

**WOODBURY COUNTY, IOWA, CONSERVATION BOARD
MINUTES OF THE THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2020 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 10, 2020, via videoconference beginning at 4:00 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Aaron Gehling, Chris Zellmer-Zant, Cindy Bennett, Neil Stockfleth, and Suzan Boden

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

None

STAFF PRESENT

Dan Heissel, Brian Stehr, Dawn Snyder, 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 Suzan, second by Neil.

To approve the consent agenda.

VOTE: Aye: Cindy Bennett, Neil Stockfleth & Suzan Boden
Nay: None
Absent: Aaron Gehling, Chris Zellmer-Zant,

The consent agenda was approved and involved the following items:

ITEM C1. Approve Minutes of the November 12, 2020 Meeting and December 1, 2020 Special Meeting.

ITEM C2. Approve the November 2020 Claims and Expenditures.

ITEM C3. Receive and Place on File the November 2020 Financial/Budget Report.

ITEM C4. Acceptance of Gifts/Donations

- Linda Thompson & Emory Graffis for \$100 cash donation for programs
- Don & Jane Dixon for \$250 cash donation for programs
- Larry & Becky Williams for \$100 cash donation for programs
- Vernon & Charlene Peterson for \$25 cash gift in memory of Frances Jackson
- Pizza Ranch, Floyd Boulevard Sioux City and Pizza Ranch, Hawarden for chicken boxes for winter fun crafts
- Loyanne Jensen for Twelve-foot Christmas Tree

ITEM R2. FY 22 Budget – Update (Dan) - Action

Dan reviewed a few changes made to the final budget that was submitted to the Board of Supervisors resulting in an increase of \$1,600 from the original proposed budget. Water, Sewer & Garbage was increased by \$1,000. An additional \$255 was budgeted for Naturalists - Wearing & Safety Apparel due to new staff member, but Typing, Printing & Binding was reduced by the same amount. Cell Phone Expense was increased by \$600 also due to new employee. Several new line items were also added to better track expenses.

Dan stated that he left the \$635,000 for roads as has been requested the last two years in the CIP budget. It will be the decision of the Supervisors to either approve or remove from the budget.

(Aaron and Chris joined the meeting at 4:10 p.m.)

Dan asked for approval of the budget request, with the exception of the salaries portion which will be added by the Auditor's office. He noted that the salaries will follow the approved WCCB wage matrix.

MOTION by Neil, second by Suzan.

To approve the budget request as presented with the salaries portion to be added later by the Auditor's office adhering to the approved WCCB wage matrix.³⁵⁻²⁰

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

Nay: None

Absent: None

ITEM R3. Capital Improvement Projects Update

1. Brown's Lake – Phase II – Update

Drone photos of the Brown's Lake shoreline project have been taken and will be sent out to the board. Dan reported that the shoreline is pretty much done other than one small section on the north property line that they need to finish. Rip rap may be needed. Four pilings were driven too deep, so a welder will add extensions and weld cross braces in place. Deeds Construction will install the decking after that and should be done before the park opens in May. It will be seeded this spring with grass.

Aaron mentioned that there are concrete slabs on the north end that should be crushed or removed to avoid a fall hazard. He also noted that the local response to the project and investment into the park has been very positive.

Dan stated that CIP funds are low this year due to COVID-related camping closures and cabin and shelter cancellations. A decision will be made at the beginning of the year as to whether the project will need to be done in two phases.

Aaron and Dan will schedule meeting with Jorgensen about the dike project at Snyder Bend.

³⁵⁻²⁰ To approve the budget request as presented with the salaries portion to be added later by the Auditor's office adhering to the approved WCCB wage matrix.

2. Brown's Lake Road – Informational (Brian/Dan)

Dan reported that he had spoken to Ben Kusler at Secondary Roads regarding Neil's suggestion of grinding the road surface and putting it back down. Ben was concerned about the additional investment in dust control etc. since it is a high-traffic road, and he recommended paving it. Dan asked Ben to put together costs, but his rough estimate was \$40-60 per linear foot. Dan recommended taking it all the way to Isaac Walton where boat ramps start, because the neighbors already complain about dust. Brian will check on measurements, but it is estimated between 1,000-1,600 feet.

ITEM R8. Board member/staff reports**1. Administrative items**

Dan reported on the following items:

a. January Meeting Date

The next meeting will be held on January 23, 2021, following the strategic planning meeting at the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center.

b. Strategic Planning Date

The board agreed to hold a strategic planning meeting on January 23, 2021 at 9:00 a.m. in person at the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center. WCCB managers will be asked to attend. Dan will prioritize and organize the information and send it out ahead of time.

c. Land Options – Action

Dan reported that he had heard from Heather at the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation regarding the naming issue on the Salsness property. The INHF does not have a problem with the naming request. They suggested a donor board or naming it "Oak Ridge Unit 1 – Salsness Addition." The board agreed by consensus to proceed as previously decided at the last meeting.

