

**WOODBURY COUNTY, IOWA, CONSERVATION BOARD
MINUTES OF THE THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 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, February 9, 2023, at the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center beginning at 4:00 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Aaron Gehling, Neil Stockfleth, and Tom Limoges (by phone)

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

Chris Zellmer-Zant and Cindy Bennett

STAFF PRESENT

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

OTHERS PRESENT

Mark Nelson, County Supervisor/Conservation Board Liaison

CALL TO ORDER

Aaron Gehling, acting as Chair, called the meeting to order at 4:08 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: Aaron Gehling, Neil Stockfleth, and Tom Limoges

Nay: None

Absent: Chris Zellmer-Zant and Cindy Bennett

The consent agenda was approved and involved the following items:

- C1. Approve Minutes of the January 12, 2023, Regular Meeting
- C2. Approve the January 2023 Claims and Expenditures
- C3. Receive and Place on File the January 2023 Financial/Budget Report
- C4. Acceptance of Gifts/Donations:
 - Scheels for \$2,500 cash donation for Summer Interns (via WCCF)
 - Marilyn Milbrodt for \$100 towards Screech Owl aviary in memory of Patti Brown

ITEM R2. Equipment Bids

Brian explained that the previously ordered one-ton chassis-cab truck has been cancelled a second time. Due to limited timing and increased pricing, it was decided to purchase a few equipment items from the next year's replacement schedule with the restricted reserve funds carried over for the truck and reorder the truck under next year's budget. Brian presented bid information for a mower and a UTV for Southwood.

Two bids were received for the UTV, and Brian recommended going with the Kubota RTV from Midwest Kubota due to pricing and good previous experience with the dealer. He also noted that WCCB has three of these units which have performed well.

MOTION by Neil, second by Tom.

To approve and authorize the purchase of a 2023 Kubota RTV-XG 850 from Midwest Kubota for \$15,000 after trade-in of a 2013 John Deere 825i.²³⁻⁴

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

Three bids were received for a 4x4 front deck 72" mower. Brian stated that with the steep hills at Southwood, the four-wheel drive really makes a difference. He recommended going with the low bid from Midwest Kubota.

MOTION by Neil, second by Tom.

To approve and authorize the purchase of a 2023 Kubota F2690 from Midwest Kubota for \$21,000 after trade-in of a 2011 John Deere 1445.²³⁻⁵

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

Dan stated that after these purchases there will be \$11,000 left, as well as a \$2,000 buffer from other equipment. They will be looking for an equipment trailer with a little more capacity and will bring information to the next meeting.

ITEM R3. Capital Improvement Projects Update

1. Little Sioux Park – Old Tent Site Area Clearing

Dan reported that a contractor is available to start next month on removing the cottonwoods in the old tent area at Little Sioux Park. As discussed at the long-range planning meeting, this area has been deemed unsafe due to the old cottonwoods that have been tipping over and breaking off. There are also spoils piles in that area from gravel mining done prior to developing the park. The area will end up with two rows of tent sites. The ditch down the middle will be filled, and a couple low spots also need to be filled so water doesn't pool.

Holly Brown Construction gave a quote of \$30,000-\$35,000 to log all the cottonwoods, haul them out, and fill holes left by root balls which will be piled behind spoils piles. Holly Brown

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²³⁻⁵ To approve and authorize the purchase of a 2023 Kubota F2690 from Midwest Kubota for \$21,000 after trade-in of a 2011 John Deere 1445.

Construction is available throughout February and March and sporadically in the summer. Dan will give them until October 1st to complete the work.

MOTION by Neil, second by Tom.

To approve and accept the proposal from Holly Brown Construction to clear the primitive tent areas at Little Sioux Park at a cost of \$35,000.²³⁻⁶

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

ITEM R4. Board Member/Staff Reports

1. Administrative Items

Dan reported on the following items:

a. March Meeting Date

The next meeting will be held at 4:00 p.m. on March 16, 2023, at the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center.

b. Naturalist I Replacement Update

Dan reported that 20 applications were received for the Naturalist I position at the nature center. Five candidates will be interviewed on February 20th & 21st. He hopes to have someone hired prior to next month's meeting so the board can then approve the salary.

c. Long-Range Planning – Follow-Up Comments

Dan stated that he was very pleased with the results of the long-planning meeting. He would like to follow through on Erik's idea to review each park's long-range projects during the summer when the board meets in the parks, as well as Theresa's suggestion to meet with staff to compile and organize the final list prior to the board planning meeting. Aaron added that, as a board member, he would like to view the top five projects in person when meeting in the parks.

d. Radio Replacement

Dan stated that law enforcement radios need to be replaced because they will no longer be supported by Motorola and the prices will be going up. He put the replacement cost in as a CIP request, and Emergency Services did the same. Last week the supervisors appropriated ARPA funds to cover the radios for the parks and the trucks. The radios can be ordered now while on sale with a \$2500 discount per radio. Dan is working with Emergency Services to get them ordered.

²³⁻⁶ To approve and accept the proposal from Holly Brown Construction to clear the primitive tent areas at Little Sioux Park at a cost of \$35,000.

e. Budget Update

Dan announced that the supervisors set the cost-of-living adjustment rate for wage plan employees, which includes all conservation staff, at 4.25% for next fiscal year.

