

**WOODBURY COUNTY, IOWA, CONSERVATION BOARD
MINUTES OF THE THURSDAY, MARCH 14, 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, March 14, 2024, 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, Theresa Kruid, Shelby Campbell, and Dawn Bostwick

OTHERS PRESENT

Mark Nelson, County Supervisor/Conservation Board Liaison via telephone

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Bennett called the meeting to order at 4:10 p.m.

CORRESPONDENCE ITEMS

None

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Shelby Campbell, newly hired Volunteer Coordinator/Receptionist for the nature center, was welcomed and gave a brief introduction of herself to the board members.

ITEM R1. Approve Consent Agenda

MOTION by Neil, second by Tom.

To approve the consent agenda.

VOTE:

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

The consent agenda was approved and involved the following items:

- C1. Approve Minutes of the February 8, 2024, Regular Meeting
- C2. Approve the February 2024 Claims and Expenditures
- C3. Receive and Place on File the February 2024 Financial/Budget Report
- C4. Acceptance of Gifts/Donations:
 - Draw knife from Gary LeMoine
 - \$3,000 from Scheels for Summer Naturalists (via WCCF)
 - \$500 from Norman Mahoney, Mahoney-Hill Trust for Summer Naturalists (via WCCF)
 - \$221.10 from Jamie Beyer (via Loess Hills Wild Ones)
 - \$250 from Bob & Holly Meis for Harlan, Barred Owl sponsorship

- \$48.51 from Dennis & Rita Vannatta for Joe Roach Memorial (via WCCF)
- \$750 from INHF/State Parks grant for Nature Playscape
- David Meis Memorial gifts: (Total = \$325.00)
 - John Gray \$250.00
 - Theresa Kruid \$50.00
 - Pam Pfautsch \$25.00
- Gary Shaner Memorial gifts: (Total = \$1,935.57)
 - Carolyn Burnham \$48.51
 - Theresa Kruid \$50.00
 - Colleen Mosher \$97.52
 - Barbara Brandt \$48.51
 - Dawn Snyder \$50.00
 - Sara Jane Hauff \$50.00
 - Susan Spooner \$50.00
 - Ronald & Corky Scott \$100.00
 - Kevin & Marla Kerr \$100.00
 - Bill & Doty Zales \$100.00
 - Eric & Pam Pfautsch \$40.00
 - John & Patricia Scherrman \$25.00
 - Amy Hauff \$97.52
 - Jim & Sherry Kitchell \$100.00
 - Anne Shaner \$320.00
 - Roger & Doris Brannan \$100.00
 - Bob & Holly Meis \$50.00
 - Duane & Peggy Hoffmeyer \$50.00
 - Sue & Steve Struthers \$40.00
 - Bill & Dianne Blankenship \$25.00
 - Jeanne McCallum \$25.00
 - Rex & Maria Rundquist \$50.00
 - Susan Lambing \$25.00
 - Nancy Cord \$30.00
 - Nancy Shulenberger & Jeff Olson \$50.00
 - Vince & Sherry McGill \$15.00
 - Audie & Julie Baughman \$50.00
 - Greg Gregerson \$100.00
 - Marvin Heidman \$48.51

ITEM R2. Consideration and Approval of Garbage Service Contracts

Brian presented proposals received for non-hazardous waste pickup service.

- Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center: One bid was received from Gill Hauling, the current provider, at \$908 per year. The price increased slightly from the last contract. No bid was received from Waste Management.
- Bigelow & Snyder Bend Parks: Gill Hauling provided the only bid at \$4,461 per year, which is down by nearly \$3,000.
- Southwood Conservation Area, Fowler Forest & Little Sioux Park: CHN Garbage submitted the only bid at \$11,826, which was the same as last year.

Aaron recommended looking at G&K Disposal as an option for next time also. Brian stated that the recycling service at Bigelow, Snyder Bend & Little Sioux are paid separately and not part of these bids.

MOTION by Tom, second by Neil.

To accept all bids for non-hazardous waste pickup and enter two-year contracts with Gill Hauling at \$908 per year for the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center and \$4,461 per year for Bigelow Park and Snyder Bend Park and with CHN Garbage Service at \$11,826 per year for Southwood Conservation Area, Fowler Forest, and Little Sioux Park.²⁴⁻⁹

VOTE:

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

²⁴⁻⁹ To accept all bids for non-hazardous waste pickup and enter two-year contracts with Gill Hauling at \$908 per year for the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center and \$4,461 per year for Bigelow Park and Snyder Bend Park and with CHN Garbage Service at \$11,826 per year for Southwood Conservation Area, Fowler Forest, and Little Sioux Park.

