

**WOODBURY COUNTY, IOWA, CONSERVATION BOARD
MINUTES OF THE THURSDAY, OCTOBER 10, 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, October 10, 2024, at Brown's Lake - Bigelow Park beginning at 5:00 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

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

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

None

STAFF PRESENT

Dan Heissel, Brian Stehr, Theresa Kruid, Josh VanVoorst, Skyler Foley, Hayden Thilges, and Dawn Bostwick

OTHERS PRESENT

Mark Nelson, County Supervisor/Conservation Board Liaison

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Bennett called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

CORRESPONDENCE ITEMS

None

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None

ITEM R1. Approve Consent Agenda

MOTION by Neil, second by Aaron.

To approve the consent agenda.

VOTE:

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

The consent agenda was approved and involved the following items:

C1. Approve Minutes of the September 12, 2024, Regular Meeting

C2. Approve the September 2024 Claims and Expenditures

C3. Receive and Place on File the September 2024 Financial/Budget Report and
1st Quarter FY 24-25 Reserve Fund Report

C4. Acceptance of Gifts/Donations:

- Port-o-Pots for use at Southwood for School of the Wild (Oct. 7-10)
- Suet Feeder from Jeff Olson
- Painted rocks for Nature Calls from Addie Nelson

ITEM R2. Motor Vehicle Bid Opening

Brian presented bids for a 2025 1-ton single rear wheel pickup truck to replace the ¾-ton truck at Snyder Bend. He stated that they decided to go with a heavier duty truck to allow hauling the department's larger equipment. A gooseneck prep package was also added to accommodate the new gooseneck trailer. Two bids were received which were comparable in price. Brian recommended going with Knoepfler Chevrolet's low bid of \$43,001, which was \$919 less than the bid from Barry Motor.

MOTION by Aaron, second by Neil.

To approve and authorize the purchase of a 2025 Silverado 3500 pickup from Knoepfler Chevrolet at a cost of \$43,001 after trade-in of a 2015 Chevrolet Silverado 2500.²⁴⁻²⁷

VOTE:

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

Dan added that the department has been ordering the LT models for park trucks, but he has learned after driving his new Ford F-150 that it is hard for bigger guys to get in and out because the seats don't adjust up and down. He recommended looking at the next step up to get power adjustable seats as an option in the future to make them more user-friendly.

ITEM R3. Owego Clean Out - Grant

Dan stated that during the long-range planning session last month, it was reported that some of the basins are filling in at Owego. He said that he is trying to get staff to bring things like that up in the normal course of business, but now that he is aware of the issue, he would like to apply for a Wildlife Diversity grant. The maximum award is \$7,500 with a \$7,500 department match, but it can be received three years in a row. It would cover a week's worth of CAT work to widen out the dikes and add depth in a few places. Josh presented a map showing a preliminary plan to do the work in three phases.

(Mark arrived at 5:12 p.m.)

MOTION by Neil, second by Aaron.

To approve and authorize the director to apply for the \$7,500 Wildlife Diversity grant for Owego with a department match of \$7,500.²⁴⁻²⁸

VOTE:

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

²⁴⁻²⁷ To approve and authorize the purchase of a 2025 Silverado 3500 pickup from Knoepfler Chevrolet at a cost of \$43,001 with trade-in of a 2015 Chevrolet Silverado 2500.

²⁴⁻²⁸ To approve and authorize the director to apply for the \$7,500 Wildlife Diversity grant for Owego with a department match of \$7,500.

ITEM R4. Capital Improvement Projects Update

1. Little Sioux Park Fiber

Dan stated that he had intended to ask for board action to obtain internet service for Little Sioux Park from Long Lines but decided to get additional information before asking for a decision. He received an email from a WCICC employee stating that the internet provider in Lawton offers lower rates. Long Lines had quoted 50 mg for \$129.95, 100 mg for \$149.95, 250 mg for \$169.95, 500 mg for \$189.95, and 1 gig for \$209.95. Dan stated that 50 mg would not be enough for the park. He intends to negotiate on the price with Long Lines and bring more information to a future meeting. Board encouraged staff to go with 1 gig minimum for campground and parks.

Dan added that Long Lines is ending their fiber installation at the entrance to Brown's Lake but are continuing down the road to the Snyder Bend shop. Josh stated that he pays for 3 mg at the residence, but it only tests at 1.5 mg. Dan stated that if the department ends up contracting to run fiber to the shop, it would also be run to the house at the same time.

