

**WOODBURY COUNTY, IOWA, CONSERVATION BOARD
MINUTES OF THE TUESDAY, MAY 11, 2021 BOARD MEETING**

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

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Aaron Gehling, Chris Zellmer-Zant (via phone), Cindy Bennett, Neil Stockfleth, and Suzan Boden

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

None

STAFF PRESENT

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

OTHERS PRESENT

None

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Gehling called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m.

CORRESPONDENCE ITEMS

None

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None

ITEM R1. Approve Consent Agenda

MOTION by Suzan, second by Cindy.

To approve the consent agenda.

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:

- C1. Approve Minutes of the April 15, 2021 Regular Meeting.
- C2. Approve the April 2021 Claims and Expenditures
- C3. Receive and Place on File the April 2021 Financial/Budget Report and 3rd Quarter FY21 Reserve Fund Report
- C4. Acceptance of Gifts/Donations:
 - Kathy Noble for miscellaneous books, hiking poles, snowshoes, ice clamp-ons, framed print, walkie talkies and bison statue
 - Sioux City Garden Club for \$500 grant for nature center gardens for Native Plants
 - Loess Hills Wild Ones for native plants for nature center gardens
 - Sharon Nilges for \$100 for turtle adoption for one year

- MacDonald Smith Memorial gifts: (in addition to last month's report)
 - Thomas Gilbert \$200
 - Lance & Linda Coles \$20
- Larry Benne Memorial gifts:
 - Ronald Bartels \$50
 - Bruce & Jeanette Hopkins \$50
 - Vibeke Jensen & Lise Wagner \$100

ITEM R2. Little Sioux Park – Informational

Dan gave an update on the housing development being proposed by Supervisor Radig near Little Sioux Park. Radig was not present at the meeting a few years ago when the Supervisors agreed to transfer the property to Little Sioux Park in a 4-0 vote. Supervisor DeWitt is going to review the closed session recording to refresh his memory of the discussion surrounding the vote. The county engineer has now completed the agreement and sent it to the county attorney for review, which usually takes two weeks. Dan stated that Supervisor Radig sent his proposal to Mark Nahra for input but has never contacted anyone at the conservation department about it. Radig has also contacted David Gleiser to seek grant money for the \$20,000 development study.

ITEM R3. Oak Ridge Dam – Informational

Dan presented photos of the several beaver dams and blowout at the Oak Ridge dam. He has been working with the county engineer's office on the plans to repair it. He does not intend to remove the beaver dams because of the silt. There was brief discussion about how to drain the sediment. Dan will continue to work with Ben to get his recommendations and to request a Hungry Canyons grant.

ITEM R4. Acknowledge the appointment of Seasonal Park Security Guards as Temporary Peace Officers for summer season: May 28 – September 6, 2021 – Action

Dan announced the five 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 Suzan, second by Neil.

To designate the following seasonal park security guards as temporary peace officers for the 2021 season (May 28 – September 6): Molly Bixenman, Lance Dunkelberger, Darin Foster, Travis Hutzell, and Joshua Martin.¹⁴⁻²¹

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

¹⁴⁻²¹ To designate the following seasonal park security guards as temporary peace officers for the 2021 season (May 28 – September 6): Molly Bixenman, Lance Dunkelberger, Darin Foster, Travis Hutzell, and Joshua Martin.

ITEM R5. Capital Improvement Projects Update

1. Brown's Lake – Beach & Road/Campground Projects

Dan updated board members on the Brown's Lake campground and roads project. The road is being designed by Secondary Roads. Bids should be let this summer with construction beginning next spring. Aaron reported that he had received a comment from a farmer who moves equipment on the main road about the possibility of widening the road as he is barely missing mailboxes even with his equipment folded up. Dan stated that he will mention it to Ben, but it may not be possible due to space constraints.

Dan stated that the concession stand project has been value engineered and a local contractor is checking prices to get a rough estimate at current prices. Contractors are seeing a 130% increase in lumber prices, as well as supply shortages.

Brown's Lake – Survey

In a previous meeting, the board discussed the possibility of moving the Brown's Lake beach boundary line back to where the assessor shows it to be on Beacon. Doug Mordhorst has been working on a survey but has been struggling to get legal documentation on the two east pins. He has been provided everything that was found in department files.

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

Dan provided drone photos of the Brown's Lake shoreline project. Dan stated that he thought the trail had been taken out of the contract but found out this week that it was left in. The trail has been installed and is made of crushed quartz, which can be a good base for concrete later if desired. The sidewalk does not need railings because it has less than a 5% slope. Two loads of quartz were also put around the tube and tapered down over the fence.

