

**WOODBURY COUNTY, IOWA, CONSERVATION BOARD  
MINUTES OF THE THURSDAY, JANUARY 11, 2024, 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 11, 2024, via Zoom videoconference beginning at 4:00 p.m.

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT**

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

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT**

None

**STAFF PRESENT**

Dan Heissel, Brian Stehr, Theresa Kruid, and Dawn Bostwick

**OTHERS PRESENT**

Mark Nelson, County Supervisor/Conservation Board Liaison

**CALL TO ORDER**

Vice Chairperson Bennett called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m.

**CORRESPONDENCE ITEMS**

None

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

None

**ITEM R1. Approve Consent Agenda**

**MOTION** by Tom, second by Neil.

To approve the consent agenda.

**VOTE:**

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

Nay: None

Absent: Chris Zellmer-Zant

The consent agenda was approved and involved the following items:

- C1. Approve Minutes of the December 14, 2023, Regular Meeting
- C2. Approve the December 2023 Claims and Expenditures
- C3. Receive and Place on File the December 2023 Financial/Budget Report and 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter FY 23-24 Reserve Fund Report
- C4. Acceptance of Gifts/Donations:
  - \$200 from Jason Wolfe for raptor food and care
  - \$550 from the Alex Uhl family for Screech Owl adoption
  - \$3,000 from Scheels for Summer Naturalists

**ITEM R2. Election of Board Officers and Committee Assignments for 2024**

Dan reviewed the traditional rotation of officers stating that Cindy Bennett would take the position of Chair, Tom Limoges would move to Vice Chair, and Aaron Gehling would serve as Secretary.

**MOTION** by Aaron, second by Neil.

To accept the slate of officers for 2024 as presented.<sup>24-1</sup>

**VOTE:** Aye: Aaron Gehling Chris Zellmer-Zant, Cindy Bennett, Neil Stockfleth  
& Tom Limoges

Nay: None

Absent: None

Cindy assumed the role of Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

Dan explained that the entire board is on the endowment committee and reviewed the history of the endowment fund.

*(Theresa arrived at 4:09 p.m.)*

*(Chris arrived at 4:10 p.m.)*

Chris agreed to remain on both the REAP Committee and Woodbury County Conservation Foundation Board.

**MOTION** by Neil, second by Tom.

To appoint Chris Zellmer-Zant as the board representative for the REAP committee and the Woodbury County Conservation Foundation board and appoint all board members to the endowment committee.<sup>24-2</sup>

**VOTE:** Aye: Aaron Gehling Chris Zellmer-Zant, Cindy Bennett, Neil Stockfleth  
& Tom Limoges

Nay: None

Absent: None

**ITEM R3. Trailer Purchase – Equipment Budget**

Dan explained that he reviews the equipment list every budget period for the next five years. He stated that Brian keeps it updated now and does a good job making sure we stay within the budget. There is enough money remaining to purchase a trailer.

Brian reported that a quote of \$17,595 was obtained from Hitches, Trailers & More for a 2024 Load Trail 26' tilt-bed trailer with two 10,000 lb. axles and a spare tire included. This would be able to haul all current skid loaders, and also be heavy enough to haul a mini excavator if needed in the future. Brian looked at other area trailer dealers but since prices were comparable chose to stay local. The tilt is a fixed 16', but the additional 8' stationary deck would be able to carry implements and attachments which the current trailer does not have room to carry.

*(Mark Nelson joined the meeting at 4:20 p.m.)*

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<sup>24-1</sup> To accept the slate of officers for 2024 as presented.

<sup>24-2</sup> To appoint Chris Zellmer-Zant as the board representative for the REAP committee and the Woodbury County Conservation Foundation board and appoint all board members to the endowment committee.

It was noted that next year the department will be looking for a fifth wheel trailer with two 12,000 lb. axles. The current trailers are dated, with two from 1997 or 1998. They don't hold much trade-in value, so one might be kept as a backup and the other put out for bid or sold on the county auction.

**MOTION** by Neil, second by Chris.

To approve and authorize the purchase of a 2024 Load Trail 83x26 Tilt-N-Go trailer from Hitches, Trailers & More for \$17,595.<sup>24-3</sup>

**VOTE:** Aye: Aaron Gehling Chris Zellmer-Zant, Cindy Bennett, Neil Stockfleth & Tom Limoges

Nay: None

Absent: None

#### **ITEM R4. Technician Position at Southwood**

Dan reported that Liam Bell, who was hired as the new resource technician at Southwood Conservation Area, has turned in his resignation. He had informed Dan and Brian prior to submitting his application with the DNR. Dan requested board support to refill that position right away.

