

Regular Meeting (March)
Buchanan County Conservation Board
April 2, 2020

This meeting was held electronically only due to concerns with COVID-19 and social distancing which made an in-person meeting impossible or impractical. Public agenda notice was posted at the Nature Center and placed on the Conservation Board website with instructions for the public to call-in or use the Zoom login.

The regular March meeting of the Buchanan County Conservation Board was postponed to April 2 due to quick changes in policies related to Covid-19 virus. The meeting was held via teleconference, with a call-in or video Zoom option. The meeting was called to order at 4:00 pm by Board President Loren Hamilton. Board members present were Anita Miller, Andy Crump and Mary Jean Blaisdell. Others present: Executive Director Dan Cohen.

Motion Blaisdell/Miller to approve February 18 meeting minutes and the April 2 agenda. All Ayes motion carried.

The Board reviewed March claims and a Financial Report. Motion Blaisdell/Miller to approve claims as shown below. All aye.

Alliant Utilities	\$759.17	Iowa Rivers Program	\$65.00
Buch. Co. Health	23.55	John Deere Financial	281.35
Buch Co Extension	140	O'Reilly Auto Parts	58.47
Diane Johnson	746.10	Oelwein Vet	100.10
East Central REC	576.20	Visa	14.04
Elaine Walker	407.79	Waste Mgmt	77.75
Ia Regional Utilities	326.27	Windstream	272.85
Ind. Lt & Power	32.00		

Cohen updated the Board on county-wide directives implemented by the Board of Supervisors regarding meetings, programs, and staff time/leave due to the novel Covid-19 virus. Cohen has canceled reservations for facilities and events through April to address immediate needs to contact people. Campgrounds had yet to be opened. Motion Miller/Blaisdell to keep all facilities closed through April, and to adopted Board of Supervisors policies regarding handling of staff time during the current episode of Covid-19 spread. All aye.

The Director informed the Board about the potential to purchase a small piece of land (2-3 acres) that would connect Benton County's new wetland to the Conservation Board's Koutny Pond. Motion Miller/Blaisdell directing Cohen to work with Benton County and the landowner to negotiated the purchase. All aye.

The Director's Report was provided as follows:

- Attended meetings of Buchanan County Supervisors; Buchanan County Department Heads on Covid-19; Buchanan County Tourism Marketing; I WiLL (phone); Bird Friendly Iowa; Wapsi Watershed Management Association, County Conservation Directors Assoc and Iowa State Assoc of Counties; Buchanan County Pheasants Forever; and Buchanan County Wildlife Association.
- Field Staff: Staff cut invasive shrubs, completed prep work in the Jakway Clearcut for spring planting; checked boundaries and nest boxes; worked on burn plans and equipment; maintained vehicles, attended burn refresher courses, etc. James Mount completed his Pesticide Applicator certifications and obtained his Class A CDL. He now has met his full requirements and begins receiving his full wage.
- Naturalist Staff: Naturalists conducted school and other programming. Public programs included snowshoeing programs. Public programs included “Tracks and Scat”. A Master Conservationist series of classes were planned for spring. Michael developed a watershed table for use in the schools. Sondra took vacation. Naturalists canceled or postponed programs due to Covid-19 policies.
- Worked on drafts of updated and reworded Conservation Board rules and regulations and county ordinances, with input from Conservation Officer and park rangers (agenda item).
- Further compiled information from Board Strategic Planning, and worked with Shive-Hattery to start the next process. Met with S-H during ISAC meeting and ahead of Board Meeting. Worked via email and teleconference to further ideas for planning and determine information needed from staff and board members (agenda item).
- Received notification from Adam Rodenburg that Craig Alber now wishes to sell the strip of land between Kounty Pond and new wetland area. Spoke with Benton County Conservation Director about this (agenda item).
- Developed the narrative and documentation for a Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) grant request for work on the Iron Bridge, with Brian Keierleber. The grant review was canceled due to Covid-19, and voting is being done by Survey.
- Worked with Buchanan County Tourism on the upcoming county visitor’s brochure. Meetings were canceled due to Covid-19, so work was done via computer.
- Met with Public Health Director Tai Burkhart and HR Deputy Karen Stephenson to develop parameters for an Employee Relations Committee, as per request from BoS Clayton Ohrt.
- Communicated with Alex Davis concerning the Fontana steps and spillway project, and Davis is providing engineering and bid specs via email due to Board meeting being canceled (Covid-19).
- Spoke with the realtor for the Crawford Property and walked the area and took photographs (agenda item).
- Advertised for seasonal conservation technicians and naturalists, and conducted interviews. Offered a seasonal technician position to returning seasonal conservation tech Jacob Schwarting and the naturalist intern position to Bailey Bergman. Both offers are pending successful completion of pre-employment requirements. Interviews are scheduled for filling the remaining seasonal conservation technician position.
- Received notification about a mussels research project being done on the Cedar River Watershed. A researcher from Iowa/Minnesota DNRs will be capture/releasing mussels in Lime Creek at the Lime Creek Area.
- Presented on the topic of Costa Rica wildlife at the Master Gardeners Conference.

- After more consulting on “rust” in water lines, had Fitzpatrick Plumbing place a filter/collector in the shower house water line, and a drain end to be able to flush out the system.
- Met with field staff to gather information and provide a better understanding of what is needed for potential maintenance shop/storage needs for strategic planning (agenda item).
- Met with representative from US Cellular regarding potential cell-based camera systems for providing security footage.
- Began checking nest boxes at Ham Marsh (volunteers are checking at other areas).
- Attended the Board of Supervisors meeting for the Budget Hearing and update on Coronavirus. Other updates on the virus also were held. Canceled meetings for the month of March.
- Developed packets for scoring scholarship applications in lieu of in-person meeting (Covid-19).
- Developed informational packets and distributed to Board members in lieu of meeting (Covid-19)
- Visited legislators at the Capitol (although the Session now has been postponed).
- Received many updates on Covid-19. As per guidance from Iowa Department of Public Health and the Center for Disease Control, as well as state and federal authorities, initiated the following protocols (not a complete list):
 - All in-person meetings and education programs are cancelled or postponed;
 - Staff remain at work to conduct business and answer phones and emails. However, offices are open by appointment only;
 - All frequently touched surfaces are wiped down at least daily.
 - Anyone entering a building is required to wash hands/use sanitizer.

Motion Miller/Blaisdell to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 4:38 p.m.