

**WOODBURY COUNTY, IOWA, CONSERVATION BOARD  
MINUTES OF THE THURSDAY, JUNE 18, 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, June 18, 2020, at Southwood Conservation Area beginning at 4:00 p.m.

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT**

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

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT**

Suzan Boden

**STAFF PRESENT**

Dan Heissel, Brian Stehr, Dawn Snyder, Erik Lindsay, Tyler Knight and Dawn Bostwick

**OTHERS PRESENT**

None

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairperson Bennett called the meeting to order at 4:11 p.m.

**CORRESPONDENCE ITEMS**

None

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

None

**ITEM R1. Approve Consent Agenda**

Dan asked to add the following under “Item R6 – Administrative Items – Other.”

- Drone Discussion
- Zoning
- Misting Machine Demo

**MOTION** by Aaron, second by Neil.

To approve the consent agenda as amended.

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

The consent agenda was approved and involved the following items:

**ITEM C1. Approve Minutes of the May 14, 2020 Monthly Meeting**

**ITEM C2. Approve the May 2020 Claims and Expenditures.**

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

**ITEM C4. Acceptance of Gifts/Donations**

- TNT Sales & Service \$1,220 in-kind donation of mister units for Nature Center & parks
- WCCF for \$750 for mister units
- Nebraska Ehtanol Board & Siouxland Ethanol for Hand Sanitizer

- Mark Johnson for 18 animal skulls
- Audubon Society for \$210 donation for room use
- Vibeke Jensen & Larry Benne for educational materials
- Bruce & Jeanette Hopkins for \$100 cash donation for camps
- Bradley & Jennifer Griffin for \$100 cash donation for camps
- Terry & Susan Koertner for \$100 cash donation for camps
- Monette Harbeck for \$35 cash donation for camps
- Theresa Kruid for Red-tailed Hawk medical supplies
- Ellis King & Ruth Gernhart for \$75 cash donation for canceled shelter reservation

**ITEM R2. Approval of FY 21 Wages/Salaries for Full-Time and Regular Part-Time Conservation Department Employees. (Conservation Board) Action**

Dan presented the FY21 Salaries/Wages for full-time and regular part-time employees, which includes a 2.75% increase as approved by the Board of Supervisors for the FY21 budget.

**MOTION** by Neil, second by Aaron.

To approve the FY21 full-time and regular part-time conservation employee salary and wage schedule as presented.<sup>16-20</sup>

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

**ITEM R3. Acknowledge the Appointment of Seasonal Park Security Guards as Temporary Peace Officers for Summer Season: May 22 – September 7, 2020.**

Dan announced the six individuals who have been hired to work as Seasonal Security Guards in the parks on weekends and holidays from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day. He asked that these individuals be officially appointed by board action as temporary peace officers for the department.

**MOTION** by Aaron, second by Neil.

To designate the following seasonal park security guards as temporary peace officers for the 2020 season (May 22 – September 7): Molly Bixenman, Lance Dunkelberger, Eric Furness, Travis Hutzell, Christian Leisinger and Joshua Martin.<sup>17-20</sup>

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

Chris arrived at 4:18 p.m.

**ITEM R4. COVID-19 – Park Facilities, Openings Discussion**

Dan initiated a discussion about reopening remaining park facilities after being closed due to COVID-19 concerns. Meetings and discussions with staff resulted in a recommended target of July 7<sup>th</sup> to open restrooms, showers, shelters and playgrounds. However, because the Governor of Iowa has eased restrictions even further and case numbers have been going down, Dan expressed willingness to open these facilities on June 26<sup>th</sup> but asked that the Nature Center opening be delayed until July 7<sup>th</sup>.

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<sup>16-20</sup> To approve the FY21 full-time and regular part-time conservation employee salary and wage schedule as presented.

<sup>17-20</sup> To designate the following seasonal park security guards as temporary peace officers for the 2020 season (May 22 – September 7): Molly Bixenman, Lance Dunkelberger, Eric Furness, Travis Hutzell, Christian Leisinger and Joshua Martin.

