WOODBURY COUNTY, IOWA, CONSERVATION BOARD
MINUTES OF THE THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 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, February 13, 2025, at the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center beginning at 4:00 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT
Aaron Gehling, Cindy Bennett, Neil Stockfleth, and Tom Limoges

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT
Chris Zellmer-Zant

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

OTHERS PRESENT
Mark Nelson, County Supervisor/Conservation Board Liaison and Kent Carper, County Supervisor

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

CORRESPONDENCE ITEMS
None

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
None

ITEM R1. Approve Consent Agenda

MOTION by Neil, second by Cindy.

To approve the consent agenda.

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

The consent agenda was approved and involved the following items:

C1. Approve Minutes of the January 9, 2025, Regular Meeting

C2. Approve the January 2025 Claims and Expenditures

C3. Receive and Place on File the January 2025 Financial/Budget Report

C4. Acceptance of Gifts/Donations:
- $200 from Anonymous for programs
- $500 (via WCCF) from Randy Chapman for Nature Center projects
- $500 from the Siouxland Fly Fishing Club for the Aquarium exhibit enhancements
- $50 Robert Eybers and Verschoor Memorials from Connie Richardson Smith
- Bird Friendly Iowa Flag from Marla Kerr
- Craft Supplies from Cindy Bennett
- Birdfeeders from Bob Meis

ITEM R2. FEMA Updates – Little Sioux Park

Brian reported that work is continuing with FEMA. He is putting RFPs together for repairing the boat ramp and armoring upstream from the boat ramp. He is also putting proposals together to repair the shelter bank that sloughed off. He is working with LG Everist to get a quote for the quantity of rocks that will be needed. He wants to try to provide tonnages to allow apples-to-apples comparison. They did warn that rock will be scarce and at a higher cost due to a few DOT proposals this spring. The project may be delayed until fall. Dan noted that they have an inspector coming to look at the projects on February 28th. Brian explained that the ramp is dug out, but there is a 10' hole at the bottom of the ramp and the last section of the ramp is undermined again also making it unusable for boats.

(Aaron arrived at 4:11 p.m.)

ITEM R3. Road Replacement – Little Sioux Park

Dan reported that during a recent supervisors' meeting for CIP presentation, Supervisor Nelson brought up that D38 by Anthon is being redone which might make it possible to get a better price on the Little Sioux roads if done at the same time. Dan presented a map marked with the 1.9 miles of road that is in the worst condition. He stated that the campground roads are not as bad, and it could be possible to get by with doing a chip coat on them in a couple years. He added that these roads will not have the heavy equipment traffic like a highway, but they will need to be maintained by adding a seal coat and filling cracks occasionally. Plans have been prepared with a quote of $536,331. The engineer has requested that it be included it in the D38 quote which would lower the cost by $100,000. Tom asked about adding the shelter house loop, and Dan said that the engineer will measure it and determine what it would add to the cost.

ITEM R4. Department Reports

1. Nature Center Activities

Theresa reported on the following Nature Center activities:

- The programs and visitors report for January was presented. The report format has been changed to include the list of schools and public programs provided.
- Pam Pfautch reached her 29-year anniversary with the nature center last week. There were a lot of nice comments on the FaceBook post celebrating her anniversary.
- Naturalist intern applications have been received and are being reviewed.
- Naturalists are working on planning summer camps and programming.
- Nature Calls – Due to staff changes and software changes at the convention center, the Nature Calls date was not saved in their system as promised. The new date will be September 13th instead of the 20th. Theresa has talked to all beer and wine vendors except one who she is having trouble reaching. A few staff and board members had already scheduled vacation for that date which is very unfortunate. Kent Carper suggested using Word of Life Church – Dream Center on Buchanan Avenue, but it will only hold 300-400 people.
- A temporary Monarch & Milkweed exhibit has been on display.
- A drawing of the planned Prairie Pollinators wall exhibit was handed out. They are planning to install at the end of March.
- Tyler Flammang built a cabinet for the Loess Hills Wild Ones seed library. It was just stocked on Monday, and a half a dozen people have visited it already.
- The Foundation's annual meeting and program is on Saturday. The program will be the Insect Zoo from Iowa State.

- Mark suggested compiling the visitors report for the year and sending it to the board. Theresa noted that it is usually part of the annual report, but she is behind on those due to being so busy.