Dan, Brian and Erik were able to tour the Salsness property yesterday. Dan presented several drone photos and described the property and general plans. Dan will email the photos to the board.

Discussion was held regarding the O'Connell parcel. It was originally purchased on contract for \$150,000 and is now being offered for sale. Heather at INHF estimates its value at approximately \$3,200-\$3,300 per acre and recommends going after a bargain sale or anything under appraised value.

Brian and Dan reviewed the pros and cons of the property. Dan discussed funding possibilities. REAP would be the first choice because no match is required and the property's size and relationship to the other 3,000 acres of continuous habitat would make it a good fit. Other alternatives would be the Habitat Stamp grant (25-45% match), Lawcon grant (50% match), and the local Whitetails Unlimited and Pheasants Forever chapters once they are able to have a banquet again.

Dan noted that the INHF has expressed that they are not concerned about the timing of the Briese parcel repurchase and that they would not borrow the money to buy the O'Connell property if they felt it wasn't a good enough piece to be funded or that the organization didn't have a good track record in paying for their property.

MOTION by Neil, second by Aaron.

To authorize the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation (INHF) to negotiate a purchase offer on the O’Connell property, striving for a bargain sale but no higher than the appraised value of approximately \$3,200. This motion is contingent to board approval of the negotiated price and approval by the INHF.³⁶⁻²⁰

ROLL CALL VOTE:

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

Dan offered to have an INHF representative present at the next meeting for discussion and questions.

d. Flemming Property – Naming Discussion (Brian/Dan) – Action

Brian stated that the sign posts are in place on the Flemming property, but a name needs to be decided. Various ideas were discussed, including Little Sioux Park – Flemming Addition. Dan will get feedback from staff and email it out to the board.

e. Other

Dan reminded Chris of the upcoming expiration of her term and the need to apply for renewal if she is willing to continue serving on the board.

2. Nature Center Activities (Snyder)

Dawn reported on the following Nature Center activities:

- Program and visitor numbers were sent out by email.
- A letter was received from the Siouxland Chamber thanking the board for donating a two-night cabin stay for their auction.
- Volunteers came out and helped decorate the Nature Center for the holidays. A 12’ tree was recently donated as well.
- Winter Fun craft boxes have been going very well. People have been very appreciative, and over \$200 has been received in donations so far. Kudos to Theresa, Kari, staff and volunteers.
- Kari has a tree identification hike scheduled for Saturday and Sunday which is already full.
- The new website was officially launched on Monday. Feedback and comments are appreciated. The developer has been responsive with any glitches or changes so far. They will be providing training next Thursday on the basics for this version of WordPress. The final costs came in a little bit higher and will be submitted for payment next week.
- The pro version of Zoom has been purchased providing the ability to host meetings longer than 40 minutes.
- Staff is looking forward to providing additional programming at the beginning of the year.
- Trail use has been very high with lots of different users every day. Additional signage will be added to indicate foot traffic only is allowed and that pets must be kept on a leash.
- Kari is planning some winter activities for kids over the school holiday break.
- Job descriptions for seasonal employment are being prepared.

³⁶⁻²⁰ To authorize the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation (INHF) to negotiate a purchase offer on the O’Connell property, striving for a bargain sale but no higher than the appraised value of approximately \$3,200. This motion is contingent to board approval of the negotiated price and approval by the INHF.

- WCCB is considering hosting the statewide IAN workshop at the Nature Center next fall, provided large gatherings are allowed by then.

3. Park Activities (Stehr)

Brian reported on the following park activities:

- Staff is continuing to work on outdoor projects and ice storm clean-up while the weather is favorable.
- Staff has been working on equipment repair and general park maintenance. Brown's Lake staff has been rebuilding one of the food plot planters, and Southwood staff has been working on their gator which has had starter issues.
- The electrician has been installing lights in the Southwood building.
- Law enforcement staff will be taking time off during the week for the next couple of weeks, because they will be patrolling areas for deer hunting on the weekends. Hunters weren't out in large numbers last weekend due to the weather.
- Tyler Knight passed his physical testing for the academy. At this point, they are still doing it in person with smaller groups and more cleaning.

Brian made a clarification from the earlier discussion about Brown's Lake roads that 1,000 feet would take care of the worst parts of the road from the entrance to just past the campground driveway. An additional 600 feet would continue down to the boat ramp and end at the Isaac Walton League fence.

4. Board

No items from the board.

Dan reported on the following additional items:

- The Little Sioux Park Technician position has been advertised and will be open until December 30th. The hiring process should begin in January with the person coming onboard in February.
- Kari has been doing well here, and the addition of her position has provided the opportunity to move Tyler Flammang over to a GIS/Resource Tech. Erik will help Tyler with the GIS transition once he gets some classes taken.

ITEM R5. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:53 p.m.

The above minutes were recorded by Dawn Bostwick.

Recording Secretary, Dawn Bostwick

Board Secretary, Suzan Boden

Board Chair, Cindy Bennett