WOODBURY COUNTY, IOWA, CONSERVATION BOARD
MINUTES OF THE THURSDAY, JANUARY 9, 2025, BOARD MEETING

The following is a true copy of the minutes of the meeting of the Woodbury County, Iowa, Conservation Board held on Thursday, January 9, 2025, at the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center beginning at 4:00 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT
Chris Zellmer-Zant, Cindy Bennett, Neil Stockfleth, and Tom Limoges

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT
Aaron Gehling

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

OTHERS PRESENT
Mark Nelson, County Supervisor/Conservation Board Liaison (via phone)

CALL TO ORDER
Chairperson Bennett called the meeting to order at 4:04 p.m.

CORRESPONDENCE ITEMS
None

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
None

ITEM R1. Approve Consent Agenda

It was noted that the financial report and claims were amended to account for a $17.40 credit from Long Lines that was posted by the auditor's office after the board materials were sent out.

MOTION by Neil, second by Tom

To approve the consent agenda.

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

The consent agenda was approved and involved the following items:

C1. Approve Minutes of the December 12, 2024, Regular Meeting

C2. Approve the December 2024 Claims and Expenditures

C3. Receive and Place on File the December 2024 Financial/Budget Report & 2nd Quarter FY 24-25 Reserve Fund Report

C4. Acceptance of Gifts/Donations:

- $5,000 from Sylvia Kuennen for John Cordoue Memorial, designated for Summer Interns (via WCCF)
- $1,500 from Tim Chwirka for Matthew Chwirka Memorial, designated for fish cleaning station at Brown's Lake and Program/Field Trip Scholarships (via WCCF)
- $140 Total for Lauren Dean Johnson Memorial (via WCCF)
  - $40 from Jeff & Teresa Rippentrop
  - $50 from Mitch & Jodie Jensen
  - $50 from Kay & Gary Kinkel
- $50 from Anonymous
- $50 from Jim & Helen Anderson for Summer Camps
- $200 from Jason Wolfe for Barred Owl & Screech Owl Adoption
- $175 from Chris Zellmer-Zant for Aquarium & 3-Toed Box Turtle Adoption (for Easton & Wessen Zant)
- $130 from Sonja Olson for Birdfeeders & Screech Owl Adoption (for Karen Quirk, Jeff Olson & Nancy Shulenberger)
- $100 from Alex Uhl Family for Snakes adoption
- Black Squirrel Study Skin mount from Bill Zales
- 3 bags of popcorn from JollyTime Pop Corn Co.
- First Aid Supplies from Sylvia Kuennen

ITEM R2. Election of Board Officers and Committee Assignments for 2025

Dan reviewed the traditional rotation of officers stating that Tom Limoges would take the position of Chair, Aaron Gehling would move to Vice Chair, and Neil Stockfleth would serve as Secretary.

MOTION by Chris, second by Neil.

To accept the slate of officers for 2025 as presented.[25-1]

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

Tom assumed the role of Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

Tom Limoges administered the oath of office to Neil Stockfleth as he has been reappointed by the board of supervisors to the conservation board for another five-year term.

Dan explained that Chris, as board member, and Dan, as staff member, are the REAP committee appointees, Chris is the current board representative on the foundation board, and all board members are on the endowment committee. Chris agreed to remain on both the REAP Committee and Woodbury County Conservation Foundation Board.

Dan also reported that Dawn Snyder is resigning from the Loess Hills Alliance board in March. Erik Lindsay will be taking her place as the employee representative on the board as he has been serving on the stewardship committee. Tom Limoges has been appointed by the board of supervisors to replace another board member on the Loess Hills Alliance board.

MOTION by Chris, second by Cindy

To appoint Chris Zellmer-Zant as the board representative for the REAP committee and the Woodbury County Conservation Foundation board and to appoint all board members to the endowment committee.[25-2]

[25-1] To accept the slate of officers for 2025 as presented.
[25-2] To appoint Chris Zellmer-Zant as the board representative for the REAP committee and the Woodbury County Conservation Foundation board and to appoint all board members to the endowment committee.

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

ITEM R3. Little Sioux Park Update – Tree Clearing, Concession

Dan presented photos and reported that the trees had been cleared at Little Sioux Park as previously discussed at the December board meeting. Holly Brown Construction cleared the area after staff had cleared the smaller trees. The original quote was $12,850 but will end up being less because of the work done by conservation staff. Some stumps were ground, and some were pulled. Everything that was piled up has already been burned by staff. Dan stated that gravel, sand, and black dirt will be brought in to get it filled and leveled up, but the hauling may need to be contracted out because of the amount of fill needed.

MOTION by Neil, second by Cindy.

