

**WOODBURY COUNTY, IOWA, CONSERVATION BOARD
MINUTES OF THE THURSDAY, APRIL 21, 2022, BOARD MEETING**

The following is a true copy of the minutes of the meeting of the Woodbury County, Iowa, Conservation Board held on Thursday, April 21, 2022, at the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center beginning at 4:00 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Aaron Gehling (via Zoom), Chris Zellmer-Zant (via Zoom), Cindy Bennett, and Tom Limoges

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

Neil Stockfleth

STAFF PRESENT

Dan Heissel, Brian Stehr, Theresa Kruid and Dawn Bostwick

OTHERS PRESENT

Jeremy Taylor, County Supervisor/Conservation Board Liaison

CALL TO ORDER

Secretary Cindy called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m.

CORRESPONDENCE ITEMS

None

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None

Dan provided an amended agenda which rearranged the order to ensure that all action items could be addressed while quorum is maintained due to board member time constraints. Item R5.2 a, b & c and Item R6.1 b & c were moved up to immediately follow Item R3.

ITEM R1. Approve Consent Agenda

MOTION by Tom, second by Chris.

To approve the consent agenda.

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

The consent agenda was approved and involved the following items:

- C1. Approve Minutes of the March 17, 2022 Regular Meeting.
- C2. Approve the March 2022 Claims and Expenditures
- C3. Receive and Place on File the March 2022 Financial/Budget Report
- C4. Acceptance of Gifts/Donations:
 - Ruth Rose \$100 for Garnetta Snyder memorial
 - Gary Lemoine \$100 for Tale Trail books

- Paul Betsworth \$40 for Barred Owl for 3 months– named Christine Betsworth & Charlee Bertrand as sponsors
- Barb Schultz for plastic containers for education
- Mark & Susan Nielsen for \$200 memorial for Ronald Dohrman for education
- Loess Hills Audubon Society for \$1,000 grant for Wildlife Viewing Scope at Nature Center

ITEM R2. Marilyn Milbrodt Retirement – Replacement – Cause for Matrix change

Dan announced that Marilyn Milbrodt, receptionist of 25 years, has decided to retire. He noted that the receptionist salary matrixes are very outdated and need to be adjusted prior to hiring a replacement. He recommended that a receptionist 2 position be created with that matrix starting at \$16.25 per hour and increasing 3% per step for six steps. He noted that the starting hourly wage for the new position is \$2.13/hour below the FY23 budgeted amount. Beginning July 1st, the current receptionist will be at \$18.38/hour and the receptionist/volunteer coordinator will be at \$19.26/hour. The proposed matrixes for these positions would start with the FY23 budgeted hourly wage and increase 3% at each of the six annual steps.

Chris asked to see comparisons from other county conservation boards. Aaron stated that he had recently filled similar positions for his bank, and these rates are in line with what he found regionally. Cindy noted that the school district has also recently increased wages for para positions.

MOTION by Tom, second by Aaron.

To approve the salary matrixes for receptionist 1, receptionist 2 and volunteer coordinator/receptionist positions as presented.²²⁻⁹

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

ITEM R3. Consideration and Approval of Nature Center Security Camera System

As requested at last month's meeting, expanded bids were collected for a security camera system at the nature center. Brian presented the bids received from ECI, Thompson and Midwest Alarm. The project was divided into two parts: part 1 for parking lot cameras only and part 2 for cameras inside the nature center with additional south and west outside cameras. Dan reported that he spoke with Kenny Schmitz from Building Services as the board had requested. Kenny understood the need for the system but said he wouldn't be able to budget for it until fiscal year 2024.

Dan and Brian recommended accepting the low bid from ECI of \$13,974.74 for the whole project, but only proceeding with part 1 at a cost of \$8,744.85 at this time. Then during the FY24 budget process, a CIP improvement request would be submitted to the board of supervisors to complete part 2 at a cost of \$5,229.89.

Chris arrived and assumed the duties of chairperson.

After discussion about the possibility of technology changes, additional software upgrades and license fees if done separately, Jeremy suggested that he present a request to the supervisors now to cover the cost of part 2 so the entire system could be installed at the same time.

²²⁻⁹ To approve the salary matrixes for receptionist 1, receptionist 2 and volunteer coordinator/receptionist positions as presented.