2. Park Activities

Brian reported on the following park activities:

- Park staff has been burning tree piles with the snow cover and getting ready for their spring burns.
- Southwood had been putting in firebreaks prior to the snow and cutting cedars on the Zook property in Oak Ridge unit one.
- They have also been waiting for snow to get a frost seeding done for one of the prairie areas on Zook, but Brian wasn't sure if it has been done yet.
- Little Sioux has started a timber stand improvement project on the Flemming property. They have been doing hack-n-squirt treatment on ironwood trees.
- Snyder Bend has been trimming trees and taking out dead giant cottonwoods in the campground. More desirable, hardwood, disease-resistant trees will be planted.
- Erik received a $5,000 grant from Loess Hills Alliance to cover a CCI crew on Oak Ridge.
- Erik also was awarded a $5,000 Gilchrist microgrant for a slide-in UTV fire skid unit. Erik did a great job on the grant writing.
- Field staff will be attending multiple mandatory trainings starting next week and through the end of the month.

ITEM R5. Capital Improvement Projects Update

1. Floor & Foundation – Nature Center

Dan stated that the only change since his report was that the engineer and architect asked if there were any floors in the basement that he would want to be raised since they aren't attached to the foundation. They will be adding that to the bid to try to make them level again. They would do that when they foam jack the floors to fill the voids. They will monitor it for another year and see if the foundation moves at all. Theresa found three new cracks in the classroom yesterday.

2. Concession Stand – Little Sioux Park

Dan reported that he asked the contractor to change the size of the concession building as requested by the board. It was originally 20' x 40' with half for the stand and half for storage. If it is increased to 20' x 60' for additional storage, it looks strange being so long. The contractor suggested making the storage section 30' x 30' with a 20' x 20' concession stand in front. Dan stated that there may not enough in the CIP fund to do the concession stand this spring due to unforeseen dirt work and electrical costs.

Dan stated that the electricians were there to look at power for the concession stand and found it was severely underpowered. The closest power is in the campground. Going around the lake would be longer, so they would bore under the pond to cut the distance in half. It would take 120' of wire at a cost of $15,000, plus another $10,000-12,000 to bore and plow it in. RFPs are still out, but Dan got rough estimates from Schoen Construction. When checking with MidAmerican to verify the primary wire, Dan was told that it was outside of MidAmerican's territory so they can't put the transformer where planned. He called Woodbury County REC to see if they could provide power to that end of the park, and they are supposed to get back to him. It will be close to $30,000 for all of it, but it is necessary for that area that was cleared to be developed.

Aaron asked that a plan for that area be developed in long-term planning. Mark suggested seeing if the REC would surrender the property to MidAmerican. Dan noted that the cost for boring could be $15 per foot or $25 per foot depending on whether they hit boulders under the pond.

Dan asked for permission to accept the RFPs and take the low bid for the concession stand. He stated that he isn't required to officially bid it or put ads in the paper because it is under the vertical threshold. Discussion was held regarding the best use of CIP funds and whether other funding options are available.

MOTION by Neil, second by Aaron.

To authorize and approve staff to pursue and review RFPs for the Little Sioux Park concession stand, select the lowest bid, and send the decision to the board via email.[25-7]

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

3. Dirt Work – Fill Tree Site – Little Sioux Park

Dan reported that when they cleared the trees at Little Sioux Park, they didn't realize the hole would be so deep. While the lake level is down, he wants to take gravel and sand from the pond and push it up on the shore to the bottom of the hole. They will slope it to a 6:1 grade from bank's edge to the road. Then they will add 3" of black dirt from the graveling operation and get a good grass going. Two bids have been received: Johnston Excavating at $20,000 and Holly Brown at $23,469 for 6,800 cubic yards. Dan asked for approval to go with the low bid from Johnston. They will also make the pad for the concession stand to have it ready to go for the contractor.

MOTION by Aaron, second by Cindy.

To authorize and approve accepting the low bid from Johnston Excavating to do the dirt work to at the tree site and prepare the pad for the concession stand at Little Sioux Park.[25-8]

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

4. Electrical Update – Little Sioux Park

Addressed with Item R5.2.

