheriff's office. About 640 acres were burned at Oak Ridge and Little Sioux, and 540 acres at Owego were able to be burned because it was so dry this year. Josh has been working on forb gardens and is growing 1,000 plugs in a variety of species to diversify at Owego.

Concession staff interviews will be held next week. Dan stated that he decided to use a Square point of sale system for the concession stand as it had the best fee percentage per swipe and is user friendly. He is targeting the holiday weekend to open, but it may not come together in time. Board members toured the concession stand to see the progress.

2. Little Sioux Park Renovations

The contractor has finished clearing trees in the primitive camping area at Little Sioux Park. Three acres of trees were cleared, and they ended up with 400 logs to go to the pallet makers. The contractor has a little time left, so Dan is going to talk to them about hauling rock from the north end of Little Sioux where the mining is being done to the parking lot at Brown's Lake. Mark Nelson reported that he received a call from someone concerned that all the trees in the park are being cut down. Dan has had two phone calls from the Record in Merville, and they are writing an article about the tree removal explaining that it was being done due to safety issues. The area has been graded and will be seeded.

3. Nature Center Shelter & Restroom

Dan reported that delivery of the nature center shelter kit has been pushed back to May 26th, so Theresa will have to contact MRHD and ask for an extension on the grant. It was supposed to have been here in April.

²³⁻¹⁵ To approve using the BioMicrobics septic system for Little Sioux Park.

Dan stated that a retaining wall will be poured behind the shelter using forms to make the back side look like rocks like the Little Sioux beach wall. It will be started next week. Then the area will be backfilled so the pad for the shelter can be poured.

He also reported that the new restroom addition has been started. The contractor tore everything off the walls, prepared it for plumbing, and built the dividing wall in the coat room. Brian had an idea to add a door into the nature center, so they also framed for that. Plumbers will start on Tuesday. The HVAC contractor will move ducts to drop heat into the room. Then the electrician will install the lights.

4. Nature Center Foundation & Retaining Walls

Dan stated that they have had two more meetings for the nature center foundation work, and the last one included someone from Certified Testing Services. It is unknown why there is such a drop in the floor and outside there is no cracking and the building is square. They submitted a proposal for \$950 to do a floor survey and determine the worst areas of the settling and where they should do soil borings. They don't think the problem is the foundation, so contractors probably won't have to bring big equipment in. The cost of replacing the retaining walls will come back on the nature center if they do not need to be removed for equipment access.

ITEM R4. Board Member/Staff Reports

1. Administrative Items

Dan reported on the following items:

a. June Meeting Date

The next meeting will be held at 4:00 p.m. on either June 8th or 15th, at the Little Sioux Park. Dan will check with Neil to make a final determination.

b. Naturalist II Position Update – Approve Starting Salary

An offer has been made and accepted for the naturalist II position. The candidate is from Illinois and arranged her pre-employment physical there. Dan received a phone call from HR regarding an issue with her physical due to a recent injury, and she won't be able to start until they figure that out.

MOTION by Aaron, second by Cindy

To approve and authorize the starting salary of \$50,730 for Mariah Meyers per the FY23 salary matrix, contingent to completion of her pre-employment physical and Human Resources approval.²³⁻¹⁶

VOTE:

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

²³⁻¹⁶ To approve and authorize the starting salary of \$50,730 for Mariah Meyers per the FY23 salary matrix, contingent to completion of her pre-employment physical and Human Resources approval.

He noted that an offer has also been made and accepted for the part-time office assistant with a planned May 24th start.

c. Old Business

Mark Nelson gave an update on the wind turbine setback ordinance. The first ordinance hearing was held at the supervisors meeting on Tuesday, May 9th. Mayors from Moville & Correctionville were in attendance and stated that they wanted a setback of five miles instead of two. They thought the setback on the parks wasn't enough, so they wanted the larger setbacks to cover Little Sioux Park and Midway Park. MidAmerican had stated that they were going to stay out of the Loess Hills and the Little Sioux River valley, but Mark has since discovered, according to their easement maps, that they have people signed up in the hills of Correctionville just three miles from Little Sioux Park. Mark doesn't believe that the supervisors will approve the larger town setbacks, because the current proposal is in accordance with the Iowa code. However, they are open to expanding the setback for the parks. Mark stated that he had reviewed the proposed ordinance with MidAmerican and gotten their approval. However, at the meeting, they said they wanted a one-mile setback from towns instead of two miles. The county is within their rights to change the distance if they want as there are easements signed but no project permits. He asked if the board would support the supervisors if they expand it to one mile setback for conservation areas.

