

**WOODBURY COUNTY, IOWA, CONSERVATION BOARD
MINUTES OF THE THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2022, BOARD MEETING**

The following is a true copy of the minutes of the meeting of the Woodbury County, Iowa, Conservation Board held on Thursday, September 8, 2022, at the Little Sioux Park Heritage Shelter beginning at 4:00 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Aaron Gehling (by phone), Chris Zellmer-Zant (by phone/in person), Cindy Bennett, Neil Stockfleth, and Tom Limoges (by phone)

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

None

STAFF PRESENT

Dan Heissel, Dawn Snyder, and Dawn Bostwick

OTHERS PRESENT

Jeremy Taylor, County Supervisor/Conservation Board Liaison (by phone)

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Stockfleth called the meeting to order at 4:04 p.m.

CORRESPONDENCE ITEMS

None

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None

ITEM R1. Approve Consent Agenda

MOTION by Cindy, 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 July 12, 2022, Regular Meeting
- C2. Approve the July and August 2022 Claims and Expenditures
- C3. Receive and Place on File the June FY22 Final Accrued, July 2022, and August 2022 Financial/Budget Reports
- C4. Acceptance of Gifts/Donations:
 - Suzy Feathers for buckeyes & quilt block
 - Ruth Rose & Luis Lebrede for garden signs
 - Sioux Valley Sports Club \$500 cash donation for Nature Center programs
 - Woodbury County Fair \$300 cash donation for walking stick program

- Iowa State University Extension 4-H Shooting Sports for Archery & air rifle equipment (valued at ~\$7,000)
- Sharron K. Bair for \$2,000 cash for raptors
- Virgil Audus for black bear skin rug

ITEM R2. Campground Water & Sewer Upgrades Using ARPA Funds from Supervisors

Dan stated that when the supervisors approved using ARPA funds for the water and sewer upgrades at Little Sioux Park and Southwood Conservation Area, the assistant county attorney questioned whether it could be used for that purpose. Dan provided a letter to the budget director laying out the project, which was then given to the consultant who has been guiding the AARPA fund spending. The consultant confirmed that the project qualifies for the funds but stipulated that bids would be required. An engineering firm has already been engaged to provide a snapshot for Little Sioux's Riverside and Bellamy campgrounds. The assistant attorney doesn't think bids will be needed for the engineering because it is considered a soft service, but Dan will confirm that.

The engineering firm will let the bids and manage the construction on site. The engineering estimate for Riverside is \$59,400 and for Bellamy is \$94,900. The project includes redesigning the campgrounds and adding a new septic system to the northwest. The park water system will be turned into a public water supply as required due to the number of users per day. The water will need to be tested quarterly by either Dan or Brian unless one of the park staff becomes certified.

Dan estimated that all three campgrounds can be upgraded for \$600,000. A question was raised about the effect of the campground redesign on the number of sites, and Dan confirmed that the number of sites will most likely go down.

(Chris joined by phone at 4:12 p.m.)

(Jeremy joined by phone at 4:15 p.m.)

MOTION by Aaron, second by Tom.

To approve and authorize proceeding with the campground water and sewer upgrades at Little Sioux Park and Southwood Conservation Area, either through JEO Consulting Group or by letting bids if required.²²⁻²²

ROLL CALL VOTE:

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

ITEM R3. Skid Loader Bids

Dan presented the bid specs for the purchase of a new skid loader. Three bids were received, but one was eliminated because it was five days late. Dan confirmed that it has been the common practice of the department to not consider late bids.

Dan recommended going with the lowest bid of \$89,751.62 from Sooland Bobcat. There will be no trade-in as this is an opportunity to have a skid loader in each district. The nature center will keep the wheeled bobcat and use it for trail maintenance and other work.

²²⁻²² To approve and authorize proceeding with the campground water and sewer upgrades at Little Sioux Park and Southwood Conservation Area, either through JEO Consulting Group or by letting bids if required.

MOTION by Tom, second by Cindy.