Restrictions, signage, and cleaning protocols were reviewed for each area. The public will be encouraged to follow CDC guidelines for social distancing etc.

- Park Restrooms/Showers – June 26:
  - Facilities will be open with scheduled closed times for cleaning.
- Shelters – June 26:
  - Enclosed shelters will be open at normal capacity as the state’s 50-person maximum has been lifted.
  - Reservations for the enclosed shelters will be available for full days only because of the difficulty of sanitizing between guests when two parties rent back-to-back on the same day.
  - Open shelters will be available to “use at your own risk” as they will not be sanitized.
- Campgrounds – June 26:
  - Campgrounds will open to full capacity with maximum of ten people per site.
- Playgrounds – June 26:
  - Playgrounds will open to “play at your own risk” as they will not be sanitized.
- Beaches – June 26:
  - Little Sioux Park beach will open without capacity limits.
  - Brown’s Lake/Bigelow Park beach will remain closed for the entire season due to construction.
- Nature Center – June 30:
  - Board members did not agree to wait until July 7 to open. Opening on June 30; Closed on July 3 & 4.
  - Reduced hours of 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday; Closed on Sunday and Monday.
  - Limited capacity of 30 visitors at a time.
  - Closed to rentals and tour groups.
  - In-person programs to resume in July with limitations. A new programs waiver form is being reviewed by the County Attorney.

**MOTION** by Aaron, second by Chris.

To approve the COVID-19 reopening dates and plans for park and Nature Center facilities as discussed.<sup>18-20</sup>

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

**ITEM R5.     Capital Improvement Projects Update**

**1.   Brown’s Lake – Phase II**

Dan reported that Phase II of the Brown’s Lake shoreline renovation project is ready to go as of September 1<sup>st</sup>. A grant extension has been obtained from Gilchrist and MHRD for delayed completion dates because of flooding and contractor availability.

**2.   Southwood Storage Building**

Erik and Dan gave an update on the Southwood storage building. Almost all equipment is now in the building, except the planter at Owego and a couple of old trailers. The roaming equipment will be added over the winter. Construction was top quality, and the few issues found were fixed immediately. Water will be added after July 1<sup>st</sup>. Lights have been ordered. A seed shed will be built in one corner with storage above. Board members were invited to tour the building following the meeting.

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<sup>18-20</sup> To approve the COVID-19 reopening dates and plans for park and Nature Center facilities as discussed.

**ITEM R6. Board member/staff reports**

**1. Administrative items**

Dan reported on the following items:

**a. July Meeting Date**

The next meeting will be held at 4:00 p.m. on July 16, 2020, at Little Sioux Park.

**b. Mower bids**

Brian presented the three bids received to replace the wide area mower at Little Sioux Park. Staff decided against another WAM due to complexities and cost. A couple vendors chose not to bid because they did not want the trade-in mower. Brian recommended the Exmark 96” zero-turn mower from Bottjen Implement which was also the lowest bid at \$11,099 after trade-in.

**MOTION** by Neil, second by Chris.

To approve and authorize the purchase of an Exmark 96” zero-turn mower from Bottjen Implement at a cost of \$11,099 after trade-in of a 2013 John Deere 1600 wide area mower.<sup>19-20</sup>

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

**c. Land Opportunity – 280 acres – Informational  
Four-Acre Donation – Highland Street – Action**

Dan reported on a 280-acre property for sale near on the north edge of Table Rock Marsh ( a property owned and operated by the DNR). He has spoken with Doug Chafa and was reassured that the DNR is pursuing it with support from the local Pheasants Forever chapter.

Dan also stated that he had received an offer from Jim Sullivan to donate four acres at the end Highland Street with the stipulation that his wildlife animal rehabilitation program be continued. The board expressed appreciation for the offer but decided it didn’t fit into department development plans at this time.