5. Izaak Walton League – Building Demolition

Brian reported on the status of the Izaak Walton League building. The asbestos has been remediated. He is putting together RFPs to demolish the building. They are considering saving the concrete pad from the main hall with the chimney on one end. There are no cracks or

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[25-8] To authorize and approve accepting the low bid from Johnston Excavating to do the dirt work to at the tree site and prepare the pad for the concession stand at Little Sioux Park.

anything in the concrete. A small shelter could possibly be added there. It will have to be determined if cutting the chimney down a little bit will allow it to be freestanding. If not, it will have to be taken down. Brian hopes to have bids for the demo at the next meeting. Dan stated that they had considered burning it down, but determined it is too close to the mobile homes and structures along the fence line.

Kent made a few suggestions prior to leaving the meeting, including a mountain bike path at Southwood like Cone Park, an area for motorcycle riding, QR codes for the campgrounds, coupons for local restaurants, and hammock camping.

(Kent left the meeting.)

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 March 20, 2025, at the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center.

b. User Fees Report – Calendar Year 2024

The user fees report for the 2024 calendar year was presented and reviewed. Aaron expressed concern about Snyder Bend and suggested advertising to let people know it is open for business.

c. Possible Donation

Tom updated the board on the status of a possible donation discussed in previous meetings. Richard Kunz, Vice President and Trust Officer with Security National Bank, approached Tom about a customer with huge taxidermy collection from all over the world and asked if the conservation board would be interested in it. Dan and Tom went to the client's house and viewed the collection. The donor wants to keep the collection together and is willing to donate towards an addition to house the collection. In further discussions, the client agreed to donate possibly $1 million with some type of matching donation to add a wing on the nature center for housing the collection and other things to make the facility more impressive than it already is. Tom expressed a desire to keep these dollars in Woodbury County and potentially put it to use in a project that will benefit the nature center.

Dan and Tom met with the financial adviser yesterday. Dan stated that he shared with the advisor that one of his biggest concerns was the care of the mounts. He floated an idea to ask if she would give the balance of the million, if not all used, to put in an endowment so that the interest could be withdrawn for maintaining the mounts and the rest of the mounts in our displays.

Dan talked to Terry Glade with CMBA privately about adding on to the building. He suggested adding to the west side and estimated $450/square foot. A 40' x 60' addition would cost $1,000,000 per level, and there would be three levels. The basement would provide additional storage and would be $250/square foot unfinished. Dan provided those numbers to the adviser and told him that doesn't include the cost of putting together the displays. Dan stated that he did some research on the original capital campaign which raised

approximately $722,500 to build the nature center 26 years ago. He noted that there are MRHD and Gilchrist grants that weren't available back then.

Aaron asked if the nature center is the best location for the display and offered the Little Sioux shelter or a new building on the Izaak Walton property as possible options.

(Mark left at 5:52 p.m.)

Neil noted that the animals are not native to Iowa, which would be a change in direction for the nature center. Dan expressed concern about the optics of refusing the donation and the effect it would have on the likelihood of future donations. Aaron cautioned that the capital campaign would take a lot of energy especially considering the current load on staff. Dan said that he and Brian would do the majority, but all employees would be involved in some way. Cindy stated that she would like to see it stay in Sioux City, but a clear vision needs to be developed. It was agreed that if it goes forward, the board should do some long-range, visionary planning on how to finish the building and displays. The client also does not want to cause an issue with the Pecaut family, so staff will meet with them and get their approval. Dan mentioned meeting with the Foundation board also to get their support.

Tom suggested telling the donor that there is interest, but that staff needs to have discussions and visit other nature centers to determine the needs before saying yes. He added that there can be a contingency plan and language built into the estate plan that if the conservation board does not use it, the donation will go elsewhere. The board agreed by consensus to express interest to the donor. Dan stated that he would discuss it with staff and visit a couple of the newer nature centers for ideas to bring back to the board.

d. Land Deal Update - INHF

Dan reported on the status of the Hecox/Ingerthon property deal. He stated that the funding source for the wind turbine company has pulled out of the project due to the freezing of the wind and solar rebates and taxes by the new federal administration. If the funds are reinstated, it could come back to the table. For now, it will go back to the RCCP easement program. Dan will contact the property owners to advise them about the situation.

2. Board Information

None

3. Other Business

None

4. Old Business

None

ITEM R8. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

The above minutes were recorded by Dawn Bostwick.

Recording Secretary, Dawn Bostwick

Board Secretary, Neil Stockfleth

Board Chair, Tom Limoges