

**WOODBURY COUNTY, IOWA, CONSERVATION BOARD  
MINUTES OF THE THURSDAY, DECEMBER 14, 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, December 14, 2023, at the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center 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, and Dawn Bostwick

**OTHERS PRESENT**

Mark Nelson, County Supervisor/Conservation Board Liaison

Dolf Ivener, Two Hawks LLC

**CALL TO ORDER**

Vice Chairperson Bennett called the meeting to order at 4:07 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, 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 October 19, 2023, Regular Meeting and November 11, 2023, Special Meeting
- C2. Approve the October 2023 and November 2023 Claims and Expenditures
- C3. Receive and Place on File the October 2023 and November 2023 Financial/Budget Reports
- C4. Acceptance of Gifts/Donations:
  - \$7,000 from Rosie Kuehne for Playscape
  - \$1,128 from Siouxland Community Foundation for Playscape (via WCCF/Big Give)
  - \$500 from Gary & Anne Shaner for Playscape (via WCCF/Big Give)
  - \$600 from Lawrence & Juliann Delperdang for bird seed and animal care

- \$200 Jason Wolfe for food & care of raptors
- \$100 from Sandra Nation for Playscape
- \$100 from Gary LeMoine for Tale Trail books
- Seashell collection from Teresa Dibble-Eichmann
- Nature Calls decorations from Pam Pfautsch
- Childrens' Big Books from Dan & Dolly Varner
- Nerf guns & darts from Gary LeMoine

*(Chris Zellmer-Zant arrived at 4:08 p.m. and assumed chairperson duties.)*

**ITEM R2. Dolf Ivener – Solar Information**

Dolf Ivener of Two Hawks LLC was present to discuss a possible solar project at Little Sioux Park. He and his partner started the solar project at Snyder Bend in 2020. Snyder Bend was chosen at that time because it was the easiest and had the most expensive electricity. Two Hawks owns the system at Snyder Bend and has a power purchase agreement with the conservation board. Dolf noted that in last four years the price of solar panels has been greatly reduced and there is now a 50% tax credit available. He would like to put a 300KW system in at Little Sioux Park to power the whole park. He asked for board approval to pursue this with MidAmerican. If they agree, he will bring information to the board for a decision. The board agreed by consensus to allow Dolf to approach MidAmerican and report back.

**ITEM R3. Little Sioux Park Sewer Project Bids – Accept and Award Bids**

Dan reported that the bid opening and public hearing for the Little Sioux Park sewer project was held on Tuesday, December 12<sup>th</sup>. Three contractors submitted bids and were present. Noah with JEO opened the bids and confirmed that they were complete. The project was split into three groups: A) Build the sanitary sewer service collection system, B) Install wastewater treatment system, and C) Build lateral field and associated force main. Doyle Construction of Fort Dodge, IA, had the low bid for Group A and Steve Harris Construction of Homer, NE, had the low bids for Groups B & C.

**MOTION** by Neil, second by Cindy.

To approve the plan specifications and forms of contract prepared by JEO for the Little Sioux Park site and utility improvements.<sup>23-30</sup>

**VOTE:**

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

**MOTION** by Aaron, second by Tom.

To accept the bids as presented by Bainbridge Construction, Doyle Construction and Steve Harris Construction for the Little Sioux Park – Riverside Campground site and utility improvements project and award low bid of \$267,005 for Group A to Doyle Construction of Fort Dodge, IA, and award low bid of \$568,683.60 for Group B and \$99,335.00 for Group C to Steve Harris Construction of Homer, NE. These will be contingent upon successful reference checks by JEO.<sup>23-31</sup>

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**VOTE:**

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

Dan reported that the DNR has done a site inspection and approved the system as planned. The permit should go through quickly, but work cannot start until the permit is in hand. Dan has requested to start on the collection system right away since it isn't part of the actual treatment system as the contractor wants to start in two weeks or less. The collection system work is required to be done by May 15<sup>th</sup> to avoid any disruption of the camping season.

**ITEM R4. Budget Review – Supervisors' Letter – Changes**

Dan presented an updated budget explanation sheet. He explained that the Board of Supervisors originally called for a 0% budget increase for FY25 but ended up allowing up to a 2% increase. The conservation department budget that was originally approved had an increase of 3.7%. Dan reduced the budget from \$16,300 to \$10,300. He will send an explanation letter along with the budget worksheet to the Supervisors.

