

**WOODBURY COUNTY, IOWA, CONSERVATION BOARD
MINUTES OF THE THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2021 BOARD MEETING
VIA ZOOM VIDEO CONFERENCE**

The following is a true copy of the minutes of the meeting of the Woodbury County, Iowa, Conservation Board held on Thursday, February 11, 2021, at the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center via Zoom video conference beginning at 4:00 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT (VIA ZOOM VIDEO CONFERENCE)

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

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

None

STAFF PRESENT

Dan Heissel, Brian Stehr, Dawn Snyder, and Dawn Bostwick

OTHERS PRESENT (VIA ZOOM VIDEO CONFERENCE)

Mark Monson, County Supervisor

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Gehling called the meeting to order at 4:08 p.m.

CORRESPONDENCE ITEMS

None

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None

ITEM R1. Approve Consent Agenda

MOTION by Chris, second by Cindy.

To approve the consent agenda, except for Item C2 because the January 2021 Claims and Expenditures report was omitted from the board packet.

VOTE: Aye: Aaron Gehling, Chris Zellmer-Zant, Cindy Bennett, Neil Stockfleth & Suzan Boden

Nay: None

Absent: None

The consent agenda was approved and involved the following items:

ITEM C1. Approve Minutes of the January 23, 2021 Meeting

ITEM C2. Approve the January 2021 Claims and Expenditures. (*Not included or approved.*)

ITEM C3. Receive and Place on File the January 2021 Financial/Budget Report and 2nd Quarter FY21 Reserve Fund Report.

ITEM C4. Acceptance of Gifts/Donations

- Mark Allard – Beer Collectibles:
Yellow Falstaff Beer plastic crate, Set of 6 small Budweiser glasses 1964, 11 Budweiser collectable steins
- Chris Zellmer-Zant – Children’s books
- Kingsley Garden Club – \$10 donation for gardens

ITEM R2. Oath of Office for Reappointed Board Member and Committee Assignments for 2021

Dan administered the Oath of Office to Chris Zellmer-Zant who has been reappointed to the board for another five-year term.

Chris also agreed to continue serving on the Woodbury County REAP committee and the Woodbury County Conservation Foundation.

ITEM R3. Campground Fee Increase - Continue Discussion (Dan/Brian)

Dan stated that he had hoped to have the statewide campground information from the association, but it is not yet available due to a death in the family of the state association director. Information will also be collected from other sources for neighboring states. This item was tabled until next month.

ITEM R4. Brown's Lake Residence – Basement – Informational

Dan stated that he had given authorization to Brian Stehr for Josh VanVoorst to finish the basement in the Brown's Lake residence. Josh was going to do the work, and the board would pay for materials. However, it was never done due to a miscommunication, and a question came up again at the long-range planning meeting.

Brian stated that a bedroom, family room and laundry room would be added in the Brown's Lake residence basement at a minimal cost. Josh put together a plan and estimated the cost at \$2,400. The estimate does not cover electrical work, egress window or flooring. It was noted that approximately \$1,200 of Menards rebates are available for purchasing supplies, and the remaining amount will be paid from the CIP fund. There was board consensus to proceed with the project.

ITEM R5. Capital Improvement Projects Update

1. Brown's Lake – Beach & Road Projects – Pursue Bonding Option W/Supervisors (Dan) – Action

Dan recapped last month's discussion about bonding for the Brown's Lake beach and roads project as he had been advised by Dennis Butler that the Supervisors will not be approving any big CIP projects in the future. It would be a 10-year reserve bond at approximately 1% interest and would be repaid with CIP funds generated by park user fees.

The project would include replacing all park and campground roads with 8,400 square yards of concrete, initially estimated at \$60/square yard or \$504,000 just for the concrete. The second part of the project would include finishing the beach and concessions building, which has been delayed due to COVID revenue losses. The estimate for finishing the beach, pouring sidewalks, and completing the concession building is just under \$300,000. The bond can go up to \$1.2 million without a public vote. Payments would start at approximately \$118,000-120,000 the first year if the full amount is used.