MOTION by Cindy, second by Tom.

To approve the nature center security camera proposal from ECI at a total cost of \$13,974.74, with the understanding that \$8,744.85 will be paid from the nature center fund, and the remaining \$5,229.89 will be requested from the board of supervisors.²²⁻¹⁰

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

ITEM R5. 2. Little Sioux Park

a. Engineering Scope of Services for Campgrounds

Dan reported that discussion was held at the last board meeting regarding using ARPA funds to install water and sewer hookups at Little Sioux, Southwood and Snyder Bend campgrounds. He presented two engineering scope of services agreements from JEO Consulting, one for Riverside campground which needs only sewer added at a cost of \$59,400 and one for Bellamy campground which needs a total overhaul and design to add water, sewer and electric at a cost of \$94,900. They will also be adding a new septic system for the expansion that is being considered for the future. The two agreements together are \$154,300 for both Little Sioux campgrounds.

Jeremy contacted Dan earlier in the week about the Destination Iowa grant which has a 60/40 match on funds. Engineering fees are covered with that grant and can also be paid with ARPA funds.

Dan noted that the JEO fees do not have to be paid in full up front, but that they will invoice the work as it is done. He stated that Jeremy has been supportive of using ARPA funds and is confident that it will be approved by the supervisors. Dan is trying to get the roads included as well, but research is being done on whether that can be covered.

Dan presented an additional scope of services agreement with JEO for Brown's Lake. He explained that the local sanitarian didn't feel comfortable permitting the concession stand because her estimation of 1300 gallons per day was too close to the maximum of 1500 gallons per day. She referred it to the DNR, who told Dan that it needs to be a permitted system and be designed by an engineer. JEO doesn't believe it will be over 1500 gallons a day, but they will work with the DNR.

The Brown's Lake scope of services is for a maximum of \$10,000 to be billed monthly on an hourly basis for work performed. The engineer believes it will be closer to \$5,000-6,000. This would be paid out of the \$1.2 million loan that is funding the Brown's Lake project.

MOTION by Tom, second by Cindy.

To approve the Scope of Services agreement with JEO Consulting Group for the Brown's Lake concession stand septic system at a \$10,000 maximum cost.²²⁻¹¹

²²⁻¹⁰ To approve the nature center security camera proposal from ECI at a total cost of \$13,974.74, with the understanding that \$8,744.85 will be paid from the nature center fund, and the remaining \$5,229.89 will be requested from the board of supervisors.

²²⁻¹¹ To approve the Scope of Services agreement with JEO Consulting Group for the Brown's Lake concession stand septic system at a \$10,000 maximum cost.

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

Dan also noted that Brown's Lake and Little Sioux have never been permitted as a public water system. They have been operated under the old system for 25 people per day or less where it is shock chlorinated and tested once a year. It has come to his attention that these parks need to be permitted as public water systems and be tested quarterly which will also require park staff to be certified water operators as Dan and Brian are for the nature center.

Dan stated that the request for ARPA funds for the Little Sioux campground project would be on the supervisors' agenda for May 3rd and that the Destination Iowa grant could possibly be used to leverage the ARPA funds. He confirmed that a commitment would not be made with JEO until the ARPA funds are approved by the supervisors.

Discussion was held regarding the information needed for the request to the supervisors and the specific requirements of ARPA fund usage. Dan reported that he anticipates a \$100,000-200,000 increase in camping revenue after the upgrade. Dan will get a rough cost estimate to present to the supervisors and submit a grant application to the Destination Iowa program as close to the May 9th opening as he is able.

MOTION by Tom, second by Cindy.

To approve the two Scope of Services agreements with JEO Consulting Group for Riverside and Bellamy campgrounds at Little Sioux Park for a total cost of \$154,300 contingent upon availability of funds.²²⁻¹²

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

b. Funding for Campground Upgrades/Road Replacement

Discussed with previous item.

c. Apply for Destination Iowa Grant for Updates to Campground and Roads

Dan asked for authorization to submit a Destination Iowa grant request as discussed earlier.

MOTION by Aaron, second by Cindy.

To authorize Dan Heissel to apply for a Destination Iowa grant for the Little Sioux Park campground upgrades and roads.²²⁻¹³

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

²²⁻¹² To approve the two Scope of Services agreements with JEO Consulting Group for Riverside and Bellamy campgrounds at Little Sioux Park for a total cost of \$154,300 contingent upon availability of funds.

