

**WOODBURY COUNTY, IOWA, CONSERVATION BOARD
MINUTES OF THE THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 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, November 14, 2024, at the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center beginning at 5:00 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Aaron Gehling, Cindy Bennett, Neil Stockfleth, and Tom Limoges (via phone)

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

Chris Zellmer-Zant

STAFF PRESENT

Dan Heissel, Brian Stehr, Theresa Kruid, and Dawn Bostwick

OTHERS PRESENT

Mark Nelson, County Supervisor/Conservation Board Liaison

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Bennett called the meeting to order at 5:13 p.m.

CORRESPONDENCE ITEMS

None

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None

ITEM R1. Approve Consent Agenda

MOTION by Neil, second by Tom.

To approve the consent agenda.

VOTE:

Aye: Cindy Bennett, Neil Stockfleth & Tom Limoges

Nay: None

Absent: Aaron Gehling & Chris Zellmer-Zant

The consent agenda was approved and involved the following items:

- C1. Approve Minutes of the October 10, 2024, Regular Meeting
- C2. Approve the October 2024 Claims and Expenditures
- C3. Receive and Place on File the October 2024 Financial/Budget Report

C4. Acceptance of Gifts/Donations:

- Siouxland BIG GIVE (designated for Raptor House repairs)
- \$2,000 from Sharron K Bair
- \$250 from Richard Pope
- \$30 from Eric & Pam Pfautsch
- \$50 from Marilyn Milbrodt
- \$200 from John & Sharon Nilges
- \$1,000 from Mary Morrissey for Robert J. Morrissey Memorial (via WCCF - \$971.56 after fees)
- \$200 from Kristin Kulash for Lauren “Larry” Johnson Memorial (via WCCF - \$195.53 after fees)
- Pumpkins for Nature Center from Bomgaars on Hamilton Blvd, Rod Tondreau & Shelby Campbell

ITEM R2. Budget – Final Review – Adopt FY25-26

Dan presented an updated FY25-26 budget which is due December 6th. He stated that he had made three adjustments to the previously proposed budget. 1) Motor Vehicles was increased from \$130,000 to \$150,000 to reflect the 7-25% increases realized on the last several vehicle purchases. 2) Computer Software was increased by \$1,200 to cover the cost of the MACH law enforcement software. 3) Water and Sewer was increased \$1,000 to cover increased costs. The budget has an overall increase of \$28,855 or 5.5%.

MOTION by Neil, second by Tom.

To approve the FY 2025-2026 operating budget as presented.²⁴⁻²⁹

VOTE:

Aye: Cindy Bennett, Neil Stockfleth & Tom Limoges

Nay: None

Absent: Aaron Gehling & Chris Zellmer-Zant

ITEM R3. Department Reports

1. Nature Center Activities

Theresa reported on the following Nature Center activities:

- The programs and visitors report for October was presented.
- School of the Wild went very well. A Perry Creek teacher saw an article in the Movable paper and emailed Jay Gorsch about doing it. Theresa expressed concern about not having the staff, time, or resources to provide the four-day immersive program for all Sioux City schools. Jay said other counties fundraise or find a corporate sponsor to hire a staff member dedicated to the School of the Wild. Theresa stated that those schools could potentially be reached with a field day, but another staff person would still be needed.
- The Bird-Friendly Iowa dedication was held in October and was well attended. A rehabbed barred owl from S.O.A.R. was released.
- Staff has been working with Brown Knows Designs on designing the new exhibits.
- Nature Calls:
 - A recap meeting was held Tuesday evening for volunteers and staff.
 - Attendance for the event was down, but the net proceeds were very close to last year.
 - Staff put in over 1,000 hours on the event and volunteers had at least 400 hours.
 - Proceeds are split 30% for interns, 30% for maintenance and 40% for programs & exhibits.

(Aaron arrived at 5:31 p.m.)

²⁴⁻²⁹ To approve the FY 2025-2026 operating budget as presented.

- Dan added that he and Theresa have had conversations about the amount of staff time involved with Nature Calls. He said that senior staff will review it and come up with ideas to bring back to the board. He noted that staff is being paid regardless, but it is taking them away from their regular duties.

2. Park Activities

Brian reported on the following park activities:

- Parks are closed for the season, and staff has been busy winterizing restrooms and lift stations.
 - The Little Sioux staff has been trained on the new septic system. They went to Brown's Lake to learn how to winterize the lift stations
 - Little Sioux had a very successful Halloween event with the campgrounds full and cars parked all the way to the entrance.
 - Dan stated that a candy company in Clay County used to donate to their Halloween hike. He suggested contacting Palmer Candy to sponsor, as the campers spend a huge amount on candy and still run out. Tom said he would be happy to make that contact.
 - Mark suggested asking Palmer or a big camper company to be a sponsor but have an event in all four parks on the same night.
- (Tom left at 5:40 p.m.)
- Staff has been prepping firewood for next year.
 - Southwood staff has reported that EHD (Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease) cases in their district have been up from 44 last year. Last year staff found 44 deceased deer in their district, and this year they have found approximately 60.
 - Josh, Dan and Brian applied for a \$7,500 habitat management grant for cleaning out the excavations at Owego.
 - Staff will be working at Owego pulling volunteer trees. A tree puller with a grapple attachment on the budgeted equipment list has been purchased.
 - Annual mandatory safety training was held at the sheriff's office training center.
 - The truck that was approved for purchase last month has been ordered.
 - A Hunter's Ed field day is being held at Brown's Lake on Saturday but is already full. The online course work must be completed in advance.

