

**WOODBURY COUNTY, IOWA, CONSERVATION BOARD
MINUTES OF THE THURSDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2021 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 9, 2021, at the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center beginning at 4:00 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Aaron Gehling, Chris Zellmer-Zant (via Zoom), Cindy Bennett, Neil Stockfleth, and Suzan Boden

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

None

STAFF PRESENT

Dan Heissel, Brian Stehr, Dawn Snyder and Dawn Bostwick

OTHERS PRESENT

Jeremy Taylor, County Supervisor/Conservation Board Liaison

CALL TO ORDER

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

The consent agenda was approved and involved the following items:

- C1. Approve Minutes of the November 18, 2021 Regular Meeting.
- C2. Approve the November 2021 Claims and Expenditures
- C3. Receive and Place on File the November 2021 Financial/Budget Report
- C4. Acceptance of Gifts/Donations:
 - Loyanne Jensen for chocolate for Winter Fun Day
 - Larry & Becky Williams for \$100 cash donation for Nature Center
 - Juliann Delperdang for \$600 cash donation for Nature Center animals
 - Carol Bickel for educational supplies

ITEM R2. Southwood Assistant Resource Manager Update

Dan reported that three candidates for the Southwood Assistant Resource Manager position went through physical testing to see if they would qualify for the academy, and none of them passed. In the meantime, another candidate was interviewed, but during the interview he disclosed that he had an issue from several years ago that may prevent him from being accepted into the academy. Dan stated that if not for that, he is the best candidate and is highly recommended by his previous employer. Dan discussed it with Melissa in Human Resources. Brian called the Iowa Law Enforcement Academy and was told that the candidate would need to write a letter and go before their council, along with county representatives, to request a waiver. Dan noted that Woodbury County has done it before successfully. He indicated that he is hesitant to do it again and risk giving the county that stigma, but he is also inclined to give him a chance if the Academy Council grants him a waiver.

(Chris arrived at 4:15 p.m.)

Board members agreed by consensus to give the candidate a chance. He will be run through the physical testing before initiating a request with ILEA. Dan mentioned that there is another possible candidate who could be considered as well.

ITEM R3. Budget FY 22-23 – Final

Dan stated that the FY22-23 budget proposal that was approved last month has been entered and submitted to the budget office. He noted that the budget had an overall increase of \$8,500 or 1.74% over the current year. Two capital improvement requests were also submitted for the Little Sioux Park roads at \$600,000 and the Southwood Resource Technician position at \$69,752.56. Both items have been requested repeatedly for several years. The budget will be reviewed with the Board of Supervisors in January.

(Dawn S. arrived at 4:20 p.m.)

ITEM R4. Capital Improvement Projects Update

1. Brown's Lake Projects

a. Campground – Sewer, Water, Electrical

Brian reported that two lift stations have been installed, trees have been removed, and stumps have been ground. Mike Barkley is working on moving hydrants around because of shifting the sites. By the end of next week, the electrical hookups should be able to be moved. Next week staff plans to finish grading and frost seeding.

b. Park Roads

Dan stated that Secondary Roads will let bids for the Brown's Lake-Bigelow Park roads project in three weeks. Dennis Butler will determine whether it will be a bond or a loan, depending on cost effectiveness. Secondary Roads will be helping with the bid process and is reaching out to the contractors.

c. Beach & Concessions

Brian reported that the sugar sand has been hauled in for the Brown's Lake beach, but some additional washed sand may be needed for fill on the new portion of the beach. The sand will probably be spread yet this fall or winter.

Dan stated that the sidewalk between the beach and park was supposed to be poured this week but will most likely be done on Tuesday or Wednesday of next week because of the forecasted snow.

Dan received a call from JEO's CEO informing him of an Iowa law that requires projects to have only one seal for the whole project. With the roof modifications made and certified by the roofing company, the project would not be in compliance. After a good discussion, JEO agreed to redraw the plans incorporating the roof changes and stamp the whole plan at no cost. The bid deadline has been pushed back to January 14th.