Additional projects that could be added would be the Brown's Lake playground replacement at \$100,000 and tornado shelters for the parks at \$34,000 each, not including the crane needed to set them.

MOTION by Neil, second by Suzan.

To authorize the Director to present a request to the Board of Supervisors to bond on the Brown's Lake roads, beach and concession stand project, including the Brown's Lake playground and tornado shelters for other parks, up to a total of \$1.2 million.⁴⁻²¹

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

2. Brown's Lake Shoreline & Pier Update – Informational

Dan reported that the Brown's Lake shoreline & pier project is currently at a standstill because of the below-zero weather. The fishing pier is framed, and the decking and railing will be done when it warms up. The contractor still needs to come back in the spring to remove roots and shape the shoreline slope at 3.5:1. Dan stated that there was a misunderstanding in the original plans, and he expected it all to be at 4:1, not just the riprap. He will get a cost estimate to go ahead make the slope 4:1 while they are shaping it.

Dan stated that a time extension was granted by the Gilchrist Foundation. Chris noted that she knows someone local who does excavator and dozer work if needed in the future.

ITEM R6. Board member/staff reports

1. Administrative items

Dan reported on the following items:

a. March Meeting Date

The next meeting will be held at 4:00 p.m. on March 18, 2021, at the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center.

b. Acknowledgment of Thomas Cobb, Resource Tech, Little Sioux Park, Hiring & Starting Salary

Dan announced that Thomas Cobb has been hired as the Resource Tech at Little Sioux Park. His starting salary will be \$42,727 annually, with an increase to \$43,902 after 6 months as per the WCCB salary matrix. He has successfully completed his physical and background check requirements and is scheduled to start on March 1st.

MOTION by Cindy, second by Suzan.

To acknowledge the hiring of Thomas Cobb as Resource Technician at Little Sioux Park effective March 1, 2021 and approve his starting salary of \$42,727.⁵⁻²¹

⁴⁻²¹ To authorize the Director to present a request to the Board of Supervisors to bond on the Brown's Lake roads, beach and concession stand project, including the Brown's Lake playground and tornado shelters for other parks, up to a total of \$1.2 million.

⁵⁻²¹ To acknowledge the hiring of Thomas Cobb as Resource Technician at Little Sioux Park effective March 1, 2021 and approve his starting salary of \$42,727.

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

c. Land Acquisition Policy – Adopt?? – Action

Dan presented a land acquisition policy that he had previously put together for the state directors' association. He asked that the board refine and adopt it as a guide in evaluating property acquisitions with the same criteria used for each. After some discussion, the board agreed that it was a good starting point but that they would like to discuss it again at the March meeting.

d. Sign Material – Informational

Dan explained that WCCB has been buying plastic sign material from Clay County, saving much time in repairing and painting wooden park signs. Clay CCB originally bought the minimum quantity of 65 sheets and have sold out after four years. They don't intend to purchase more. Park staff would like to transition all of their wooden signs over to this material.

Brian did some research and found the company that sells the material. The minimum order is 65 sheets at a cost of \$277 per 4'x8' sheet or \$18,000. Dan would like to purchase the minimum amount and sell some to other counties. He sent an email to the 16 counties in this district to gauge their interest in purchasing some of the sheets. The material would be shipped to Sioux Falls and could be picked up there to avoid shipping charges. Dan will wait to see what the other CCB's say and keep the board updated.

e. Strategic Planning Follow-Up (Dan)

Dan reported that all staff have responded with their top five priorities for their management area, as well as their top five countywide. Dan is compiling the information and will email it to the board when complete. There will be separate lists for parks and environmental education. Dan asked board members to look it over, so it can be discussed at the March meeting.

f. FY22 Budget Update

Dan stated that he had spoken with Dennis Butler about the status of the department's FY22 budget and was told that nothing had been changed on it so far. The Supervisors will have their final budget review next Tuesday.

g. Old Business (Dan)

- Dan reported that he had received an email late yesterday afternoon from Heather Jobst at the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, and the Eric O'Connell property may be back on the table. Eric O'Connell contacted the INHF and may be willing to accept the original offer of \$3,200 per acre if it still stands. The property is 116 acres and sits less than a quarter mile from Unit 2 and about one mile from Unit 1 of the Oak Ridge complex. If the board chooses to honor the offer it made with the INHF in December, a special board meeting will be called to make a decision.
- Dan stated that the December financial/budget report that was approved last month has been corrected due to an error in IPERS withholding for Tyler Knight. The corrected statement was presented for approval.

