

**WOODBURY COUNTY, IOWA, CONSERVATION BOARD
MINUTES OF THE THURSDAY, JUNE 15, 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, June 15, 2023, at Little Sioux Park beginning at 4:00 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Aaron Gehling, Chris Zellmer-Zant (via phone), Cindy Bennett, Neil Stockfleth, and Tom Limoges

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

None

STAFF PRESENT

Dan Heissel, Brian Stehr, Theresa Kruid, Nathan Silfies, Derek Bean, Thomas Cobb, and Dawn Bostwick

OTHERS PRESENT

Mark Nelson, County Supervisor/Conservation Board Liaison

Mark and Jeanie Peterson

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Zant called the meeting to order at 4:08 p.m.

CORRESPONDENCE ITEMS

None

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None

ITEM R1. Approve Consent Agenda

MOTION by Aaron, second by Cindy

To approve the consent agenda.

VOTE:

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

Nay: None

Absent: Tom Limoges

The consent agenda was approved and involved the following items:

- C1. Approve Minutes of the May 11, 2023, Regular Meeting
- C2. Approve the May 2023 Claims and Expenditures
- C3. Receive and Place on File the May 2023 Financial/Budget Report
- C4. Acceptance of Gifts/Donations:
 - \$5000 from CF Industries via WCC Foundation for Screech Owl Aviary
 - \$1000 cash from Bruce & Carol Bickel for Screech Owl Aviary
 - \$500 cash from Loess Hills Wild Ones Grant for Garden walls and native plants
 - \$165 cash from Nolan Schmeckpepper for Screech Owl Aviary
 - Hummingbird feeders, shepherd's hook, and kids' games from anonymous

- Birdseed from Anne Shaner and Walt Johnson
- Pipe Cleaners from Mary Siepker
- 2 Squirrel feeders from Terry Cook
- Newspapers from Linda Bockelman and Dawn Snyder

ITEM R2. Presentation of the Friend of Conservation Award to Mark Peterson

Theresa presented the 2022 Friend of Conservation Award to Mark Peterson in recognition of his extensive contributions to conservation. Mark expressed appreciation for the honor and gave kudos to the board and department for their conservation efforts.

(Tom arrived at 4:15 p.m.)

ITEM R3. Approval of Wages/Salaries for Full-Time and Part-Time Employees for FY 2024 Budget

Dan presented the employee salaries and department salary matrix for fiscal year 2023-2024. He explained that the Board of Supervisors has decided to use a biweekly rate for salaried employees to avoid the issues experienced in the current fiscal year due to having 27 pay periods rather than the usual 26. He also explained that there are a few variances between the department salary matrix and actual employee wages which will be addressed before the next budget period.

MOTION by Neil, second by Tom

To approve the salaries and wages for fiscal year 2023-2024 as presented.²³⁻¹⁸

VOTE:

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

ITEM R4. Little Sioux Park Septic Update

Dan reported that he has been working with the engineers on the Little Sioux Park septic update. Staff was asked to obtain samples from the septic tank to get the BOD (biological oxygen demand) which is used to calculate the load and determine the appropriate leach field size. The original leach field sites chosen did not pass, so two additional sites are being evaluated.

Brian, Tyler, and Dan worked with Little Sioux staff to plot out campsites at Bellamy campground. The campground will end up with 8-10 fewer sites depending on the final design. Currently the sites are 90-degree angle back-in sites and only 20' long. The new sites will be 20' wide by 75' long to accommodate larger campers. The current leach fields and dump stations will continue to be used and will be converted to the new biosystem as they fail. The new system will be large enough to handle all the existing sites plus the anticipated expansion to the north. Dan is hoping to let bids in time to get work done after the parks close this fall and to complete one of the parks before next season.

(Mark Nelson arrived at 4:25 p.m.)

ITEM R5. Hay Bids for Little Sioux

Brian presented the breakdown of the five hay bids received for Little Sioux Park. The number of acres was lowered to 16.75 after removing Shagbark. The high bid received was \$208.95 per acre or \$3,499.91 per year for a two-year contract. Dan noted that staff looked for areas to expand the

²³⁻¹⁸ To approve the salaries and wages for fiscal year 2023-2024 as presented.

number of acres within Little Sioux park, but there is a problem with ant hills around the clumps of prairie grass preventing equipment from being able to hay it right now. He asked staff to level out an acre at some point to see how long it lasts.