Dan reported that Supervisor Ung said that big increases cannot be given across the board but a consultant should be brought in to do a wage study and make necessary adjustments that way. Dan noted that he has readjusted a few conservation positions already, but he wants to review all positions before the next budget period.

f. Friend of Conservation and Conservation Educator Awards

Theresa presented a list of previous Friend of Conservation and Conservation Educator award winners and a list of suggestions for 2022 recipients. After some discussion, the board decided to name former WCCB Deputy Director and nature center volunteer, Mark Peterson, as the Friend of Conservation and Karen South, Lawton-Bronson kindergarten teacher, as the Conservation Educator for 2022.

g. Old Business

Dan reported that the Izaak Walton League property has been purchased by the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, and they were able to get their insurance carrier to insure it. Dan will seek grant money, possibly through LAWCON, for the purchase. Dan urged the board to keep moving forward on deciding what to do with the building.

h. Other Business

Supervisor Nelson Introduction and Wind Turbine Information:

Mark Nelson, Woodbury County Supervisor, gave a summary of his personal background and conservation experience. He noted that he had specifically requested to be the liaison for the conservation board. He then presented information about wind turbine zoning changes that he was very involved in getting implemented for rural areas. He stated that area city mayors have expressed concerns about zoning set-back for cities as well and that he has been asked to amend the ordinance for city limits. In his research, he has discovered that the set-back is only 600' from a conservation area. If opening the discussion back up for city limits, conservation areas could be added as well. Many issues were discussed including noise, safety, and wildlife impact.

Dan expressed concern about moving forward based strictly on facts as MidAmerican has been a very good partner and invested a lot of money into infrastructure for Brown's Lake. He stated that he is not against wind energy but does not want it to encroach on private citizens. He advised proceeding carefully to get a setback of at least 2500' or a half mile for conservation areas.

(Tom left meeting at 5:30 p.m.)

Potential New Lake Acquisition:

Dan announced that MidAmerican is interested in donating New Lake near Salix to the conservation board and is in the process of putting documents together. The agreement would include burning restrictions due to the power line poles, continuation of public access and hunting with non-toxic shot only, and a shotgun and muzzle loader ban. It would also have an easement on the rights-of-way. MidAmerican could use the dollars from this donation and the Brown's Lake infrastructure as a match in obtaining NAWCA money for conservation. Dan will get the offer documents from MidAmerican and will have the county attorney look at it regarding the easements.

2. Nature Center Activities

Theresa reported on the following Nature Center activities:

- The programs and visitors report for January was presented.
- Dawn's retirement open house went very well with approximately 150 people in attendance.
- Kari has been covering some of Theresa's programs during the transition period.
- Theresa is being added as a signer on the WCCF checking accounts.
- The WCCF annual meeting will be held on Saturday, February 18th, at 2:00 p.m. along with a Wildlife Encounter program for the public at 1:00 p.m. and a special members-only meet and greet program at 2:30. The public program was limited to 150 people, but concerns were raised about inadequate parking, especially with winter conditions. A decision was made to add another session at 11:00 a.m. Staff will make calls to those registered to split the group between the two sessions.
- Dan stated that through the training process it was discovered that Dawn had been putting in an average of 10-12 hours per week on WCCF work and bookkeeping. Dan said that the foundation needs to find a volunteer or hire someone to do the bookkeeping duties. He noted that other counties have been penalized because of employees working for their foundation. Dawn has brought it up to the WCCF board in the past, but they wanted her to keep doing it.
- Theresa met with Pam for her annual review and will be meeting with other employees individually to get feedback and ideas.

3. Park Activities

Brian reported on the following park activities:

- Staff has been working on burn plans. Erik sent plans for cooperative burn week to Brian for approval.
- Josh and Snyder Bend crew have been at Owego grinding some of the trees out in the middle or in areas that are wet and inaccessible to burn. Fire should be able to keep them under control going forward.
- Training:
 - NCIC training has been completed except for testing.
 - February 17: District burn refresher in Plymouth County.
 - March 7: Taser certification training.
 - March 21: CCPOA district training at Prairie Hill – hosted by WCCB.
- Little Sioux staff has been working at Shagbark burning piles and cutting black locust trees with the shears.
- Brian will get new bids on the one-ton chassis cab truck that was cancelled. It will be on next fiscal year's budget so can't be delivered until after July 1st.

4. Board Information

Neil had a brainstorming idea to buy goats and turn them loose in Oak Ridge because to eat shrubs and weeds.

Aaron stated that he had a great conversation with Justin Terrell with MidAmerican, who had interesting ideas about some other ditches that run behind Brown's Lake to Snyder Bend lake.

Dan stated that staff has discussed the Brown's Lake island and would love to get a 28E agreement from the DNR to be able to manage it. They would like clear out the sand prairies and open the trails up again so people can use it. Board members present were supportive of the idea.

5. Other Business

None

ITEM R5. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:12 p.m.

The above minutes were recorded by Dawn Bostwick.

Recording Secretary, Dawn Bostwick

Board Secretary, Tom Limoges

Board Chair, Chris Zellmer-Zant