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

To approve the amended FY25 budget as presented.<sup>23-32</sup>

**VOTE:**

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

**ITEM R5. Capital Improvement Projects Update**

**1. Nature Center Foundation & Retaining Walls**

Dan updated the board on the nature center foundation project. Radar was completed on all floors upstairs and downstairs. There was a large area with voids in the classrooms, staff entrance, naturalist work room, and kitchen. That information has been sent to building services, the architect, and the engineers to make a recommendation. They will fill the voids with foam but won't jack the floors. They don't believe that the foundation has settled, but they are still monitoring the building to make sure it isn't continuing to move. The Supervisors have allocated \$120,000 for the project.

Dan reported that the contractor looked at the garden retaining walls last month. The contractor said he would pour concrete walls to match the wall by the shelter and step it down 2'. He won't be able to do curved walls. The garden will be two tiers instead of three. A 15-20' strip will be left between the retaining wall and the light pole to allow for equipment access if necessary. This project might be started this spring.

Dan also had the contractor look at the area by the gravel parking lot in case erosion starts and was told they could tie the existing shelter wall in behind the parking area.

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<sup>23-32</sup> To approve the amended FY25 budget as presented.

## 2. Little Sioux Park – Bellamy Campground

Dan stated that the contract with JEO included both Riverside and Bellamy campgrounds. Staff has been working on redesigning the Bellamy campground layout. The software used to collect the data has not been working well with the GIS program used to manipulate the data, specifically on field maps. Tyler has been on the phone with support trying to figure it out. GPS points were obtained to within a couple inches, and it has been laid out in the campground. The layout has been sent to JEO, and they are working to get plans and specs completed for Bellamy. The funds aren't available to complete the project right now, but the plans will be ready to go.

Dan reported that Little Sioux staff has already been putting fish structures in the south end of the pit. The three field staff members had to take an online miner training to be allowed access in the active pit due to MSHA rules.

## 3. Little Sioux Park Beach Discussion

Dan stated that Little Sioux Park has taken a hit in camping revenues due to the beach being closed, and water levels aren't expected to turn around anytime soon. He discussed the possibility of drilling a 250' well with Ben Kusler at the engineer's office and was told that it would need to be continually pumped. The well would cost \$20,000, and an additional \$20-30,000 would be needed for a pump and the electricity to run it.

Ben Kusler recommended grading the beach so there is a zero-grade entry with low water and a zero-grade entry with high water. Dan will talk to Mark Nahra and see if his staff can survey it this winter and find where the drops are. Ben offered to design it on his own time because he is retiring this month. If it looks like it will work, he will make a recommendation.

## ITEM R6. Board Member/Staff Reports

### 1. Administrative Items

Dan reported on the following items:

#### a. January Meeting Date and Location

The next meeting will be held at 4:00 p.m. on January 11, 2024, at the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center. Long-term planning for Southwood Conservation Area might be done at that time, and a meeting will be scheduled at that park first next summer.

#### b. Vests for Officers

Dan reported that a WCCB officer was recently on the scene of an active shooter incident, and it reinforced the need for rifle vests which Dan has been trying to get for the department for three years. Brian has asked two companies for quotes and has only received a quote from GH Armor so far at a cost of \$9,800 to equip all eight officers with vests and ballistic helmets. He recently learned that the other company he contacted is being investigated by the DOJ because their armor is not meeting specs.

Discussion was held regarding possible grants. Dan stated that he tried for grants for this during his first three years here. Tom suggested applying for a \$10,000 micro grant through MRHD and agreed to contract them about it.

*(Chris left at 5:35 p.m. and Cindy assumed chairperson duties.)*

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

To pursue grants to purchase rifle vests for eight officers.<sup>23-33</sup>

**VOTE:**

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

*(Tom left at 5:37 p.m.)*

**c. Solar Farm Distance From Conservation Areas**

Dan stated that he was contacted by Dan Priestly regarding solar panel setbacks for conservation areas, and he recommended a one-mile setback.