ITEM R3. Capital Improvement Projects Update

Little Sioux Park:

1. Sewer Projects

Dan, Brian, and Little Sioux staff met with Harris Construction and Tony from BioMicrobics for a preconstruction meeting. The tanks will be moved a little bit because they are too close to the road. The earliest start will be in two weeks to allow time for the tanks to be delivered. The BioMicrobics team will come and spend three days for the install. They estimate completion by mid-May.

Work is being done on the leach field currently and should be done in the next week or two. When Brian and Dan stopped in last week, they realized the field would be raised. They contacted the engineer who then informed the contractor to dig it in deeper.

Mark stated that he took his kids out there on Sunday and looked around. He said the contractor did a great job, and he had a hard time seeing where they laid the pipe.

The system can be monitored from the BioMicrobics office in Milwaukee, as well as by WCCB staff. Staff can let them know before heavy-use times, and they will adjust it in advance and monitor it.

Dan stated that if the project is not done by May 1st, the park will open with sewer caps locked until the system is up and running. There is a penalty of \$200/day if not done by May 15th. The engineers are wrapping up the design on Bellamy and will have it ready when there is money available to pursue it.

2. Bellamy Campground Water Heater Replacements

Dan reported that the gas water heaters in the Bellamy campground shower house need to be replaced. He stated that Marathon commercial 85-gallon heaters would be \$2500, plus the cost of constantly heating water. Also, if electric heaters are used, the panel will need to be upgraded at a cost of \$3,000-\$10,000. Dan recommended going with on-demand water heaters. He said that Pottawattamie County has had them for several years and love them. They are gas-fired and heat water only when needed.

Brian presented information on the three bids received: Morningside Plumbing at \$8,062, Foulk Brothers at \$15,000, and CW Suter at \$7,150.

MOTION by Neil, second by Aaron.

To accept the bid of \$7,150 from CW Suter to install two on-demand water heaters for Bellamy campground at Little Sioux Park.²⁴⁻¹⁰

VOTE:

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

Nay: None

Absent: None

²⁴⁻¹⁰ To accept the bid of \$7,150 from CW Suter to install two on-demand water heaters for Bellamy campground at Little Sioux Park.

3. Well Discussion

Dan confirmed that, as discussed last month, a new well needs to be drilled at Little Sioux Park and because it will be a public water supply, it needs to be engineered and designed. He has engaged with JEO since there is a current contract with them for the water and sewer project using ARPA funds.

Brian stated that he had to obtain water samples for a variety of things (manganese, magnesium, arsenic etc.) from the deepest well in the park to use as a test well. They were sent to the hygienic lab at the University of Iowa to determine if any treatment will be needed.

Dan asked for a motion to amend the contract with JEO and move forward with the public water system at a cost of approximately \$18,000-20,000 for drilling a new well. Engineering will be separate, and Dan will have that figure at a later date. If the process is started now, the well can be drilled in 2025. If the water results are favorable, they will move forward.

MOTION by Tom, second by Aaron

To approve and authorize the director to amend the contract with JEO and move forward on the new well project at Little Sioux Park.²⁴⁻¹¹

VOTE:

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

Nay: None

Absent: None

ITEM R4. Board Member/Staff Reports

1. Administrative Items

Dan reported on the following items:

a. Set April Meeting Date

The next meeting will be held at 4:00 p.m. on April 11, 2024, at the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center.

b. Southwood Resource Technician – Acknowledge & Approve Salary

Dan announced that former employee, Tanner Petersen, was hired for the Resource Technician position at Southwood and started last week.

MOTION by Chris, second by Aaron.

To acknowledge the hiring of Tanner Petersen as Resource Technician at Southwood Conservation Area effective March 4, 2024, and approve his starting salary of \$47,713.²⁴⁻¹¹

VOTE:

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

Nay: None

Absent: None

²⁴⁻¹¹ To approve and authorize the director to amend the contract with JEO and move forward on the new well project at Little Sioux Park.

²⁴⁻¹² To acknowledge the hiring of Tanner Petersen as Resource Technician at Southwood Conservation Area effective March 4, 2024, and approve his starting salary of \$47,713.

c. Old Business

Dan presented information regarding a 35-acre parcel owned by MidAmerican Energy that they would like to donate to the board. It is near the New Lake parcel obtained by the state and has good wetland and upland. If there is interest, paperwork will be prepared for the county attorney to review, and the board will vote on it at that time. The board agreed by consensus to convey their interest in receiving the property.