Additional discussion was held regarding Liam's recent CDL training. Dan explained that the cost was around \$500 and is not covered in any kind of contract. The department does have a law enforcement contract that stipulates that the officer stay for five years or they pay back a prorated share of the training expense, but that training costs over \$10,000. No other employee contracts are required.

**MOTION** by Aaron, second by Neil.

To approve and authorize the director to refill the open resource technician position for Southwood Conservation Area.<sup>24-4</sup>

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

Nay: None

Absent: Tom Limoges

Dan noted that a flyer will be created about this job and seasonal positions for the Winterfest college day next week.

#### **ITEM R5. Capital Improvement Projects Update**

##### **1. Little Sioux Park – Sewer Project**

Dan reported that he and Brian had met with park staff and had a preconstruction meeting with the JEO engineers and the contractor in charge of the collection system, which includes all the piping that gets to the BioMicrobics system. The contractor wants to start possibly next week and are confident they can be done in two weeks. They plan to clear just enough area of snow to work on each day and use frost blankets overnight. Brian added that they will wait until the current cold stretch is done to have a little warmer weather and hopefully be done in 2-3 weeks.

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<sup>24-3</sup> To approve and authorize the purchase of a 2024 Load Trail 83x26 Tilt-N-Go trailer from Hitches, Trailers & More for \$17,595.

<sup>24-4</sup> To approve and authorize the director to refill the open Resource Technician position for Southwood Conservation Area.

Dan noted that there will be some minor changes, most of which will save money on the project, and he would like to handle those. If any of the changes will add a significant cost, he will bring it to the board for approval. The board approved by consensus.

## **2. Little Sioux Park – Bellamy Campground**

Dan reported that the engineers have their drawing in place for Bellamy campground, which is part of the contract with the Riverside campground. They reviewed the plans and are ready to go when the funds are available. They would like to extend the contract with the contractor to be further ahead on Bellamy. They had questions on the length of the sites, so were able to measure those while onsite and will make the adjustments. They also checked the water system inside the shower house because it will be required to be a public water supply with the DNR. Staff will become certified water operators and test quarterly.

Discussion was held regarding the condition of the Little Sioux wells. Brian stated that the only deep well is at Riverside and is approximately 180'. The wells for Bellamy campground, Lakeside campground, and the residence are all shallow wells. The Bellamy well dried up last fall and has been backfilled from Riverside. Mike Barkley tried to lift that well, but it wasn't the screen and it didn't help. The residence well is questionable right now also. Dan stated that a new well may need to be drilled. He recommended going down to 180' or 250'. It will all depend on the quality of the water for the water supply. Brian stated that Noah mentioned today that if it is considered public water supply, the setbacks for other wells, septic tanks, sewer lines, etc. goes down with a deeper well. Dan stated that more research will need to be done before any decision can be made.

## **ITEM R6. Board Member/Staff Reports**

### **1. Administrative Items**

Dan reported on the following items:

#### **a. February Meeting Date and Location**

The next meeting will be held at 4:00 p.m. on February 8, 2024, at the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center.

#### **b. Vest for Officers**

Dan looked at additional funding and grants for the officer rifle vests. He talked to David Gleiser with MRHD and was told that they do not provide waivers to allow for purchasing the product in advance. Dan felt the vests needed to be ordered as soon as possible and was confident he could find room in the budget. Then the tragic Perry school shooting came up and confirmed this, so he asked Brian to place the order.

Brian reported that he ordered the vests from the company that the sheriff's office uses. They are level 5, the highest level of protection. Helmets were also ordered. They suggested ordering large helmets and getting headbands to size them, making them more universal. No information was provided on when they will be available. They confirmed that it is in system and ordered, but it could take a couple months. Dan will continue to look for additional funding.

**c. Technician Position at Brown's Lake**

Dan reported that the Brown's Lake resource technician opening closed last Friday, and there were 15 applicants. Four have been chosen to be interviewed next Wednesday.