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

To support the adoption of a one-mile setback from conservation areas for solar arrays in the proposed county zoning rules.<sup>23-34</sup>

**VOTE:**

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

**d. Old Business**

Midway Park Fishing Jetty: Dan reported that Brian's fish habitat stamp grant request for the Midway Park fishing jetty scored third at the review with an award of approximately \$80,000. However, later the head of the scoring committee called and said that one of the scores was entered incorrectly which bumped Woodbury down to fourth with an award of \$65,000. Dan requested a copy of the score sheets, and it looks like an 8 turned into a 9 on both Woodbury and Ida counties. The scorer was contacted, and they gave 8 to Woodbury and 9 to Ida. Dan is going to call them on it.

O'Connell Property: Dan was contacted by the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation about another offer from Erik O'Connell on his 116-acre property. He is now offering appraised value, but it would cost \$2,000-\$3,000 for the appraisal. Dan stated that the property has been timbered and overgrazed and does not attach to any current WCCB property. He added that the landscape has changed with available grants, county budget, and money available. It was agreed by board consensus to pass on it again.

**2. Nature Center Activities**

The nature center programs and visitors reports for October and November were presented. Theresa was unable to attend the meeting, but board members were referred to her printed report.

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<sup>23-33</sup> To pursue grants to purchase rifle vests for eight officers.

<sup>23-34</sup> To support the adoption of a one-mile setback from conservation areas for solar arrays in the proposed county zoning rules.

### 3. Park Activities

Brian reported on the following park activities:

- Little Sioux staff worked with Bedrock Gravel to truck unwanted overburden to the lakeside campground area that was cleared earlier this year, and it ended up being enough to finish up the project. The area will now be frost seeded or seeded in the spring.
- A local eagle scout recently made 20 fish structures and, with the help of staff, placed the structures in the north pit of Midway Park.
- Southwood staff completed a burn on the Salsness and Zook properties.
- Southwood staff spent several days clearing and replacing half of the Fowler Forest fence near the dam.
- Brown's Lake and Snyder Bend staff have placed large rocks around the parking areas to replace the posts.
- Little Sioux staff moved rock to make a parking lot at Peters Pit.
- Liam Bell has been working with Northland CDL Training and Licensing to complete his CDL training. Most was done online, but he will travel to Mason City next Monday and Wednesday for driving training and testing. This was a considerable savings compared to doing it through WIT.
- Both F150 trucks have been ordered from Barry Motor with a spring delivery expected. Nothing has been heard about the Chevy 1-ton except that the build date was pushed from October to January.
- Dan reported that the insurance check for the totaled truck was written to the conservation board. The money is required to be deposited back into the fund that the truck was paid from and won't be allocated to the conservation budget line. Dan sent an email to Dennis Butler stating that he will be amending the conservation budget for that amount in the spring, and the balance due for the replacement truck will come from the conservation department budget.
- Brian has been looking for a trailer to replace two 1998 models at the end of their life span. There is \$17,000 remaining in the budget which should be enough to cover it.

### 4. Board Information

Aaron asked if any WCCB staff are able to adjust the valve at Brown's Lake. Brian stated that staff have been shown how to do it, but they do not have a key. Only state employees are allowed to adjust it.

### 5. Other Business

None

### ITEM R7. Director's Annual Review

The board went into closed session for the Director's annual performance evaluation at 6:21 p.m. by motion from Aaron and second by Neil. Vice Chairperson Bennett held the roll call vote: Aaron Gehling-Aye, Neil Stockfleth-Aye, Cindy Bennett-Aye, Chris Zellmer-Zant-Absent and Tom Limoges-Absent.

The board discussed Director Heissel's performance for the past year and goals for the future. The session was recorded.

At 6:46 p.m., Aaron moved to come out of closed session, which was seconded by Neil and carried unanimously by roll call vote: Aaron Gehling-Aye, Neil Stockfleth-Aye, Cindy Bennett-Aye, Chris Zellmer-Zant-Absent and Tom Limoges-Absent.

**ITEM R8. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:48 p.m.

The above minutes were recorded by Dawn Bostwick.

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Recording Secretary, Dawn Bostwick

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Board Secretary, Tom Limoges

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Board Chair, Chris Zellmer-Zant