

**Regular Meeting  
Buchanan County Conservation Board  
November 16, 2020**

Present: Loren Hamilton, Ronnie Wolfe (by Zoom), Mary Jean Blaisdell (by Zoom), Anita Miller (by Zoom), and Dan Cohen.

Hamilton called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Motion Wolfe/Miller to approve the agenda and minutes from the October 20, 2020 meeting. Motion carried.

The Board reviewed the Claims Report. Motion Miller/Crump to approve claims as shown below. All ayes.

Alliant Energy	\$686.68	Anita Mars	\$327.60
Blake Streicher	\$100.00	Buchanan Co. ISU Ext.	\$175.00
Coe Collage	\$252.00	Consolidated Energy	\$334.25
Cy & Charley's	\$24.00	DenHerder VET	\$302.14
Diane Johnson	\$275.63	ECI REC	\$481.41
Fitzpatrcik Water	\$907.50	Forestry Supply	\$61.71
IA. Reg. Utilities	\$459.32	InMotion Hosting	\$15.99
INRCOG	\$1620.00	JD Financial	\$160.28
Koch Office Group	\$48.01	Shive Hattery	\$7120.00
Signs & More	\$19.50	State of Iowa	\$368.30
Walmart	\$48.54	Waste Management	\$188.25
Windstream	\$276.19		

The Board reviewed a policy updated from previous meetings, regarding issuance of special permits for disabled persons to use motorized vehicles where they otherwise are prohibited. Motion Blaisdell/Crump to approve the written policy as presented. All aye. [policy will be placed in Board policy Binder]

The Director updated the Board on progress for completing the steps and dam spillway project at Fontana Park. Cohen and project engineer Davis worked with the contractor to reduce handrail costs, for a net savings of \$11,490. The handrails have been ordered. The project will be completed once handrails are installed and a dispute on billing for subbase material is resolved. Motion Wolfe/Miller to approve a claim in the amount of \$69,243.39, which covers all project items other than handrails, the disputed subbase materials, and 3 percent retainage. All aye.

Property for potential acquisition in the far southwest corner of Buchanan County was discussed, with no action taken.

The FY22 staff salary policy was discussed. Cohen presented standard language in the Board's previous salary policies and comparisons of salaries within the County Conservation Board system and other county departments, relative to state averages and counties of similar size. Motion Wolfe/Miller to adopt the FY22 policy as presented, with three percent wage increases for regular staff, pending additional information from the Board of Supervisors. All aye.

Motion Blasidell/Miller to accept the Director's Report, provided as follows:

- Attended meetings: Buchanan County Board of Supervisors; East Central Iowa Tourism (ZOOM), and Bird Friendly Iowa (phone and ZOOM).
- Field Staff: Marked park boundaries; replaced turkey building roof; mowed fore breaks, cut/sprayed shrubs, bitternut (Fontana), buckthorn (Jakway), and garlic mustard; pruned trees; patrolled and investigated ATV issues; worked on road maintenance; removed fallen trees; conducted landowner planting; raked leaves around animal enclosures, etc...
- Naturalist Staff: Naturalists provided outdoor school programs and field trips. Public programs included a schedule of "Breath of Fresh Air" programs that included a birding hike, kayaking, sidewalk chalk activity, geocaching, Roberts Wildlife Walk (cancelled). A star party was canceled due to clouds. Nature Kids was held on the topic of Turkeys. An OWLS "Ready for Winter" walk was held at Grover Timber.
- COVID impacted county offices, so the viral mister was loaned to the courthouse and Secondary Roads Department to disinfect.
- Marked new north boundary on the east side of Fontana Park.
- Visited with Marcus Lee regarding his dispute of boundary markers placed at Three Elms Area.
- Worked with INRCOG on final edits of the Needs Assessment Survey of county residents. Due to the the anticipated huge influx of political junk mail, I requested mailing to be postponed until after the election. Survey postcards are scheduled to go out the second week of November.
- Received confirmation for deadline extension for the Fontana steps and spillway project due to redesign of handrails.
- Presented the Master Plan information to members of the Orlan Snyder Trust, a neighbor to Fontana Park, Assistant County Engineer Alex Davis, and continued to make offers to show the Plan to other stakeholders. Thus far all comments have been positive (agenda item)
- Worked with Alex Davis and Tschiggfrie on a new handrail plan. We were able to reduce costs from more than \$35K to \$23K. The handrail was ordered.
- The yearling bull bison was sold, as per the October meeting (agenda item).
- Continued to work on ATV issues at Three Elms Area, Buffalo Creek Area and elsewhere..
- Toured the Weltzin property again with field staff. Spoke with Roger Weltzin to negotiate a lower price for his offer to sell, as per the October Board meeting. Thus far, there has been no renewed offer.
- Assembled data on salaries in county departments and county conservation departments for use in reviewing staff salary policy.
- Presented the FY20 Annual Report to the Board of Supervisors, as per the October Board Meeting.

- Overlaid the management plan schematic over other aerial photos and determined GPS points for future prairie and bison fence enclosures. Plotted this on an app that field staff can use as we move forward. Developed a plantings plan for the area where the crop rental agreement was cancelled. Looked for information/consultation on the best seed mix for starting new bison pasture (agenda item).
- Was asked to help with the development of new Conservation Board Member training/job description information being prepared by ICCS.
- Arranged for use of the County's bucket truck for reinstalling a flag and for future work on tree limb removal.
- Field staff and Michael renewed their individual pesticide applicators permits, and sent paper work in for renewal of our Department's state license.
- Met with Alex Davis regarding plans for the east cabin project. He plans to work on this some next month with an eye to have plans ready to bid in February.
- Renewed our account on the SAM system for required for receipt of various federal grant programs.
- Requested the Board of Supervisors act on reappointment of Mary Jean Blaisdell for her first full term as a Board Member (Mary Jean sent a letter requesting appointment).
- Received guidance from Public Health and Emergency Management, and decided to close the display floor due to COVID-19 concerns when the 14-day average positivity rate exceeds 15% (offices still open by appointment). This policy will be presented to the Board at the next meeting (agenda item).

The Board discussed the recent dramatic surge in Covid-19 cases in Buchanan County. Motion Blaisdell/Wolfe to adopt a policy of closing the nature center display floor whenever the COVID-19 14-day rolling average positivity rate is above 15 percent. All aye.

Cohen reminded the Board that Needs Assessment survey forms should be arriving to a random sample of Buchanan Count Households in the next couple weeks.

The Board reconsidered holding its December meeting with a social meal to follow, due to the Pandemic. Motion Wolfe/Crump to hold the December Board Meeting at 5 p.m. on Wednesday, December 16 at Fontana Park, and to cancel the December 17 meeting date. All aye.

Motion Wolfe/Blaisdell to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 6:51 p.m.