²²⁻¹³ To authorize Dan Heissel to apply for a Destination Iowa grant for the Little Sioux Park campground upgrades and roads.

ITEM R6. 1. Administrative Items

b. Approval of Cooperative Agreement with DNR on Briese Habitat Stamp Grant

Dan reported that he had received the cooperative agreement with the Iowa DNR for the Briese property Habitat Stamp grant for \$215,660.

MOTION by Tom, second by Aaron.

To approve the cooperative agreement with the Iowa DNR for the Briese property Habitat Stamp grant.²²⁻¹⁴

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

Dan also reported that he received the Briese appraisal and sent it to the DNR. He has the paperwork ready for the NAWCA grant reimbursement of \$50,000 and has already received \$10,000 from both the local chapter and state council of Pheasants Forever. Once the appraisal approval is received from the DNR, Dan will request payment to the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation and submit the rest of the funds to finalize the purchase solely from grants using no tax dollars.

c. Sand Pit North of Correctionville

Dan stated that he was approached by the owner of a 72-acre sandpit three miles north of Correctionville along the Little Sioux River who wants to sell the property for \$300,000, plus an additional \$100,000 if the river rock on the property is kept. Dan reported that while it looked great from the aerial photo, an onsite visit revealed many rock, sand, and asphalt piles that he estimated would cost approximately \$200,000 to do the work necessary to make it suitable for recreation or even for planting. Dan and Brian do not recommend pursuing the property at this price, which equates to \$4,286/acre. No action was taken.

Aaron left the meeting.

ITEM R4. Owego Drainage Ditch Cleanout

Dan has been informed by the NRCS that the drainage district plans to clean out the Garretson ditch that runs north and south through Owego and grade the bank to a 5:1 slope. There will be some damage to habitat, but they are required to seed it back when they are done. The drainage taxes will likely be increased accordingly but not for a year and a half. The engineering firm working on it will have a public hearing. Tom mentioned that there are deep holes in that area, and it would be great if they could add extra dirt to fill those holes. Brian also noted that the ditch that runs along the road hasn't been draining, and Josh VanVoorst has contacted the drainage district about possibly cleaning that out too.

²²⁻¹⁴ To approve the cooperative agreement with the Iowa DNR for the Briese property Habitat Stamp grant.

ITEM R5. Capital Improvement Projects Update

1. Brown's Lake

a. Road Project

Dan reported that the Brown's Lake road project has been started and is going well. Dan discussed the progress and showed a drone video. The contractor is supposed to be done next week, so staff can seed it. Dan has been keeping the residents up to date with emails. Secondary Roads is going to help fix a drainage issue that has been ongoing.

b. Campground Project

Dan gave an update on the Brown's Lake campground project. The electrician will be hooking up the sewer pumps next week. Staff will finish up the dirt work and seed it. Once roads are poured, staff will put rock on the pads and finish grading along the roads.

c. Concession Project

Dan stated that the contractor has poured the concession stand footings. The plumber is supposed to come in this week to install the sub-earth plumbing and get it ready to pour the floor. The issue with the septic system should be taken care of with the scope of services agreement approved earlier. Dan stated that he had been hesitant to order the dock and paddle boats etc. due to the septic permit issue, but he has decided to go forward on placing those orders. He is also planning to proceed with advertising the four part-time concession worker positions.

d. Oak Ridge Unit One Dam Repair

Construction for the Oak Ridge dam repair was supposed to begin April 1st, but the contractor has been having labor issues. He wanted to push back until fall, but he was informed that there is a penalty if the project is not completed by July. Conservation staff has cleared trees and shrubs to provide access. The project is being managed by the engineer's office. WCCB is responsible for the 15% match when they are done.

ITEM R6. Board member/staff reports

1. Administrative items

Dan reported on the following items:

a. May Meeting Date

The next meeting will be held at 4:00 p.m. on May 12, 2022, at the nature center or possibly at Brown's Lake depending on the weather and construction progress.

d. Old Business

None

e. Other Business

Discussion was held regarding current and anticipated future lake levels at Snyder Bend and the resulting effect on campground and cabin use.

