

Regular Meeting
Buchanan County Conservation Board
April 21, 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 April meeting of the Buchanan County Conservation Board was called to order at 6:00 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/Wolfe to approve April 2 meeting minutes and the April 21 agenda. All Ayes motion carried.

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

Alliant Utilities	\$715.56	John Deere Financial	\$451.89
Bruening Rock	267.91	Myers Polaris	89.18
Capital Sanitary	30.10	O'Reilly Auto Parts	10.99
Consolidated	522.53	Signs & More	108.00
Dan Cohen	10.38	Swales Concrete	11,250.00
Diane Johnson	222.94	Treas of Ia	157.00
Elaine Walker	367.68	Verns True Value	205.87
Fareway Foods	16.95	Visa	11.02
Fitzpatrick Plumbing	357.14	Walmart	102.33
Hawkeye Alarm	72.00	Waste Mgmt	77.75
Ia Regional Utilities	343.18	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.

The Board discussed reviewed the updated Professional Services Agreement with Shive-Hattery. The Board desires to move forward with the agreement, but would like to update the Board of Supervisors about the project and its cost, and receive any feedback. The Director will provide the update during an upcoming Board of Supervisors meeting.

The Board discussed purchasing 2.3 acres (mol) of land to connect the Board's Koutny Pond property to the Benton County wetland to the north. Benton County will be talking with the landowner to gauge interest. The Board is interested in acquiring the property if the landowner agrees to terms.

The Board discussed progress at Iron Bridge Access. Motion Wolfe/Blaisdell to allow for an additional \$2,500 for mobilization due to sidewalk installation not in the original bid agreement, approved payment of \$86,308.71 to EIEC, and to allow an extension for installation of parking lights until August 31, 2020 due to backorder. All aye.

The Director presented 11 potential rules changes for incorporation into a new rules brochure and county ordinance. These included:

1. Adopting DNR rule on erecting and dismantling of tree stands during deer and turkey seasons.
2. Adopting DNR/Black Hawk CCB rule on target shooting (prohibited unless authorized by the Board and signed as a target shooting area).
3. Alcohol in parks (taking out language about 6.5% alcohol and "light" wine, and language about keg permits).
4. Combining rules for boats and vehicles left unattended, and generalizing that units may be disposed of "as per Iowa Law".
5. Changing "possession" of firearms is prohibited to "use" of firearms is prohibited outside of hunting seasons, to be in line with current rules on carrying firearms.
6. Prohibiting pets within 50 feet of any live animal enclosures (whether or not on-leash).
7. Adding language regarding camping registration to indicate reservable sites and season-long sites (current language still states self-registration and time limits).
8. Adopting DNR language regarding 14-day max stay (without prior Director approval, and excluding season-long sites).
9. Adopting DNR language doing away with the need to occupy a camping unit within 24 hours (just have to be registered – within one hour).
10. Adopting DNR language, with parks open at 4 a.m., and designating areas using the same state designations (parks, preserves, WMA's, etc.)
11. Changing camping checkout time to 3 p.m. (instead of 5 p.m.)

Motion Miller/Blaisdell to incorporate these rules as Board policies. All aye.

The Director's Report was provided as follows:

- Supervisors; Buchanan County Department Heads on Covid-19; I WiLL (phone); Bird Friendly Iowa; County Conservation Directors (large and small group); Hawkeye Community College Advisory Committee.
- Field Staff: Staff was largely on stay-at-home leave during the first two weeks of this period as per Board of Supervisors/Conservation Board Policy. They returned largely to regular hours with restrictions related to Covid-19 beginning April 7. Staff cut/sprayed/pulled invasive shrubs and garlic mustard; bladed roads (and rocked some sites); checked nest boxes; conducted only minimal burns; maintained vehicles; readied parks, including shower houses, in anticipation of opening; patrolled; etc. Even when on "leave" staff rotated animal care and park checks.
- Naturalist Staff: As per above, staff was on stay-at-home order for half the period, however, Sondra was able to do more work from home. Naturalists remain encouraged to do office work from home. Michael is allowed to use Emergency Sick Leave to help

with caring for children due to day cares being closed. All educational/recreational programs were canceled and refunds were issued. A Master Conservationist series of classes was included in the cancellations. Michael worked mostly on website updates and developed a Facebook video of ducks and a QR Birding program. Sondra wrote articles and initiated a “Baby Bison Bingo” initiative to help get people to social distance outdoors.

- 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).
- Continued work with Shive-Hattery on strategic master plan for Fontana Park (via phone and email). Shared Board and Director comments regarding thoughts on potential lodge. S-H was asked to prepare an updated cost proposal. Although they are assigning their projects to one of their senior lead landscape architects, they agreed to charge the project based on their initial lower rate. (agenda item).
- Spoke with Adam Rodenburg (Cedar River WMA) and Benton County Conservation Director Karen Phelps about moving forward to purchase the 2.3 acres separating Koutny Pond from the new Benton County wetland from Craig Albert. Decided to let Phelps initiate the discussion (agenda item).
- The Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) grant request for work on the historic Iron Bridge (Taylors Ford Bridge) was successful – scoring #1 with an award of \$184,000. Also wrote the grant narrative for a REAP Historic Resources Development Program (HRDP) grant (may be submitted pending timing of TAP grant availability). County Engineer Keierleber developed a budget plan to restore the Bridge under these cost restraints (agenda item).
- 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.
- Full bid plans still are being developed by Assistant County Engineer Alex Davis for the Fontana steps and spillway project. Davis did provide a cost estimate, which I used to write and submit a Buchanan County Community Foundation grant request (\$12K). We have grant extensions from FEMA/Homeland Security to complete the project by October 30, 2020.
- Received a call from an attorney regarding a land donation for property to the east of Otter Creek Roadside Park (agenda item).
- Seasonal conservation technicians and naturalists are on a hiring hold pending Coronavirus. Interviewed another candidate for a seasonal conservation tech position. I plan to start one Conservation Tech May 4.
- Worked on repairing/replacing/gps marking/numbering/mapping bluebird nest boxes in the 10 or so areas where they are monitored. Volunteers monitor most areas, but I have been monitoring Ham Marsh and Rowley Fen. I set Mike up to monitor Quigley and Jeremy/James will monitor Fairbank Fen.
- Participated in several ZOOM meetings (Board of Supervisors and County Conservation System) regarding responses, policies, etc. related to Covid-19.
- Arranged for mail-in scoring of Buchanan County Area Conservation Scholarships, and the group selected three recipients. Contacted the winners and wrote a news release with photos that was submitted to area newspapers.
- Conducted weekly staff meetings via ZOOM, and sent memos to staff with Covid policies and work lists (items completed and items yet to complete).

- Spoke with Senator Johnson regarding the rest of session and any movement on the Trust Fund. Attended conference calls scheduled by the lobbyist working on the Trust Fund for the ICCS.
- Visited almost daily with contractors and Secondary Roads staff at Iron Bridge Access since work began April 1. Visited also with adjacent landowner Ron Sheldon regarding his secondary driveway (contractor states they will make the driveway work). A lot of work is done, including some paved trail, paved parking, paved ramps, and earth work for parking on east side of Nolen Ave (agenda item).
- Met with County Sanitarian Matt Even at Cortright and arranged for plugging two wells. I am currently awaiting notification that the contractor is ready to do the work. Even has grant funding to pay all or most of the cost.
- Looked into purchas bollard barricades o keep vehicles off new paved trails at Iron Bridge/Grover.

Motion Miller/Blaisdell to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 6:58 p.m.