2. Nature Center Foundation

Dan reported that he talked to Kenny Schmitz last week and learned that they are still waiting for a quote from Concrete Raising who apparently is waiting for information from their engineer. Kenny has let them know that they need to submit their quote, or he will have to contact someone else. Two quotes are required to move forward. Dan stated that Thrasher's plan will be more aggressive and leave more to fix inside the building when they are done. Concrete Raising is doing the same work but not tearing the building up as much. Dan hasn't heard anything back about the wall cracks that they found. Dan will let the board know as soon as he has more information.

(Tom joined by phone at 5:23 p.m.)

ITEM R5. Board Member/Staff Reports

1. Administrative Items (Dan)

Dan reported on the following items:

a. Set Next Meeting Date

The next meeting will be held at 5:00 p.m. on November 14, 2024, at the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center.

b. Land Deal Information – New Easement Program

Dan reported that he spoke with Ross at the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation and was told that the rules are done for the easement program they plan to use for the Hecox/Ingerthson property by Shagbark. Dan talked to Mark Hecox on Monday to let him know the status. Dan doesn't have any specifics yet on the easement program. Neil predicted that it would likely mirror the easement used to purchase Owego in which they would be selling a forever easement to the program and agree to no longer farm it. Then they could offer to sell it to the board for the residual value.

2. Nature Center Activities

Theresa reported on the following Nature Center activities:

- The programs and visitors report for September was presented. School numbers were down, because naturalists did not participate in the Ponca Expo school day this year since it fell on the Nature Calls set-up day.
- Nature Calls:
 - Theresa is still waiting for final invoices. She received the invoice from the convention center, but it didn't appear to include all the beverages. She will check on it.
 - Theresa and Dawn calculated the initial gross profit at roughly a little over \$70,000.
 - Raffle ticket sales were down, but the live auction was up considerably. The Costa Rica/Belize trip sold three times at just under \$8,000 each, less the retainer cost of \$11,000 for all three.
 - Dan reported that he was talking to a gentleman who had bid heavily that night and thanked him for his support. During the conversation, his wife asked who was going to do the work on the raptor house and stated that a friend attending with them is a contractor and would like to donate his time to do it. They then asked about the materials needed and said they would donate the materials. Theresa received an email from them and will arrange a meeting with them soon.
 - Theresa hopes to have a follow-up meeting with the convention center staff next week. Overall, she has received great comments about the event, especially that the food was much better than the last couple of years. She had previously heard comments about people not buying tickets this year because of the food quality in the past years. Sales were down about 150 tickets this year with 411 people in attendance.
 - Theresa mentioned that the event is a big stress for staff and that she questions the amount of time spent fundraising rather than providing education. Dan noted that the summer interns are paid with part of the proceeds, which was how it was set up long ago, and that the board of supervisors will not agree to fund those interns now. He doesn't know how else that money could be raised for the educational programs. He will discuss it with staff before bringing suggestions back to the board.
 - Theresa noted that in the beginning there was a stronger volunteer base. Many of the volunteers have burned out or have moved on to spend more time with grandchildren, etc.
 - Shelby has been onboard just six months and has been getting her feet under her as volunteer coordinator. She did a good job on her first event and will be developing the volunteer base as she has more time.
- The raptor house had also been designated as the project for the Siouxland Big Give which raised \$1,450 with a matching donation of \$2,000 from one donor. A couple additional checks have also been received.
- The nature center will have a new high school intern from North High this year.
- Program field trips picked up again right after Nature Calls.
- Theresa, Kari, and Mariah finished up a four-day collaboration today with School of the Wild at Southwood Conservation Area for Woodbury Central 5th graders. There were 46 students, 4 teachers, and a couple volunteers. They participated in a variety of activities and are already asking to do it again next year.

Mark Nelson commented that this was his first year attending Nature Calls and that he had a good time. He has also already heard good comments about the School of the Wild and commented that any time kids can get out to the nature center or county parks is a good thing.

(Tom arrived at 5:45 p.m.)