ITEM R4. Capital Improvement Projects Update

1. Little Sioux Park

a. Fiber Rates

Brian reported that fiber has been installed and the service is up and running at the Little Sioux Park office. He went with base package of 50 mg up and down but are getting speeds of 100 mg up and down when tested. He noted that when Wi-Fi is added for the campground, WCICC would like it to be on a separate line. Additional speed may be needed at that time. The current package is \$129.95 per month for a business line with a unique IP address. Brian is looking at solutions for getting Wi-Fi to the park and hopes to have it up and going by spring.

b. Concession Stand

Dan presented a site plan concept and projected costs for a new concession stand at Little Sioux Park. The 20' x 40' building would be built along the beach where staff will be able to monitor activities and take care of the rentals. The total cost estimate is \$123,670, which includes \$85,000 for the building and \$38,670 for accessories. Mark suggested designing it

to include outdoor vending machines to provide after-hour options for campers. He also thought bicycle rentals would go over well for the trail.

Dan stated that he met with April, the Correctionville city clerk, to make sure there wouldn't be any conflict with their restaurant. She was going to talk to her husband and get back to him, but she didn't think it would be a problem since the park would only be offering prepackaged foods. The contractor has this project penciled in for the spring.

2. Nature Center Foundation

Dan reported that quotes were received from Thrasher Foundation Repair and Concrete Raising Service. Both quotes were above the bid threshold, so it will now have to be opened for bidding and will need to be designed by an architect.

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 4:00 p.m. on December 12, 2024, at the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center.

b. FEMA Update

Dan reported that he and Brian attended a FEMA meeting last week and submitted flood damage costs for possible funding. Repair estimates are \$312,636.77, which includes the Little Sioux boat ramp, bank erosion, trail, and fence and the Snyder Bend cabin mold remediation.

c. Supervisors' Personnel Policy Change

Dan stated that the Board of Supervisors approved a change to the sick leave policy that the conservation department follows. The change is to the sick leave payout when a wage plan employee retires. It reduces the years of service from 25 years to 20 years and increases the payout from 15% to 28%. The employee may take the payout or elect to take one year of single health insurance coverage if they have at least 500 hours of sick leave. The board acknowledged the policy, and the Woodbury County Conservation Department will follow that policy.

d. Habitat Diversity Grant Update

Dan stated that he and Brian worked on the habitat diversity grant with Josh VanVoorst who had some good feedback. They divided the work up between the three of them to complete the application. Tyler Flammang created the needed maps.

e. Law Enforcement Agreement Update

Dan reported on a meeting that he and Brian had with the county attorney and the sheriff regarding the current law enforcement agreement. There has been an issue with one line item in the 350 code which was written in 1962 and says that an officer shall not enforce outside their bailiwick other than hunting and fishing codes. The county attorney thinks they will

make all WCCB officers special deputies. The sheriff can't use them to shorten their staff hours, but they can give permission to make the stop and be covered legally. This issue was brought up because of an incident in another county. All cost and overtime would be paid by the officer's department.

2. Board Information

None

3. Other Business

None

4. Old Business

a. Izaak Walton League

Dan reported that a survey was done to determine if there is asbestos in the Izaak Walton building. Asbestos was found in the kitchen vinyl tile, the women's restroom tile, and the windows in the original section only. An abatement estimate of \$6,320 was received from Environmental Services which is the company used for the Brown's Lake concession building. A follow-up inspection by a separate company must be done to confirm it has all been removed. Once completed, building demolition can take place. A down payment of 25% is required. The board agreed by consensus to proceed with the asbestos removal.

b. Ingenthron/Hecox Property

Dan stated that he was contacted by the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation this afternoon regarding the Ingenthron/Hecox property. An energy company is looking for land to purchase to mitigate wind turbine bird strikes. They were looking for property with oak hickory in Ida or Carroll counties, but there is one in Woodbury county on the Ingenthron/Hecox property. They would pay for the conservation department to manage and improve it. There would be some management practice requirements regarding burn schedules, etc. Dan will bring more information as it is available.

ITEM R6. Director's Annual Review

MOTION by Neil, second by Aaron at 6:30 p.m.

To enter a closed session pursuant to Iowa Code – Chapter 21.5(1)(a) for the purpose of conducting the Director's annual performance evaluation.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

Aaron Gehling - Aye, Cindy Bennett - Aye, Neil Stockfleth - Aye

The board discussed Director Heissel's performance for the past year and goals for the future. The session was recorded.

MOTION by Neil, second by Aaron at 7:17 p.m.

To leave closed session pursuant to Iowa Code – Chapter 21.5(1)(a) for the purpose of conducting the Director's annual performance evaluation.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

Aaron Gehling - Aye, Cindy Bennett - Aye, Neil Stockfleth - Aye

ITEM R7. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:18 p.m.

The above minutes were recorded by Dawn Bostwick.

Recording Secretary, Dawn Bostwick

Board Secretary, Aaron Gehling

Board Chair, Cindy Bennett