2. Nature Center Activities

Theresa reported on the following Nature Center activities:

- The programs and visitors report for February was presented.
- Shelby Campbell, Volunteer Coordinator/Receptionist started on March 5th.
- The education team will be attending the NAI/IAN Spring Workshop April 3-5. Each of the three naturalists received a \$250 scholarship to attend, provided by the REAP Conservation Education Program, Iowa Association of Naturalists, and the Iowa County Conservation System.
- Nature Calls sponsor packets will be available at next month's meeting.
- The Nature Calls committee met but did not make a final decision on venue. They are leaning toward staying at the convention center due to high rental cost at the Expo Center. The Oak View group who manages the Expo, Tyson, and Orpheum will be taking over the management of the convention center also.
- A rough draft of the t-shirt design for the 20th year was presented. It is a quilt design that incorporates all of the previous 19 years of animals, and the 29 quilt squares represent the number of years the nature center has been open.
- The annual foundation meeting was not very well attended. Election of officers was postponed until more information is obtained regarding Theresa and Chris being board officers. Dan stated that it isn't good optics to have board members or staff serve as foundation officers. The biggest concern is Theresa being the foundation treasurer and writing checks from the foundation to the board. The State Auditor's office said staff members should not be the foundation treasurer, but Dan is waiting for them to put it in writing what staff can and cannot do. Dan suggested having a joint meeting with the foundation board to review this. Discussion was held regarding the possibility of finding a qualified volunteer or hiring an accountant. It was also suggested that the money could possibly be managed through the Siouxland Community Foundation.
- Education team met with the Sioux City Schools science facilitator, Kristin Eiders. She will help share nature center programs information with teachers. Staff will work on creating a video to highlight the nature center and field trip programs.
- Staff also met with Jay Gorsch, director of School of the Wild, and Scott Herbold, Woodbury Central 5th grade teacher. The school board approved the program, and it has been scheduled for October 7-11.
- Only one day remains available for field trips.
- Rich Stolpe would like to donate a full-size black bear mount (cinnamon color phase). Theresa has reached out to the exhibit company that designed the screech owl aviary about possibly reworking the original woodlands exhibit to include the bear. Theresa submitted a request for proposal from Gilchrist today.

Mark announced that he has filed papers to run for reelection to the Board of Supervisors. The primary is June 4th, and he may have a challenger. He also noted that Dave Dietrich is running for Jeremy's spot.

(Mark left the meeting at 5:40 p.m.)

3. Park Activities

Brian reported on the following park activities:

- Staff has been getting burns prepped and getting burn rigs together. They will have to be cautious this year due to lack of moisture. It will mostly be grasslands and not timber burns.
- A few small burns have been done at Little Sioux and Southwood to test the rigs.
- Little Sioux staff is getting ready to put rock in and do grass seeding.
- Southwood staff completed dormant seeding on prairie restoration. An Iowa Prairie Partners grant paid for half of the seed. The Oak Ridge landscape is being reshaped from brome to native prairie.
- Tanner Petersen has started at Southwood, and Skyler Foley has started at Brown's Lake/Snyder Bend. Skyler is working on his S130/190 (basic burn certification).
- Erik and Brodie both attended a leadership fire training course in Harrison County last month.
- Brown's Lake and Snyder Bend staff is getting ready to burn at Owego next week if weather is favorable.
- All officers are signed up for the Western Spring Workshop hosted by Harrison County next Wednesday.
- Rifle vests and helmets arrived yesterday and have been logged and issued. They are level 4 which is the best you can get right now. They are one size fits all, and the plates are all standard size, so they will be transferrable between staff if needed. They have a five-year warranty. They can be used up to 84 months but then need to be replaced. Storage and care guidelines were provided.
- Derek and Brian attended taser training as they were not available when the rest of the officers were trained.

4. Board Information

Aaron noted that the boat ramps have been installed at Brown's Lake, and there were boats on the lake last weekend.

5. Other Business

Dan reported on the Ingenthron land discussed in previous meetings. They are looking at doing the conservation easement and then seeing if the conservation board would be interested in buying the residual. It has been delayed due to waiting for an easement program to be put together by the USDA. The rules are supposed to be finalized by May. The Natural Heritage Foundation has been working on it with them.

Brief discussion was held regarding a recent incident where a confetti blaster was used on a nature center trail. Education staff put out a social media post to inform people that the confetti is harmful to wildlife and not biodegradable. It took four staff members half an hour to clean it all up. The post was very well received, reaching 25,000 people with over 8,000 people engaged and hundreds of shares. It was even picked up and aired on one of the news channels.

ITEM R5. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:05 p.m.

The above minutes were recorded by Dawn Bostwick.

Recording Secretary, Dawn Bostwick

Board Secretary, Aaron Gehling

Board Chair, Cindy Bennett