**d. Receptionist/Volunteer Coordinator**

Dan stated that the receptionist/volunteer coordinator position closed last Friday also, and 37 applications were received. Plans are to review applications next week and set up the interview schedule.

**e. Old Business**

Little Sioux Park: Dan reviewed last month's discussions about asking secondary roads to survey the beach. Once there is ice on the lake, staff can measure depths, but there hasn't been hard water yet. Dan talked to Ben at his retirement on Tuesday, and he said that he will look at it once our staff is able to get measurements and shots done. The plan is to move things around and try to bench it, so there is a little shallower spot when water is low. Dan stated that the board needs to be proactive on this because camping revenues are down due to the beach being closed. He would like to try this versus pumping because pumping would be a continual process. The board agreed by consensus to keep pursuing this and get measurements once there is ice on the lake.

**2. Nature Center Activities**

Theresa reported on the following Nature Center activities:

- The programs and visitors report for December was presented.
- Winter Fun Day was well attended but a little lower than normal at 150 people due to the high winds.
- Kari & Mariah held programs over the holiday break. The turtles program was attended by 147 people.
- Other larger counties talked about holding some zoom and in-person meetings to discuss how to reach more schools with low staff and large numbers of students.
- Theresa will be meeting with the School of the Wild organizer soon. They are targeting starting in October of this year if Woodbury Central can make that work. School of the Wild will bring one or two staff members and will involve WCCB staff and the school's teachers. The students would spend an entire week at one of our parks and rotate instructors. This will be for 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades.
- Betty West's retirement party was yesterday, and her last day is next week. Tyler Flammang's 8-year anniversary is next week. Mariah Myers just completed six months.
- Nature center seasonal staff announcements will hopefully go out next week.
- Nature Calls: Theresa noted that there was an error in her report, and another check has since been received, bringing the net profit to \$38,750.46, which is more than in the past. She heard from the Expo Center that the rental rate alone is approximately \$11,000, which is a significant increase from the Sioux City Convention Center. However, the food is more expensive at the convention center since outside caterers can be used at the Expo Center. A decision will need to be made in the next month or so.
- The foundation's end-of-year mailer has been sent. Renewals and new memberships are coming in. Foundation members are planning their annual meeting which is scheduled for February 17<sup>th</sup>. The foundation has also requested a joint meeting with the conservation board in the upcoming year.

(Neil left at 5:08 p.m.)

### 3. Park Activities

Brian reported on the following park activities:

- Staff has committed a lot of time to snow removal and indoor projects. They also have been using some of their time off over the holidays.
- Brown's Lake staff has been working on rebuilding the Vermeer tree spade which was a wild-built piece of equipment from 1976. They have replaced the engine and tires and will be replacing hoses and rebuilding hydraulic cylinders.
- Little Sioux staff has been working on tree damage at Midway Park from a recent ice storm.
- Little Sioux staff has also been using the forestry grinder at the park and on the Briese area. During this work, the main shaft on the grinder broke. In talking with Diamond, they said it was a known issue on the earlier models. Diamond is covering the whole cost of the spindle and upgrading the gear box. Brian stated that their customer service is top notch, and they stand behind their products.
- Southwood staff has been burning brush piles that couldn't be burned earlier because of lack of snow, as well as doing burn prep for the spring.
- Liam Bell earned his CDL certification.

### 4. Board Information

None

### 5. Other Business

Budget Review: Dan reported that the department's budget review was held on Tuesday with the Supervisors. Dan and Brian were both present. Dan said it appeared that most department heads were doing good at coming in under a 2% increase.

Mark agreed that it went smoothly and cleared the first hurdle, stating that department heads have done a nice job of getting their budgets in order. He announced that he has been reappointed as conservation liaison and looks forward to this next year.

Dan mentioned that during the budget review Supervisor Radig brought up the issue of the Winnebago transfer and voiced some ideas of how to handle it, but Dan didn't feel it was the appropriate forum to discuss it in detail.

Director's Annual Review: Dan received Chris's comments for his annual review and added them to the other comments. He will send the report out to board members for review. Cindy can confirm that everything is correct and sign it at the next meeting.

**ITEM R7. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:22 p.m.

The above minutes were recorded by Dawn Bostwick.

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Recording Secretary, Dawn Bostwick

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Board Secretary, Aaron Gehling

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Board Chair, Cindy Bennett