MOTION by Neil, second by Suzan.

To approve the corrected December 2020 Financial/Budget Report as presented.⁶⁻²¹

VOTE: Aye: Aaron Gehling, Chris Zellmer-Zant, Cindy Bennett, Neil Stockfleth & Suzan Boden

Nay: None

Absent: None

- Dan reported that an unexpected \$3,200 interest deposit to the Conservation Reserve Fund lead to discovering a \$50,000 CD. When the interest deposit was noticed, Dan called former WCCB Director, Rick Schneider, and he recalled that when the old CIP fund was up to \$300,000 or more, the Treasurer's office would invest some of it in a CD. Dan then called the Treasurers office and confirmed that their records from the former Treasurer and Deputy Treasurer also indicated that the CD belonged to the conservation department and that they were told to keep renewing it and pay any interest to the Conservation Reserve fund. The current CD matures in December 2022. Dan documented this with an email to the Treasurer's office. A decision will need to be made prior to December 2022 as to whether to reinvest or cash it in. Dan suggested that the \$57,000 life insurance benefactor payment received recently could also be added to the CD. Aaron advised that CD rates will be going down and it may be wise to withdraw the money at maturity.

2. Park Activities (Stehr)

Brian reported on the following park activities:

- Officers have been completing their law enforcement continuing education for the year, and staff is scheduled for pesticide training.
- Brian will be working with officers to train them on body camera operation and policies before May.
- Little Sioux staff finished up the grinding project at Shagbark and will switch their focus to pruning trees in the park once the temperature gets into double digits.
- The grinder has been moved to Brown's Lake, and staff will be start grinding at Owego. The colder temperatures will allow access to areas that would otherwise be impossible to get to when the ground is not frozen. They will focus on areas that are scheduled for burns in the next year or two.
- All staff have been working on burn plans for the year, and Erik is working on getting maps ready.
- Most officers were able to get their COVID vaccinations this week.

5:38 p.m. Suzan left the meeting.

3. Nature Center Activities (Snyder)

Dawn reported on the following Nature Center activities:

- Staff has been planning for spring and summer.
- The intern posting deadline was Monday. Twelve applications were received for the habitat position, and approximately twenty applications were received for the naturalist positions. The exact number to be hired will be determined after looking more closely at the budget.
- Dawn was contacted by Jamie Uhl with the NRCS regarding partnering on the Trees for Schools program again this year.

⁶⁻²¹ To approve the corrected December 2020 Financial/Budget Report as presented.

- The Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center was featured on KCAU Channel 9 last night regarding the 1000 Hours Outside program. The Nature Center is promoting this national program to encourage people to match the number of hours spent in front of a screen. Tracking sheets are being provided on the WCCB website and through social media. Programs will be provided to aid in getting the outdoor time. Prize packages will be put together for those who turn in their tracker sheets at the end of the year.
- Dovetailing on the 1000 Hours Outside, Theresa and Kari are also designing a Wild Woodbury program to market our parks and encourage people to get out and explore.
- The WCCF annual meeting will be held at 2:00 p.m. on February 28th via Zoom. There will be a short business meeting, and then Kari Sandage, WCCB naturalist, will be talking about her time serving in Nicaragua with the Peace Corps.
- An email was sent to Woodbury county schools on Monday reminding them that naturalists are available to provide programs.

4. Board

Dan reported that there have been issues with the Nature Center HVAC system. Suter has spent a lot of time working on it, and a new compressor has been ordered. Dan was told that it would be covered under the warranty.

ITEM R7. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:51 p.m.

The above minutes were recorded by Dawn Bostwick.

Recording Secretary, Dawn Bostwick

Board Secretary, Neil Stockfleth

Board Chair, Aaron Gehling