MOTION by Neil, second by Aaron

To approve and accept the high bid for brome hay removal at Little Sioux Park made by John Heilman at a rate of \$208.95 per acre or \$3,499.91 per year for two years and authorize staff to accept the next highest bid in the event the first offer is not accepted.²³⁻¹⁹

VOTE:

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

ITEM R6. Motor Vehicle Discussion

Brian reported that Knoepfler Chevrolet has a chassis-cab truck coming in that is very similar to what the department has been looking for to replace the 2005 Ford 1-ton flatbed truck. The cost would be \$66,690, and previous bids were \$53,415 and \$41,717. It is an LT package, which is a step up from the usual department trucks but not much different. The government discount has gone from \$4,400 to \$2,200 now. Ford and Ram won't be able to order until late August or early September. Dan and Brian proposed passing on this offer and waiting to bid it out in the fall. Brief discussion was held.

MOTION by Tom, second by Cindy

To pass on the offer of \$66,000 for the Chevy chassis-cab truck with the expectation to rebid for it this fall unless a more competitive offer is presented.²³⁻²⁰

VOTE:

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

ITEM R7. Capital Improvement Projects Update

Dan reported on the following capital improvement projects.

1. Brown's Lake Beach and Concessions

The Brown's Lake beach opened two weeks ago and has had some usage, about 30-40 people. Unfortunately, the bacteria count has been up due to the geese that have taken up residency on the beach. A notice was posted, and testing will continue. Concession staff will start on Monday, and one of their jobs will be to keep the geese off the beach and swimming area. The beach has been signed and floats are out. The concession opening is targeted for next weekend. An internet connection from Long Lines was needed, but they were able to bump up the schedule and hooked it up today. Brian and Dan will install the point-of-sale machine tomorrow. Dan has already

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programmed the inventory and pricing. Brian showed pictures of the two display cases that were built to display the products.

2. Little Sioux Park Renovations

The trees have been cleared in the primitive camping area. The contractor got started later than anticipated due to snow, but it went fast once started. They took 600 cottonwood logs to South Sioux City for pallets. It really improved the appearance of the park and has drawn a lot of compliments. The staff will pick up sticks and larger rocks before adding topsoil.

Dan noted that the beach is still closed because the water level is not conducive to safe zero-entry. He has talked to Ben Kusler, assistant engineer, about the water level readings they do at Little Sioux Park, the Briese property, and Peters Pit. He will provide a spreadsheet of the readings to the University of Iowa people who drilled the well at Midway, and they will decide if a water study is needed at Little Sioux. Discussion was held regarding the possibility and feasibility of pumping water in to bring the lake level up.

3. Nature Center Shelter & Restroom

Theresa showed pictures of the nature center shelter and restroom projects. The retaining wall behind the shelter area has been built. The contractor used forms for the wall to give the appearance of boulders. When the garden and retaining walls are torn out for the foundation project, they will be replaced with a similar poured wall. The shelter pad was poured today, and the shelter will be erected after the concrete cures for a week. Dan noted that Brian and Tyler did a beautiful job on the dirt work and packing. The restroom has been roughed in and is ready to go. The contractor will work it into their schedule. The inside and outside doors should be installed next week.

4. Nature Center Foundation & Retaining Walls

A floor survey was done at the nature center to determine the problem areas. The Resource Room/Library and Dan's office have both settled 3", and there is settling upstairs in the work room and classrooms. CTS is doing bore samples to test the soil, but results won't be available for a week or two.

There is a concern that the water feature is leaking because the concrete plug on the bore hole in Dan's office is not drying and it was muddy quite deep when the soil test was done.

ITEM R8. Board Member/Staff Reports

1. Administrative Items

Dan reported on the following items:

a. July Meeting Date and Location

The next meeting will be held at Snyder Bend on Thursday, July 20th. (Aaron will not be able to attend.)

b. Naturalist II Position Update

Dan explained that there had been a delay in hiring the new naturalist due to a recent injury that prevented her from passing the required physical. After being allowed some time to heal, she has now passed the physical. Human Resources gave their approval this afternoon.

c. Old Business

Interviews have been conducted for the Resource Technician position at Southwood Conservation Area. An offer was made to Liam Bell, and he is expected to start on July 10th.

d. Other Business

H.R. 1240: Winnebago Land Transfer Act of 2023: Tom reported that he had received a phone call from a Salix resident yesterday regarding the reintroduction of bill H.R. 1240. The bill summary states that it would transfer land including Winnebago Bend and the lower half of Snyder Bend to the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska. The resident was told by Feenstra's office that none of the sportsman's groups had opposed it. Pheasants Forever opposed it when it was presented in 2017, taking the position that it would take the land out of public use and put it into a private entity. The conservation board also opposed it at that time. Aaron stated that Ducks Unlimited opposed it last time as well. Dan stated that his biggest concern is loss of control of the water level and the wildlife preserve, and that could kill the department's investment in that park. Board members were encouraged to contact Grassley's and Feenstra's offices soon. Mark stated that he is willing to bring it to the supervisors, but it would mean more to have representation from the sportsman's groups there. Aaron will contact Lance Larson and Ducks Unlimited. Tom will contact Pheasants Forever.