To authorize and approve the invoice from Holly Brown for removal of cottonwood trees at Little Sioux Park.[25-3]

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

Dan presented CAD drawings for the proposed concession stand at Little Sioux Park. Brian stated that the back section is 12' high, because the canoe trailer would be stored there. Dan stated that the contractor's bid six months ago was $85,000, but that concrete prices are expected to go up again in the spring.

Chris asked about making the whole building 12' tall rather than having the two levels. Mark stated that he thinks it will be so popular that additional seating for dining may be desired later.

Dan stated that approximately 3-4 seasonal staff will be needed, but no additional funding will need to be requested from the supervisors because of unfilled seasonal staff positions that can be reallocated. He also noted that because of a recent rule change, projects under $165,000 do not require bids. Brandon Deeds has it tentatively scheduled for April or May.

Mark asked about bicycle rentals. Dan said he likes the idea but that it may need to be a cooperative venture with a bike shop and will require more research. Questions were raised about whether the building would be large enough. Dan agreed to have the contractor quote it at different sizes.

MOTION by Neil, second by Chris.

To authorize the director to proceed in gathering quotes for construction of a concession stand building at Little Sioux Park as discussed.[25-4]

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

[25-3] To authorize and approve the invoice from Holly Brown for removal of cottonwood trees at Little Sioux Park.
[25-4] To authorize the director to proceed in gathering quotes for construction of a concession stand building at Little Sioux Park as discussed.

ITEM R4. Sheriff's Department Special Deputy Agreement

Dan presented an agreement that was recently negotiated with the sheriff's department to cover conservation officers when assisting the sheriff's office or when working outside their bailiwick. As needed on an individual incident basis, the conservation officer will be appointed as a special deputy by the highest-ranking sheriff's deputy on duty. Once the incident is over, everything will go back to normal. The agreement has been approved by the county attorney and signed by the sheriff and conservation director. In January or February, the sheriff will hold a training for all conservation officers.

MOTION by Neil, second by Chris

To approve and adopt the Sheriff's Department Special Deputies Agreement as part of the Woodbury County Conservation Board Law Enforcement Policy to allow officers to perform duties as needed.[25-5]

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

Dan noted that Woodbury will be one of the first counties to figure this out and that other counties will be looking at this agreement as a model.

ITEM R5. Department Reports

1. Nature Center Activities

Theresa reported on the following Nature Center activities:

- The programs and visitors report for December was presented. The number of visitors was lower due to having to cancel Winter Fun Day which is usually 150-400 people. There was ice that weekend, so it was decided to cancel for safety.
- End of year donations have been coming in.
- Staff anniversaries: Theresa Kruid - 28 years, Tyler Flammang - 9 years, and Pam Pfautsch - 29 years. Pam is currently the most tenured employee.
- Field trips are slower at this time of year.
- The nature center is partnering with Sioux City Parks and Recreation to lead snowshoe programs at Cone Park.
- The nature center is also partnering with Loess Hills Wild Ones on a series of programs.
- Staff has been working with Brown Knows Designs on the exhibit upgrades and awaiting a new estimate due to possible additional panels.
- Tyler has been building a cabinet for a Loess Hills Wild Ones seed share library. The library will be housed in the lower level of the nature center and stocked with native seeds that will be available to the public.
- The foundation board met in December. They have been struggling to find a presenter for the annual meeting.
- Photos were shown of possible 3D animal models to be incorporated in the exhibits.
- The seasonal position opening was posted for four summer interns.

[25-5] To approve and adopt the Sheriff's Department Special Deputies Agreement as part of the Woodbury County Conservation Board Law Enforcement Policy to allow officers to perform duties as needed.

- The volunteer appreciation event is scheduled for February 27th. Discussion was held regarding nominees for the Friend of Conservation and Conservation Educator awards.

  MOTION by Chris, second by Cindy

  To appoint Marla Kerr for the 2024 Friend of Conservation award and Randy Williams for the 2024 Conservation Educator award.[25-6]

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

2. Park Activities

Brian reported on the following park activities:

- Park projects slowed down over the holidays with staff taking time off.
- Little Sioux staff has been working with Holly Brown Construction to clear trees and get the piles burned.
- Little Sioux staff has also been replacing old wooden signs with new plastic signs.
- Brian has been compiling a list of road sign replacements needed. Some are in bad shape.
- Southwood staff has been trimming trees that may scrape campers and proactively taking out ash trees.
- Brown's Lake staff has done a good job cleaning up the outside of the Izaak Walton League property and have removed most of the items of value from the building. The asbestos crew wanted to come in over Christmas, but now Monday is their target date. Dan stated that the board had previously approved letting Josh remove some car siding for personal use, and Dan will be taking some light fixtures. Brian noted that a lot of rot was discovered in the walls once the wood was removed.
- Officers will be completing mandatory taser recertification later this month, as well as NCIC testing.