Discussion was held regarding placement of the buoys in Brown's Lake. Dan explained that the buoys have been in the wrong place for many years, and the DNR has recently moved them to the correct place, changing the boating area significantly. It was stated that the "no wake zone" now completely covers the front of the campground and encompasses the deepest part of the lake. The public is not very happy about it, but Steve is aware. Dan feels that the DNR may be open to negotiation with the landowners.

Dan stated that while he was at Brown's Lake today, a landscaper showed up to measure for the seeding and erosion control, despite it being removed from the contract. Dan called the engineer and was told that Dixon wasn't aware it had been removed and had lined up the contractor. Since they were already there, a quote was provided which came in at \$9,000. The line item in the contract had been \$12,500. It was determined to still be more cost efficient to have WCCB staff complete the seeding and mulch. Dan called Clay County Conservation to ask about renting their hydro-seeder, and they offered to lend it at no cost. Brian put together a cost estimate of \$4,801 for staff to complete the project. The rolled netting won't be used as it isn't safe for animals or children and the mowers tend to catch on it. The seeded area will need to be fenced off until well established.

3. Snyder Bend Status – Informational

Dan reported that cabin cancellation requests are coming in due to the low lake level and fish odor. Camping has also been down at Snyder Bend with only seven campers on opening weekend.

Dan had a discussion with Ben Wallace today and found out he had looked at Snyder Bend yesterday. The DNR is trying to get an air boat out of Bellevue to avoid stirring up the mud and making the chemicals less effective. Dan couldn't get a firm timetable for when it will be shocked. He was told they wouldn't be able to stock it until fall and were worried that other people would add fish prior to that. They only plan to fill it a couple feet at first to allow for revegetation. Dan asked him to put a Zoom meeting together with the stake holders and pushed him to get it done to avoid missing the opportunity to work with MidAmerican.

Dan has been fielding calls from media and the public. During a television interview last week, he stated that the DNR has a plan in place and asked the public to be patient.

4. Pond Restoration – Action

Dan reported that when contractors dewatered the Salsness pond to install the tube, the situation was found to be much worse than thought. Brian explained the dredging process suggested by the contractor to remove the silt and haul it across the road to be spread out on the ten-acre property and used for food plots. The contractor would require a two-day minimum and estimate removing 80 cubic yards per hour at a cost of \$1,200 per hour or a minimum of \$20,000. Various options were discussed. The board decided by consensus to not clean out the pond and took no action at this time.

ITEM R6. Board member/staff reports

1. Administrative items

Dan reported on the following items:

a. June Meeting Date

The next meeting will be held at 4:00 p.m. on June 16, 2021, at Brown's Lake–Bigelow Park.

b. Nature Center Rentals – Staff Recommendations

Dan presented recommendations from staff to allow Nature Center classroom rentals beginning May 15th with a 30-person capacity per room or 60-person capacity for the full room, which is 50% of the building code capacity. They also recommend lifting capacity restrictions in the gallery. Masks will continue to be recommended, but not required. In-person program attendance will continue to be limited with many programs being held outdoors. Questions were raised by board members about opening fully, but it was agreed to ease into it for 30 days and reassess at the next board meeting.

MOTION by Suzan, second by Neil.

To approve and adopt the easing of nature center COVID-19 restrictions to allow for classroom rentals at a 30-person per room capacity beginning May 15, 2021, and to remove the current gallery capacity restrictions, all of which will be reassessed at the next board meeting.¹⁵⁻²¹

VOTE: Aye: Aaron Gehling, Chris Zellmer-Zant (via phone), Cindy Bennett,
Neil Stockfleth, and Suzan Boden

Nay: None

Absent: None

¹⁵⁻²¹ To approve and adopt the easing of nature center COVID-19 restrictions to allow for classroom rentals at a 30-person per room capacity beginning May 15, 2021, and to remove the current gallery capacity restrictions, all of which will be reassessed at the next board meeting.

c. Nature Center Rentals – Deposit discussion

Dan stated that in a previous meeting the board discussed doing away with nature center rental deposits, but he couldn't recall any action being taken. He recommends doing away with deposits and making sure damage liability is addressed in the rental contract. The county attorney will be consulted to approve the contract language.

MOTION by Cindy, second by Neil.

To approve discontinuation of collecting deposits for nature center rentals and to amend the contract language to assign to the renter responsibility for all damages including attorney fees and costs.¹⁶⁻²¹

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

d. Grant Updates

Dan stated that he would be submitting applications for Habitat Stamp and Pheasants Forever grants at the end of the month for the Briese property.