Tom left the meeting. Quorum was no longer met, but there were no further action items. The meeting continued with reports only.

2. Nature Center Activities

Theresa reported on the following Nature Center activities:

- The programs and visitors report for March was presented.
- Nature Calls packets were distributed to board members.
- Nature Calls sponsorships received to date total \$2,550, and the goal is \$26,000.
- Grants of \$1,000 each were received from the Junior League and the Loess Hills Audubon Society for a wildlife viewing scope for the nature center deck. A private donor will be covering the balance.
- A MRHD grant application has been submitted for an outdoor learning shelter. The results will be announced in mid-May.
- The application deadline for the part-time receptionist position is tomorrow.
- Kari and Thresa have been busy with school programs. Some requests had to be turned down which has led to some internal discussions about other ways to schedule in the future.
- A new Wild N Woodsy art club has been introduced featuring art project inspired by nature, such as making paper, natural egg dying, flower and leaf pounding. There will be one more in May and then it will resume in the fall.
- Summer camp general registration started last Thursday, and camps are already 75% full with about 50 spaces left.
- Three summer interns will be starting on May 23 and one more on June 1st.
- A current calendar of events was distributed.
- The tale trail installation will start soon depending on weather. Several books have been donated. Seven are completely ready to go, and ten more need to be mounted.
- Tyler and Brian will be installing the dog-friendly water station soon. This will alleviate the problem of people leaving the hydrant on because it has an auto shut-off. It was paid for by Siouland Big Give and private donors.
- A screech owl with broken wing and eye injuries was rescued at Stone Park and transported to SOAR. Unfortunately, its injuries are permanent, and it will not be able to be released. It will be returned to the nature center for permanent care and educational purposes.
- A volunteer recognition ice cream social will be held at the nature center on Thursday, June 9th from 5-7 p.m. This event hasn't been held the last two years, so this recognition will include volunteers from 2019, 2020, and 2021.

3. Park Activities

Brian reported on the following park activities:

- Campgrounds open on April 29th this year. The camping kickoff will take place the following weekend. Park staff have been busy getting the parks ready to open.
- Because Woodbury County is still in a burn ban, staff hasn't been able to complete any prescribed fires. Snyder Bend & Brown's Lake staff have been working with the Hornick fire chief to get a burn permit for Owego yet and hope to accomplish that before nesting season.
- Three staff members participated in cooperative burn week in southern Iowa during the first week of April. They were only able to burn on Monday and Friday due to windy conditions, but training was provided on the other days. Close to 200 acres were burned.
- Public hunting signage was put up on the Salsness property in time for turkey hunting. It has been well used so far.

- Southwood staff has been cutting cedars and working on prairie areas.
- Brown’s Lake and Snyder Bend staff worked on finalizing pads that had settled over the winter. Once the road is done, they will be working on finishing up the campground to open most of it as quickly as possible.
- Little Sioux staff have been repairing and staining tables and doing tree trimming in the campgrounds. They built new target stands for the shooting range to replace ones that have gotten shot up over time.
- The mower ordered last summer from Midwest Honda Kubota has finally been shipped but hasn’t been delivered yet.
- The half-ton truck from Knoepfler Chevrolet is scheduled to be built this week, however, they are having trouble getting trucks delivered after they are built. They hope to deliver it before end of June.
- Dan noted that equipment must be delivered before June 30 to use funds from the current fiscal year. Dan been told by the budget director that they can do restrictive reserve funds with a motion from this board and the supervisors that would allow funds to be held for the following year if delivered in July.
- The chassis cab diesel truck from Knoepfler will not get built because it was too close to the model year change. It will have to be rebid.
- Barry Motors hasn’t heard anything about a build date on the third truck. He said that retail has been getting priority over fleet vehicles.
- Officers received training today for administering Narcan/Naloxone. Doses are free for officers from Iowa Department of Public Health. Brian has obtained two doses for each officer already and will try to get an additional two doses each. Opioid and fentanyl use is high in this area. Fentanyl can cause an overdose if touched with bare skin, so our officers could possibly need a dose for themselves.

4. Board Information

None

5. Other Business

None

ITEM R7. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:53 p.m.

The above minutes were recorded by Dawn Bostwick.

Recording Secretary, Dawn Bostwick

Board Secretary, Cindy Bennett

Board Chair, Neil Stockfleth