To approve and authorize the purchase of a Bobcat T770 from Sooland Bobcat for \$89,751.62.²²⁻²³

ROLL CALL VOTE:

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

ITEM R4. Nature Center Shelter & Sidewalks

Dan stated that the \$15,000 MRHD grant awarded for the outdoor learning shelter needs to be used by May 2023, but other funding requests have not been successful. Dawn suggested using a portion of the \$57,000 bequest from Karen Juhl to complete this project. The plan includes ordering a shelter kit, having concrete pad and sidewalks poured, and hiring a local contractor to set up the shelter. The handicap accessible sidewalks, pouring of the pad, and the shelter construction would require a minimum of \$22,000. Dan stated that electricity and water could possibly be run to it but are not included in current estimate.

MOTION by Aaron, second by Chris.

To approve and authorize the use of \$22,000 from the Karen Juhl bequest, along with the \$15,000 MRHD grant, to complete the outdoor learning shelter project at the nature center.²²⁻²⁴

ROLL CALL VOTE:

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

Dan explained that there has been a need for an outdoor restroom at the nature center for off-hours use. Brian and Dan looked at the possibility of installing a pit toilet but couldn't identify a location that is flat enough and wouldn't be highly visible. Brian had the idea to use a portion of the entryway coat closet to create a handicap-assessable unisex bathroom with outdoor access. This would only take up 8 of the 24 feet of coat closet which is not fully utilized most of the time.

MOTION by Aaron, second by Chris.

To approve and authorize staff to pursue a bid and get a design and cost estimate for the installation of a bathroom with outdoor access for after-hours use at the nature center.²²⁻²⁵

ROLL CALL VOTE:

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

²²⁻²³ To approve and authorize the purchase of a Bobcat T770 from Sooland Bobcat for \$89,751.62.

²²⁻²⁴ To approve and authorize the use of \$22,000 from the Karen Juhl bequest, along with the \$15,000 MRHD grant, to complete the outdoor learning shelter project at the nature center.

²²⁻²⁵ To approve and authorize staff to pursue a bid and get a design and cost estimate for the installation of a bathroom with outdoor access for after-hours use at the nature center.

ITEM R5. Capital Improvement Projects Update

1. Brown's Lake Projects

a. Concession Project

Dan gave an update on the Brown's Lake concession stand project stating that almost everything is done, but they are waiting on the handmade cabinets. The septic system is ready to go, and the pipes have been run and dead-ended. Dan received the scope of services and contract times from JEO, and the earliest expected completion would be February 2023. Mike Barkley will put in the septic in the spring. Hopefully the lake level will come back up enough to allow beach use and rentals.

Dan reported that he received a letter from the Woodbury County Attorney regarding the landowner beach ownership issue stating that the deed contains specific meets and bounds that do not include the beach. Even if it hadn't been specific, the county attorney stated that the boundary is always assumed to be the high tidemark. The letter is not an official opinion to be provided to the landowner, and no action will be taken unless the landowner moves forward.

(Chris arrived in person.)

Aaron reported that he talked to MidAmerican's Justin Terrell and learned that pumping has ceased for installation of the new valve. It will be off until approximately November 15, the expected completion date. Water level is 3" under the back spillway boards today. It is assumed to have a blockage as there is backflow into the ditch towards Snyder Bend. Aaron will get clarification from Justin and ensure the blockage is cleared before turning the water back on. Dan will fly the drone and try to determine what the blockage is. Aaron also noted that the consultant proposed putting a dike across the lake and dividing it in two, but the DNR is not supportive of that. Dan will invite Doug Chaffa and Ben Wallace to a board meeting to discuss.

ITEM R6. Board member/staff reports

1. Administrative items

Dan reported on the following items:

a. October Meeting Date

The next meeting will be held at 4:00 p.m. on Thursday, October 13, 2022, at Snyder

b. Izaak Walton League

Dan reported that the Izaak Walton League approved the property purchase, and the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation stepped in and purchased it on the board's behalf with a \$500 down payment and \$74,500 due on October 14th. Dan stated that available CIP funds are needed to make the first loan payment to the Board of Supervisors, so the INHF will complete the purchase and allow WCCB to pay it off when the CIP fund is replenished.

Dan summarized necessary renovations to keep the existing building, acknowledging that it could be close to \$300,000 before done. The board will compile a list of options at the long-range planning session in January taking into consideration the best use of the property (with or without the building), the highest need for the park, and the best revenue opportunity.