ITEM R6. Capital Improvement Projects Update

1. Septic Replacement – Little Sioux Park Ranger Residence

Dan reported that the septic replacement for the Little Sioux residence is done. Staff will haul a little more dirt this spring and put down grass seed. Dan stated that he went to the board of supervisors to request funds for it because there isn't enough to cover it in the general fund budget. Dan expressed appreciation to Mark Nelson for speaking up on the department's behalf when one supervisor suggested only funding half of the amount. In a 5-0 vote, the supervisors agreed to fund the entire cost of $18,342 with gaming funds.

Mark added that Dan spoke up during public comment and pointed out that he had asked for the boiler replacement the last three years. Mark said it was an eye opener and that the supervisors need to do a better job of planning for those types of expenses. Dan explained that he had recently learned that the building services director, budget director, and supervisor chair would meet privately to decide which projects are put forward for consideration by the supervisors. Dan asked for better communication and involvement with department heads in that process.

[25-6] To appoint Marla Kerr for the 2024 Friend of Conservation award and Randy Williams for the 2024 Conservation Educator award.

2. Boiler Repair & Replacement – Brown's Lake Shower House

Dan stated that he asked the supervisors to fund the Brown's Lake boiler project as well. The board of supervisors agreed to fund the $12,849 cost with gaming funds. Parts had to be ordered, and it will be fixed when the parts arrive.

ITEM R7. 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 February 13, 2025, at the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center.

b. Easement Monitoring Funds Investment

Dan spoke with the county treasurer about investment of the easement monitoring funds. She gave him a few investment options laddering it with three different banks and timeframes. He chose an option with CDs at 12-, 24-, and 36-month maturities and providing a total of $14,392.28 in interest. The investments will be rolled over again at maturity, and the interest will be deposited into that fund. Interest had previously been going into the general fund due to confusion of how the law was interpreted. Dan asked if that interest could be tracked and transferred back to the easement monitoring fund, and Tina is looking into it.

2. Board Information

Winnebago Land Transfer: Neil stated that he had a public inquiry regarding new signage at Snyder Bend denying access past a certain point. Dan explained that once the Winnebago transfer went through, the DNR added those signs south of the observation tower. Dan believes that the transfer has been finalized, and the tribe owns the south part of the lake and the majority of the refuge. Dan will contact Doug Chaffa and ask if the DNR has gotten an official survey.

Exotic Animal Mounts Donation: Neil asked for an update about the possible exotic animal mounts donation. Tom explained that he let the donor's financial advisor know that the board is interested. The advisor and the customer are in the process of figuring it out as there are three or four areas she is considering for donations. Tom expects to have an update sometime in the next quarter.

3. Other Business

None

4. Old Business

Raptor House Repairs: Dan reported that a meeting had been set with Mr. Pick regarding the raptor house repairs, but he had something come up and had to postpone. In the meantime, staff examined the raptor house and discovered more rot and problems than was originally thought. He said all joints and rim joists, all the 2 x 4s, and sill plates need replaced. Windows were never framed, so all the water ran in behind the plywood. He stated that it would be better to just start over. Staff had long discussions about what to do and considered moving it to another location with concern about it being disturbed when the building foundation work is done. A new site was

designated and determined to be a better location and quieter for the birds. Just under $5,000 has been donated through the Big Give and other donors. Mr. Pick said he would donate materials but may not want to donate all the materials to rebuild. It could be a possible project for a Gilchrist grant. Dan's recommendation is to rebuild in the new location. Staff also talked about heating the center room to allow for a small freezer to store all the food and supplies right there. The new USDA permits that are in the process require that animal food needs to be in a separate freezer. Currently the freezer has taxidermy also. Staff will visit a few other nature centers and get plans from other counties.

Nature Center Building Foundation: Dan and Brian had a video meeting yesterday with the architects for the nature center building foundation repairs. They plan to come and inject foam under all the voids to stabilize the floor and monitor it for two years. Originally, they were proposing 40 helical piers, but after the engineer looked at it, they are now estimating over 160. They propose installing them every three feet, so it would be a major project requiring the offices to be all torn up. Hopefully the foam fixes the problem. Architects will draw up plans and send them to the two companies. They will take more reference points and monitor it for the next 12 months.

ITEM R8. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:52 p.m.

The above minutes were recorded by Dawn Bostwick.

Recording Secretary, Dawn Bostwick

Board Secretary, Neil Stockfleth

Board Chair, Tom Limoges