(Chris left the meeting at 5:37 p.m. Cindy assumed chairperson duties.)

MOTION by Neil, second by Tom

To oppose the H.R.1240 bill that transfers property away from the current ownership of the Army Corp of Engineers and managed by the Iowa DNR to a private entity.²³⁻²¹

VOTE:

Aye: Aaron Gehling, Cindy Bennett, Neil Stockfleth, & Tom Limoges

Nay: None

Absent: Chris Zellmer-Zant

Commercial Solar Debate: Mark Nelson reported that the commercial solar debate is ongoing in Woodbury County. NextEra Energy from Florida has been signing up landowners around Salix without checking the zoning ordinances. In Woodbury County, commercial solar is only allowed on industrial-owned property. Farmers are exempt to power their farms, and there is a conditional use permit process to allow it on a residential property. There is currently debate regarding commercial use, with some entities wanting to allow conditional use permits for any ground. Feedback from farmers has been that it should not be used on farm ground. Mark predicts that the issue will come before the Board of Supervisors in the next month.

Brown's Lake Wildlife Habitat Weir: Aaron stated that plans have been formalized for building a third weir in Brown's Lake, and the lake association is looking at seriously. Dan stated that he is concerned that it would put water in the Brown's Lake residence basement.

New Lake: Dan stated that the New Lake deal is dead, and the conservation board will not be getting that property. MidAmerican has said that they will be offering it to the state. Dan asked if it was because of the wind turbine issue but couldn't get an answer.

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2. Nature Center Activities

Theresa reported on the following Nature Center activities:

- The programs and visitors report for May was presented.
- A great crew of summer staff has started.
- Summer camps started on Tuesday and are 98% full for the summer.
- Grants have been received from BNSF Railroad for the shelter (\$5,000) and Loess Hills Wild Ones (\$500) for the gardens.
- The gardens are doing amazing this year. Lots of monarchs and caterpillars have been spotted already.
- Theresa is working on a Gilchrist grant for the exhibit additions.
- The exhibit company will install the prairie root during the last week of June. The aviary will be installed later.
- Approximately 50 people attended the volunteer recognition event on May 18th. Three individuals were recognized for volunteering over 100 hours and one for volunteering over 200 hours last year. Karen South was presented with the Conservation Education award.
- The foundation was named as a beneficiary in the William Vust estate along with many other non-profit organizations. Necessary paperwork has been signed, but the specific bequest amount is unknown at this time.
- Nature Calls auction committee and regular committee meetings have been held. Sponsors are needed. The committee will start working on auction items. Premier Glazer's, L&L Distributing, and Wise I Brewing Co. will be participating. Theresa plans to make contacts for raffles and guns next week.

3. Park Activities

Brian reported on the following park activities:

- Almost all the parks were at capacity for Memorial Day weekend, but it has been a mix since then. Having the Little Sioux beach closed has hurt attendance, but safety comes first.
- Districts have been working on food plots.
- The Southeast District has completed several larger burns this spring. Many of the areas had been prepped for the cooperative burn week but didn't get done.
- Cops and Bobbers and Pheasants Forever fishing derbies were well attended.
- Field staff, along with three seasonal employees, attended S-212 chainsaw training class. Erik and Brodie were instructors.
- Erik attended an ALERRT (Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training) class, which might become a requirement for law enforcement. It was a week-long class to become a trainer.

4. Board Information

None

5. Other Business

Dan stated that the board had mentioned that the department doesn't market itself enough, so he is considering taking part in the One-Tank Wonders program through KCAU 9. They will put together a video and a 30-second ad and provide a QR code for \$1,000 per month.

Aaron provided information about the Mighty Mo Youth Trap Team that he coaches on. Fifty-one kids are on the team this year with a dozen coaches. There is a spring and a fall season for 4th

grade through high school students. Twenty-seven kids went to Cedar Falls for the state shoot. Full-ride scholarships are available at 16 Iowa colleges.

ITEM R9. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:28 p.m.

The above minutes were recorded by Dawn Bostwick.

Recording Secretary, Dawn Bostwick

Board Secretary, Tom Limoges

Board Chair, Chris Zellmer-Zant