Dan submitted a MRHD grant request and will get the results this month. He learned from a member that they are against acquisitions because of past experiences and tried to focus his request appropriately.

c. Owego Wetlands – Gilchrist Grant

Upon a suggestion made by Tom, Dan successfully obtained a micro grant from Gilchrist Foundation to cover fuel costs for pumping water at Owego wetlands. He presented a map showing the cells that currently have water. The micro grant will enable staff to keep it full through the migration season and maybe into December. Dan noted that staff worked on cattail control around the wetlands before pumping began. Aaron also mentioned that the previous work on the control structures contributed to make this possible.

d. Snyder Bend Cabin Air Conditioner Replacements

The air conditioning/heating units have all been installed and paid for by the supervisors giving peace of mind heading into the winter season. They are all identical units purchased from the same company.

e. Nature Center Security Cameras Update

The nature center security cameras have been installed and are working great. Dan related an incident noticed by Tyler Flammang in the first week that led to identification and charges being filed against four suspects running four-wheelers through Stone Park. The staff has been utilizing the system to keep an eye on the exhibit areas and parking lots. It has also shown a high level of after-hours trail use. The board of supervisors contributed over \$5,000 towards the camera system.

f. Old Business

Dan was contacted by the new owners of the Vernie Nicolaisen property east of Shagbark. They are interested in selling off some of the rough ground when they take possession in December and want to know if the WCCB would be interested in any of that ground.

2. Nature Center Activities

Dawn reported on the following Nature Center activities:

- The programs and visitors report for July and August were presented.
- Nature Calls brochures are going to the printer tomorrow, and sponsors who have sent money will be included. Amazing auction items have been donated. The convention center needs the headcount on Tuesday. Gun raffle flyers were presented.
- Kari and Theresa are doing a monarch program tonight. A garden and native plants program will be held this weekend.
- A generous donation of archery equipment was made by the Iowa State Extension. The equipment was gently used and includes bows, targets, and 3D targets.
- Mike Barkley came to the nature center to look at the dog-friendly fountain. It is on his list for installation, but he has been dealing with a lot of dry wells etc. and was also out sick for two weeks.
- The Siouxland Big Give is coming up in early October. The nature center focus will be on the outdoor shelter.

3. Park Activities

Dan directed the board to review Brian's written report of park activities.

Nathan Silfies, Little Sioux Park Resource Manager, reported on the following for Little Sioux Park:

- Camping has been slightly slower this year, but staff has been working on other projects in the park and tree trimming in access park areas.
- The Briese property has been signed and is ready for hunting, with usage anticipated right away including the youth season.
- Mining is done in the lake area by the shooting range. Staff has picked out rocks by the tons and is prepping it for seeding this fall. Dan added that the contractor put dirt back over the area so it could be seeded and put a lot of structure in the bottom.

(Aaron left meeting.)

- Staff have been mowing food plots and planting turnips.
- The swan nesting dock was pulled out because it was too high. This coming year would be when they would nest.
- Dan stated that the park doesn't just look like this for the board meeting but always looks this nice.

4. Board Information

None

5. Other Business

Dan reminded the board about his upcoming annual evaluation. He will get information to Neil, and it can be done following the board meeting in October.

Dawn mentioned that she will be doing interviews for nature calls on the radio, and there will be an article in the Sioux City Journal on Sunday. She is also trying to line up a project with CF Industries.

Dawn announced to the board that she has decided to retire with an anticipated last day of January 20, 2023. She has held this position for 34 years. Dan is collecting job descriptions from other counties and will be working with Dawn on the transition. Dan stated that over the years some of Dawn's duties have been transferred to Theresa, which is why Theresa's pay scale was adjusted and her position was changed to Naturalist 1 last year. Dan will talk to Brian, Dawn and Theresa and put together information for the board. He stated that it would be great to get someone on board to spend time training and meeting major contacts etc. before Dawn leaves, but it will be a tight timeline. Board members expressed their appreciation for Dawn's years of service.

ITEM R7. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

The above minutes were recorded by Dawn Bostwick.

Recording Secretary, Dawn Bostwick

Board Secretary, Cindy Bennett

Board Chair, Neil Stockfleth