3. Park Activities

Brian reported on the following park activities:

- The parks officially have water operating permits now. Dan or Brian, as certified operators, will be doing monthly water samples for bacteria, quarterly samples for magnesium, and yearly nitrate samples.
- Little Sioux Park staff removed the old playground material and installed the new rubber mulch. They also added sand and heavy landscaping fabric underneath the mulch. The edging has not been put in yet. The contractor was there this weekend to install it around the septic system but had an issue with his machine. It should be done today or tomorrow. Staff will then work on putting rock around the septic area and planting shrubs to screen it off and hide the equipment.
- Southwood staff has been repairing the kiosk which had a leaky roof that also led to other problems. The asphalt shingles were replaced with steel, and steel siding was also added to make it more maintenance free.
- Brian announced that the department was awarded the grant for the Brown's Lake playground, and he has just started working through the process. The grant is from the National Park Service but is run through the DNR and will be a lengthy process. The playground will be started in the Fall of 2025 at the earliest. Brian met a representative from Des Moines at the park so they could do a site survey to make sure everything in the grant was accurate. She was very impressed with all the improvements and amenities at the park.
- Josh reported on the following Brown's Lake activities.
 - The campground has been very busy with minimal incidents. The campground lost nine spots during the redesign but is making more money now than ever. He stated that they have had the best group of campers this summer than they have since he has been here.
 - He provided some statistics about the beach concessions for the season: 1,480 transactions, \$11,200 gross receipts, \$6,000 in rentals (the majority of which was paddleboats at \$4,140).
 - Owego: Staff pumped on two cells with one 300-gallon tank of fuel, 108 hours, and approximately 14.3 million gallons of water. They burned 385 acres and mowed 147 acres.
- Officers attended the annual CCPOA fall conference this week providing mandatory training for their law enforcement certification.
- Dan added that the CCPOA had added a "ranger of the year" award this year and asked for recommendations. He said that WCCB has eight great rangers, but Erik stood out this year due to his involvement with flood relief, the Hornick shooting, and an AED deployment. The award recognized valor, public service, lifesaving, and law enforcement. Dan was pleased to announce that of the seven nominees, Erik Lindsay was chosen as ranger of the year.

(Mark left at 5:57 p.m.)

- Dan & Brian attended a watershed workshop today in Le Mars. Brian stated that it was a good training. It covered inspections and who is responsible for maintaining the dams. He said they learned that there are over 600 dams in Woodbury County, many of which are coming to the end of their life expectancy but still need to be maintained. Quite a few are on WCCB property. Dan added that dams are typically sponsored by the NRCS or the board of supervisors, and if NRCS is the sponsor, county conservation isn't responsible for it other than inspections. Neil noted that over 400 are Little Sioux flood control structures. Dan and Brian plan to inventory all the dams on WCCB property.
- The department is hosting the ICCS District III meeting next Wednesday at the nature center. It will be followed up with a presentation by Sioux City Parks and Recreation at the new Cone Park bike trail.
- Both new F-150 trucks have arrived and have been picked up.
- The Halloween event at Little Sioux Park is next weekend on the 19th.

4. Board Information

Aaron asked if Dan had contacted Rick Patterson. Dan reported that he has talked to him, and Rick wants to do the easement but was worried about what would happen if he ever changed his mind. Dan told him that the county attorneys are backlogged, so he would have to use outside counsel for the agreement. Rick offered to have his son, who is an attorney, draw one up, and then Dan can have the county attorney review it.

Aaron asked if anyone knew anything about the new wastewater treatment plant being installed at Gelita. He wondered if there was ever a public meeting. No one had any further information.

Neil asked for an update on the driveway requested by a resident near Brown's Lake. Dan said that he is working on it with the DNR and getting maps put together.

Cindy distributed copies of the annual evaluation form for Dan's evaluation next month. Dan will email a digital copy to the board also. Cindy asked that board members complete the evaluation and email them back to her by November 9th to be compiled for the meeting.

Aaron stated that he talked to a sheriff's deputy who was at last week's county supervisors meeting which apparently went a little sideways. He received good comments from the deputy about Dan standing up at the end of the meeting and providing some "voice of reason" comments.

Neil asked about the high bank issue at Little Sioux. Dan said that Brett Johnston has looked at it and gave an estimate of \$54,000 for the boat ramp but didn't put a firm number on the bank repairs. Dan estimated that it would probably cost \$150,000-\$200,000 to repair the boat ramp and the bank. He needs to give the figures to Mike Montino of Emergency Management to be added to the county FEMA request.

Dan reported that there was a CCI crew, cosponsored by the DNR, at Little Sioux last week to cut out trees. They cut the logs up in 18" lengths and let them float down the river.

Tom reported that he was at Little Sioux Park last week for the Woodbury County Pheasants Forever youth day. They used the shelter, and he received good comments from participants about the facilities being in great condition.

ITEM R6. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:14 p.m.

The above minutes were recorded by Dawn Bostwick.

Recording Secretary, Dawn Bostwick

Board Secretary, Aaron Gehling

Board Chair, Cindy Bennett