ITEM R5. Board member/staff reports

1. Administrative items

Dan reported on the following items:

a. January Meeting Date

The next meeting will be held at 4:00 p.m. on January 20, 2022, at the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center.

b. Zook Final Grant Payment

Dan announced that the final grant payment has been made on the Zook property, and nothing more is owed to the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation.

c. Briese Habitat Stamp Grant

Dan participated in a Zoom meeting today to score the Habitat Stamp grants. He, of course, did not vote on the WCCB grant. Humboldt County's project was voted first, which he agreed was well deserved. The WCCB request for the Briese property came in second and will be fully funded. The project agreement should be received from the state in February and then can be turned in for funding. The 45% match will be paid from the WCCB REAP fund.

d. REAP Grant

Dan reported that he has signed and returned the REAP grant agreement for the Salsness parcel and will start the paperwork to get that transferred from the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation. He anticipates that the grant will be paid directly to the INHF. Next week Dan will start pulling together documents for the REAP grant and associated grants to pay off the Salsness property. He will go to the Pheasants Forever state council in January to request \$20,000, as they will usually match the local chapter that pledged \$20,000 as well. Neil asked if Dan had contacted the PF group in Omaha. Dan said he did reach out, but they have not called him back yet.

e. O'Connell Property

Dan reported that the INHF made an offer on the O'Connell property as approved by the WCCB. Eric O'Connell denied the offer stating that he has higher offers. Since the board has a right of first refusal filed against the deed, he is required to have a signed and recorded offer before it is released. Dan acknowledged that the board would have the right to pay the highest offer amount if so desired.

f. Old Business

Southwood Equestrian Campsites: Discussion from the November meeting regarding equestrian or premium campsites at Southwood Conservation Area was reintroduced. Brian showed drone photos of the campground and stated that the only special amenities of the preferred sites are hitching rails and slightly longer pads to accommodate horse trailers. Dan and Brian stated that staff is not in favor of different pricing for those sites due to the confusion it creates for campers and that it most likely will not stop others from coming in earlier in the week to get those sites. The board agreed by consensus to leave the pricing as is.

War Eagle Park: Val Uken came and picked up the War Eagle medallions from the nature center. There was a case of 304 medallions in individual boxes, plus others not in gift boxes.

Oak Ridge Dam Structure: The bid was let, and the contract was awarded for the Oak Ridge dam repair. Mark Nahra was nervous about starting the work this fall, so it will be delayed until spring.

2. Nature Center Activities

Dawn reported on the following Nature Center activities:

- The programs and visitors report was presented. She noted that more school groups were seen this month than in past years, and the higher workshop numbers were due to hosting the IAN fall workshop.
- Winter Fun Day will take place on Saturday from 10 am to 2 pm. Several activities will be available, including a campfire with toasted marshmallows and hot cocoa, slingshot range, corn hole game, nature stories, and live animals. This event has been very well attended in the past with up to 400 people. To reduce numbers in the classrooms this year, crafts will not be done on site. Craft boxes have been prepared with several crafts and supplies to be taken and completed at home.
- Kari has some winter break programs scheduled, including solstice yoga and hiking or possibly snowshoeing on Saturday.
- The Tale Trail stands have been received. They probably won't be installed before spring. These were purchased with grants from the Siouxland Community Foundation and CF Industries, as well as donations of story books. There will be 19-20 stations with pages from children's books related to different seasons in nature to increase literacy and encourage people to get outdoors.
- Foundation membership letters went out, and payments have started coming in.
- The annual foundation meeting is being planned for February 20th with Linda Black Elk as the guest speaker. She will be talking about ethnobotany and may also stay to lead a hands-on workshop.
- A new kiosk is being installed near the nature center entrance as a scout project.

3. Park Activities

Brian reported on the following park activities:

- Park staff has been doing maintenance burns in the parks, and Erik helped the DNR complete a fall burn.
- Staff has started building up their firewood stockpiles for next year.
- Little Sioux and Southwood staff have been maintaining fence lines, clearing downed trees and creating a buffer area around fences.

- Signs were made to replace the Ducks Unlimited signs at Owego, and they will be installed next week if weather permits.
- The AEDs provided from the Hemsley Charitable Trust for law enforcement were delivered. Brian has set them up to connect to Wi-Fi in the parks. When the units are deployed, they will automatically send supplies and document the usage for the grant. The only thing the department is responsible for is replacing batteries, and they are supposed to be five-year batteries.
- Only two of the laptop mounts have come in so far, but all the printers and connections have been received. Dan stated that once the equipment has been installed, Brian will work with the Department of Public Safety to install the software.

4. Board Information

Suzan announced that her board term expires at the end of the year, and she has made the difficult decision to not renew. Dan stated that the board needs to come up with candidates and make a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors. The opening does not have to be filled immediately in January. Appreciation was expressed for Suzan's service on the board.

ITEM R6. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:10 p.m.

The above minutes were recorded by Dawn Bostwick.

Recording Secretary, Dawn Bostwick

Board Secretary, Neil Stockfleth

Board Chair, Aaron Gehling