MOTION by Tom, second by Aaron

To approve support of the Board of Supervisors in changing the proposed setback limit ordinance for wind turbines near conservation areas to one mile rather than the previously proposed one-half mile.²³⁻¹⁷

VOTE:

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

Mark noted that the second hearing is next Tuesday.

d. Other Business

None

2. Nature Center Activities

Theresa reported on the following Nature Center activities:

- The programs and visitors report for April was presented.
- The nature center has been busy with field trips. Theresa and Kari were at Little Sioux last Friday with Woodbury Central's 4th graders, and Theresa will be there tomorrow with their 2nd graders.
- Grants update:
 - The Iowa Ornithologists union grant request for the aviary was denied.
 - BNSF Railroad awarded a \$5,000 grant for the shelter.
 - The Loess Hills Wild Ones will donate \$500 for plants when the garden beds are redone.
 - An invitation was received to apply for a Gilchrist grant for exhibits.

²³⁻¹⁷ To approve support of the Board of Supervisors in changing the proposed setback limit ordinance for wind turbines near conservation areas to one mile rather than the previously proposed one-half mile.

- The designer created a model mockup of the screech owl aviary. Pictures were shown to the board. The actual aviary will be 8'tall with an inside diameter of 4'. They are also working on the round tube for prairie root. Half of the cost of the aviary has been raised so far.
- Theresa distributed Nature Calls sponsor contact lists to board members.
- The Volunteer appreciation event will be held next Thursday, and the conservation educator award will be presented to Karen South at that time.
- Scarlet, the DPNC educational red-tail hawk, passed away two weeks ago. She was estimated to be 25-30 years old.

3. Park Activities

Brian reported on the following park activities:

- Camping kickoff weekend was slower than anticipated due to weather. Staff gave out promo items and a permit for a free night of camping to be used later in the season.
- Staff is working on food plot plans and will be planting as soon as possible.
- Brown's Lake staff has been landscaping along the steps and shower towers. They also worked with Cardis to install the fence.
- Staff also conducted the department's first burn on the Breise property. It was a challenging burn but a huge success. There is a good stand of native grasses now, but it needs to be interseeded with some forbs. It was a good time to burn and reinvigorate the grasses. Plans are to convert it into prairie.
- Brian is working on getting hay bids out. The board had decided not to renew the contracts at Shagbark and just do the ones in the park. Additional park areas suitable for hay were not found. The current hay ground totals 16.5 acres. Bids will be requested and advertised. It will be a two-year contract instead of three this time.
- The new Kubota mower came in for Southwood.
- The Kubota UTV for Southwood ran into some issues with a recall on power steering components and production shutdown. Since they can't guarantee it will arrive by the end of June, Dan and Brian will look at purchasing other equipment from the replacement schedule.
- The one-ton truck bid has been cancelled twice, and Brian will be starting the rebid process in the next month or so.

Aaron suggested publicizing the amazing upgrades that have been completed at Brown's Lake over the last couple of years with a news announcement and/or Siouxland Chamber ribbon cutting.

Mark Nagra said his department would be willing to contribute to a water study in the Little Sioux area. Dan is working with the University of Iowa to look at the data and see what is going on with water levels.

4. Board Information

None

5. Other Business

None

ITEM R5. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:19 p.m.

The above minutes were recorded by Dawn Bostwick.

Recording Secretary, Dawn Bostwick

Board Secretary, Tom Limoges

Board Chair, Chris Zellmer-Zant