

**WOODBURY COUNTY, IOWA, CONSERVATION BOARD
MINUTES OF THE THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 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, February 8, 2024, at the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center beginning at 4:00 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Cindy Bennett, Neil Stockfleth, and Tom Limoges

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

Aaron Gehling and Chris Zellmer-Zant

STAFF PRESENT

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

OTHERS PRESENT

None

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Bennett called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m.

CORRESPONDENCE ITEMS

None

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None

ITEM R1. Approve Consent Agenda

MOTION by Neil, second by Tom.

To approve the consent agenda.

VOTE:

Aye: Cindy Bennett, Neil Stockfleth & Tom Limoges

Nay: None

Absent: Aaron Gehling & Chris Zellmer-Zant

The consent agenda was approved and involved the following items:

- C1. Approve Minutes of the January 11, 2024, Regular Meeting
- C2. Approve the January 2024 Claims and Expenditures
- C3. Receive and Place on File the January 2024 Financial/Budget Report
- C4. Acceptance of Gifts/Donations:
 - \$100 from Marc & Tracy Vander Wilt for Fox snake adoption
 - \$20 from Gary LeMoine for Corn snake adoption
 - Craft supplies from Sally Hartley and Tiana Kruid

ITEM R2. Oath Of Office – Cindy Bennett – 5-Year Term

Dan Heissel administered the oath of office to Cindy Bennett as she has been reappointed to the board for another five-year term.

ITEM R3. Friends of Conservation & Conservation Educator Awards

Theresa presented a list of suggested candidates for the nature center’s annual conservation awards.

MOTION by Neil, second by Tom.

To appoint Gary LeMoine for the 2023 Friend of Conservation award and Prudy Deck for the 2023 Conservation Educator award.²⁴⁻⁵

VOTE:

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

ITEM R4. Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center Rental Rates

Theresa presented the proposed changes to the nature center room rental rates along with a room rental rate comparison of other counties. Proposed changes include eliminating hourly rates and offering half-day or full-day rates only, as well as eliminating a separate children’s birthday party rental rate. The staff also requested that rentals start at 9:00 a.m. instead of 8:00 a.m. because staff must be there in advance to prepare for the rental.

MOTION by Neil, second by Tom.

To approve nature center room rental rates as presented.²⁴⁻⁶

VOTE:

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

Theresa also stated that the rental rules and contract are not consistent, so she will be reviewing them and making necessary changes.

It was noted that the nature center used to be open from 1-4 on Sundays, but that was discontinued during Covid. Dan recommended reopening the nature center on Sunday afternoons from 12-4 just for the summer to coincide with the park season. He will present it for board action at a future meeting.

ITEM R5. Resource Technician Position at Southwood Update

Dan reported that sixteen applications were received for the Resource Technician position at Southwood Conservation Area. Four interviews have been scheduled for next Tuesday.

²⁴⁻⁵ To appoint Gary LeMoine for the 2023 Friend of Conservation award and Prudy Deck for the 2023 Conservation Educator award.

²⁴⁻⁶ To approve nature center room rental rates as presented.

ITEM R6. Capital Improvement Projects Update

Little Sioux Park – Sewer Projects

Dan stated that a preconstruction meeting was held, and the contractor started a week and a half ago. The high-pressure line is in, and the collection system has been started. They are at least half done and will be finished well ahead of schedule. With it being muddy, the equipment has been tearing up the ground, but staff can seed it in March leaving a couple months for it to get established. Brian added that the contractor hit a power line that wasn't marked, but otherwise everything was going smoothly. One pedestal was ruined, but there is an extra one on hand that the electrician can install when he is onsite wiring the pits.

The contractor for phases B & C is asking for pre-construction meeting on March 4th and hopes to be done by the end of April. It is possible that the system may be up and running for the summer ahead of schedule. Brian noted that park staff has received good feedback about the project from the community.

ITEM R7. Board Member/Staff Reports

1. Administrative Items

Dan reported on the following items:

a. Set March Meeting Date

The next meeting will be held at 4:00 p.m. on March 14, 2024, at the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center.

b. User Fees Report – Calendar Year 2023

The 2023 user fees report was presented. Discussion was held regarding usage trends.

c. Brown's Lake/Snyder Bend Resource Technician– Acknowledge & Approve Salary

Interviews were held for the Resource Technician position at Brown's Lake/Bigelow Park and Snyder Bend Park. The position was offered to and accepted by Skyler Foley. He is currently at Howard County Conservation. He has law enforcement certification, but this position does not require it. Dan is considering allowing him to attend CCPOA workshops with the officers to keep up his CEUs. That way if there is a position change later, it would save the county \$15,000 for academy training and additional travel costs, as well as having a staff member out for four months of training. Skyler would need to earn 12 CEU hours per year plus participate in mandatory training within the department cycle and handgun qualification with a score of at least 80%. Discussion was held regarding a possible hybrid position.

MOTION by Tom, second by Neil.