**d. Year End Budget Overview/Purchases**

Dan reported that he has been monitoring the budget and expenses and expects to have funds available to make some needed year-end purchases. Several items were discussed, including spare tires for the trailers, lights for the Southwood building, string trimmers, body cameras for officers, salt and peroxide for parks.

**e. Other**

**i. State Association Strategic Survey Discussion**

Dan provided an Iowa County Conservation Systems transition survey and asked for board member input by July 15.

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<sup>19-20</sup> To approve and authorize the purchase of an Exmark 96” zero-turn mower from Bottjen Implement at a cost of \$11,099 after trade-in of a 2013 John Deere 1600 wide area mower.

## **ii. Drone Discussion**

Dan suggested that a drone be purchased for the department if enough funds are available this fiscal year. Discussion was held regarding a variety of potential uses, such as accident investigation, law enforcement, prairie burns, Owego pumping plans, mapping, and easement monitoring. Two or three people would take a one-day training class and become licensed to operate the drone. There was board consensus to authorize the purchase if funds are available.

## **iii. Zoning**

Discussion was held regarding a proposed subdivision on the Loess Hills scenic byway along old Highway 141. The planning and zoning office had emailed Dan asking for comments if he had any to share. Dan stated that all he commented was that it is along the Loess Hills Scenic Byway and he hoped it wasn't on the hilltop as to impact the viewshed. He did not want to comment officially as it wasn't his business what the landowner did with his property. Dan asked if the county had a position on this regarding the Loess Hills Scenic Byway. Dan and Neil have both made comments on the project. It was noted that the board traditionally concedes to private property rights.

## **iv. Misting Machine Demo**

Southwood's misting machine was available for viewing, and Erik provided a demonstration of its use. Four units have been purchased from TNT Sales and Service, one for each district and one for the Nature Center, to sanitize public areas. Tom and Theresa Crawford of TNT deducted \$1,220 off the cost as a Nature Center donation, and Woodbury County Conservation Foundation funded \$750.

Chris left the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

## **2. Nature Center Activities (Snyder)**

Dawn reported on the following Nature Center activities:

- Tyler has been working with the Conservation Corps crew this week on prairie habitat on the hills at the Nature Center. The Foundation is funding this project. Dawn will send a link to board members for the Google photos showing the project progress.
- Staff, interns, and AmeriCorps employees have been providing virtual programs which have received many positive comments and an increased number of followers.
- The Naturalist position description is being developed.
- The Nature Center 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary is in October. No event planning has been done yet due to uncertainty with the COVID-19 situation.
- An exhibit booth has been reserved for the Woodbury County Fair, but no announcement has been made as to whether it will take place.
- In-person programs are being developed to incorporate new safety protocols.

## **3. Park Activities (Stehr)**

Brian reported on the following park activities:

- Parks have been busy since opening May 21. Most guests are following social distancing guidelines.
- Almost all food plots have been planted other than the late-season plots.

- Officers have been busy and have done a great job responding to several incidents, including a UTV accident at Little Sioux Park, a boating incident on the Little Sioux River, a drowning at Brown's Lake, a vehicle rollover on Snyder Bend Road, and an unresponsive camper at Snyder Bend Park. Brian shared a letter of appreciation from the Woodbury County Sheriff's Office that was sent to Officers Nate Silfies and Derek Bean for their assistance on the Little Sioux River rescue.
- Pollinator plots are being planted and will be mowed as needed throughout the summer.
- An incident happened recently when a staff member was cleaning off the Little Sioux Park boat ramp with the McCormick tractor and hadn't engaged the four-wheel drive. The tractor lost traction and slid into the river far enough for the it to take in water and stop the engine. Luckily, the damage was minimal, but required new piston rings, new gaskets, and honing of cylinder walls to remove rust.
- Brian received word from Children's Miracle Network and UnityPoint Health that replacement lifejackets will be provided for the lifejacket loaner station at Brown's Lake.

**ITEM R7. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

The above minutes were recorded by Dawn Bostwick.

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Recording Secretary, Dawn Bostwick

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Board Secretary, Suzan Boden

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Board Chair, Cindy Bennett