He also reported that the Zook grant is on hold until a deed correction is done. Dan Moore discovered that one line had been omitted in the legal description. Once the deed correction is done, Dan will contact Bruce Zook and his wife to get it signed.

e. Old Business – INHF Land Updates

Dan gave an update on the status of the O'Connell property purchase. There was an issue with the warranty deed, but the correct deed was later located and the deal was moving forward. However, as of this morning, it appears that Mr. O'Connell wants to back out. Discussion was held regarding the process of breaking the contract and what will be required.

MOTION by Neil, second by Suzan.

To release seller from the O'Connell property purchase contract with the stipulation that seller reimburses the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation for the earnest money and that seller signs a recordable document granting the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation right of first refusal on the property. The board also directs staff to strongly pursue a conservation easement on the parcel.¹⁷⁻²¹

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

¹⁶⁻²¹ To approve discontinuation of collecting deposits for nature center rentals and to amend the contract language to assign to the renter responsibility for all damages including attorney fees and costs.

¹⁷⁻²¹ To release seller from the O'Connell property purchase contract with the stipulation that seller reimburses the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation for the earnest money and that seller signs a recordable document granting the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation right of first refusal on the property. The board also directs staff to strongly pursue a conservation easement on the parcel.

f. Other Business

Discussion was held regarding the availability of a six-acre parcel near Oto that could be used for a boat ramp. The asking price is \$5,000 per acre. The property also has a CRP contract at \$300 per acre which would need to be bought out before developing it for a boat ramp. Dan stated that water access grants are available to help with the boat ramp costs.

(Chris left the meeting.)

MOTION by Aaron, second by Cindy.

To approve and authorize the purchase offer of \$2,500 per acre and naming rights for a six-acre parcel near Oto to be developed as a boat ramp.¹⁸⁻²¹

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

2. Nature Center Activities

Dawn reported on the following Nature Center activities:

- School field trips have begun.
- Summer camp registrations have gone well. Only four spots are left, but there are fewer camps than usual.
- Programs are being planned in the parks for youth and families, as well as at the nature center. The full calendar will be on the website.
- Four Morningside College students participated in a semester-long project to develop media plans for WCCB. They produced very useable products, including layouts and designs to be used for new brochures and a new foundation logo.
- A relationship is being cultivated with an unpaid social media intern from Briar Cliff through a contact at Powell Broadcasting.
- Summer interns start on May 24th along with the AmeriCorps intern.
- Plants totaling \$700 were purchased for the garden revision. The Sioux City Garden Club donated \$500 towards that project.
- Theresa and Dawn are working on a Siouxland Community Foundation grant for the Tale Trail. The maximum award is \$5,000. Dawn is pursuing other donations as well.
- Staff has been focusing on summer programs and activities. More requests are coming in for rentals.
- Nature center staff have been working on a cleaning and sanitizing regimen and using precautions.
- Nature Calls will be held at the Sioux City Convention Center on September 18. Appreciation was expressed to board members for their help. Sponsorships have been coming in. A meeting will be held at the convention center on Wednesday, May 19th.
- Aaron gave his compliments to Dawn and staff on the Nature Calls packets being professional and very well done.
- Marilyn Milbrodt observed her 24-year anniversary as part-time nature center receptionist on April 24th.

¹⁸⁻²¹ To approve and authorize the purchase offer of \$2,500 per acre and naming rights for a six-acre parcel near Oto to be developed as a boat ramp.

3. Park Activities

Brian reported on the following park activities:

- Parks are open. Camping kickoff was well attended except for Snyder Bend.
- Attendance was down last weekend, but it was probably weather related.
- Staff has been pushing hard to get as many spring burns done as possible.
- Field staff participated in cooperative burn week at the end of April. Over the week, 1300 acres were burned by the 50+ people who attended. The cooperative burn gives staff experience and the opportunity to learn from other people. Over 300 acres were burned just in Woodbury County on parcels couldn't have been done without the extra help. Next year's burn week will take place in the southern loess hills.
- Staff has started working on food plots, especially at Owego.
- Staff met with the well driller at Fowler Forest, and he will be starting work later this week.
- Tyler Knight graduated from the Iowa Law Enforcement Academy on April 21st.
- The UTV slide-in unit was picked up. It was tested on a burn at the nature center and performed very well. The new trailer for the nature center was also picked up.
- Staff will be doing some hydroseeding at Brown's Lake and at the dam in places equipment can't get to.

ITEM R7. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:10 p.m.

The above minutes were recorded by Dawn Bostwick.

Recording Secretary, Dawn Bostwick

Board Secretary, Neil Stockfleth

Board Chair, Aaron Gehling