To acknowledge the hiring of Skyler Foley as Resource Technician at Brown's Lake/Bigelow Park and Snyder Bend Park effective March 4, 2024, and approve his starting annual salary of \$47,713.²⁴⁻⁷

²⁴⁻⁷ To acknowledge the hiring of Skyler Foley as Resource Technician at Brown's Lake/Bigelow Park and Snyder Bend Park effective March 4, 2024, and approve his starting annual salary of \$47,713.

VOTE:

Aye: Cindy Bennett, Neil Stockfleth & Tom Limoges

Nay: None

Absent: Aaron Gehling & Chris Zellmer-Zant

d. Receptionist/Volunteer Coordinator – Acknowledge & Approve Salary

Dan announced that four candidates were interviewed for the Receptionist/Volunteer Coordinator positions and an offer has been made to Shelby Campbell. She will have her physical on Tuesday, and her background checks are in progress. Once approved, a start date will be set. She has good connections within the community which should be beneficial.

MOTION by Neil, second by Tom.

To acknowledge the hiring of Shelby Campbell as part-time Receptionist/Volunteer Coordinator at the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center and approve her starting hourly rate at \$20.08, with start date to be determined upon completion of employment requirements.²⁴⁻⁸

VOTE:

Aye: Cindy Bennett, Neil Stockfleth & Tom Limoges

Nay: None

Absent: Aaron Gehling & Chris Zellmer-Zant

e. Old Business

Dan reported that he is working with the state on the well at Little Sioux Park. A new well needs to be drilled for the residence. JEO will engineer it within the current contract and handle the public water supply part of it. They will find the place for it at the correct distance from the septic system and obtain the DNR permit. Dan will bring more information for board approval later.

He noted that most wells are 28-40' in the park currently, but this will be engineered for the most volume possible to accommodate future needs. Because it may need to be used to replace one of the other wells in the park, it will need to be done as a public water supply.

2. Nature Center Activities (Theresa)

Theresa reported on the following Nature Center activities:

- The January programs and visitors report was presented.
- Kari and Mariah went to Winterfest for training in January.
- Kari and Mariah both received a grant for the Iowa Association of Naturalists spring workshop to be held in conjunction with the National Association for Interpretation in April. Theresa will only be able to attend for one day.
- Mariah will attend National Archery in the Schools Program training on Monday in O'Brien County. She has been doing a portion of the training online.

²⁴⁻⁸ To acknowledge the hiring of Shelby Campbell as part-time Receptionist/Volunteer Coordinator at the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center and approve her starting hourly rate at \$20.08, with start date to be determined upon completion of employment requirements.

- The Foundation annual meeting and program will be held on Saturday, February 17th. Daniel Fogell, Herpetologist and Instruction at Southeast Community College in Lincoln, will be presenting the program “*Snakes on the Plains: Surviving a Harsh Environment.*”
- Nature Calls will be held on Saturday, September 21st. A planning meeting will be held in the next couple weeks, and a decision on venue will need to be made.
- Naturalist staff met with Kristin Eilders, Sioux City School District Science Administrator. The 1st and 5th grade classes are preapproved to visit the nature center. She will distribute information to the teachers.
- A meeting is scheduled tomorrow with Jay Gorch and a 5th grade teacher for School of the Wild.

3. Park Activities (Brian)

Brian reported on the following park activities:

- Field staff has been working on normal winter weather maintenance. Snow on the ground allowed them to get burn piles caught up that they haven’t been able to burn for at least two years.
- Little Sioux staff has been doing a great job meeting with construction staff crew and getting them gravel, etc.
- Brown’s Lake staff is almost done making repairs to the tree spade.
- Tyler had a meeting with staff today about Avenza maps app. The department has a subscription so field staff can use cell phones to collect information and send edits to Tyler more readily. He can create a map with points they create on their phone. He can also get QR codes for parking lots to download maps to that area. They are dynamic QR codes so updates will get sent out automatically.
- The radios are ready to be installed. Don Groves was working on the programming side of it and got it figured out. They are still having issues with the Iowa State Patrol channel.
- The chassis cab truck has finally showed up and is at Marx Trailer to get the flatbed installed. The flatbed was purchased two years ago. This truck replaces the 2005 Ford flatbed, and the fire rig fits on it.
- Four staff members attended Winterfest. There were great training opportunities again, and they had record-breaking attendance.
- Brian sat in on a meeting for a new QR code function coming available in MyCountyParks.com for a pay-at-site option in campgrounds. Cash or checks are still possible, but this is another pay option. It is just being rolled out, so he suggested waiting a season to get the kinks worked out. Good cell phone or Wi-Fi signal at the parks will be necessary.
- Dan reported that Long Lines is installing fiber from Brown’s Lake all the way down to Snyder Bend.
- Neil suggested hiring someone to take photos of the campsites and help with building the facilities online to roll it out sooner.

4. Board Information (Board Members)

None

5. Other Business

Dan announced that Erik Lindsay applied for a \$5,000 grant from Loess Hills Alliance and was awarded \$4,500.

ITEM R8. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:15 p.m.

The above minutes were recorded by Dawn Bostwick.

Recording Secretary, Dawn Bostwick

Board Secretary, Aaron Gehling

Board Chair, Cindy Bennett