

**Wapello County Conservation Board**  
**Regular Meeting Notice**  
**Monday, January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2024**  
**5:30 PM Meeting**  
**Pioneer Ridge Nature Center (1339 HWY 63, Bloomfield)**

**Call to Order:**

Beth Doggett called the meeting to order at 5:30PM.

**Roll Call:**

Marsha Parker(Zoom), Beth Doggett(Zoom), Aaron Ruff(Zoom), Jeff Layton(Zoom), and John Henscheid

**Staff Present:**

Rick Tebbs, Amanda Jones(Zoom), Sara Runyan(Zoom), Mike McCall, and Paul Totten

**Approval of Agenda:**

Jeff moved to approve the agenda, Aaron seconded, approved.

**Election of Officers:** Aaron moved for John to become chair and Jeff to become vice chair. Marsha seconded. The new officers were elected.

**Approval of Previous Monthly Meeting Minutes:**

Aaron moved to approve the previous monthly meeting minutes, Beth seconded, approved.

**Guests:**

Emiliy Nailer(Zoom) *Bolten and Menk*

**Claims:**

- WCCB claims for the month of December were submitted for approval.

Discussion followed over various claims. Jeff moved to approve the December WCCB claims, Aaron seconded. Approved.

- The American Gothic House Center claims for the month of December were submitted for approval.

Jeff moved to approve the AGHC claims for the month of December, Beth seconded, approved.

**Old Business:**

- **Solar Energy for the Pioneer Ridge Nature Center**

The board discussed different solar energy options for the Pioneer Ridge Nature Center. Reviewed the plan presented by Red Lion and discussion followed over different grants, pay off timeline, and how the energy would be bought. The board would like to look further into the payment details and review the proposal from Midwest Solar. Marsha moved to table the solar energy at Pioneer Ridge, Aaron seconded. Tabled.

- **Approval of Contractors Bid Packet for Campground Projects at Pioneer Ridge**

Emily from Bolten and Menk discussed the expansion plans with the board as well as the bid packet timeline. The playground will not be included in the original planning and additional funding is being sought. There will be a public notice sent out to their various connections. They are looking for general contractors. Marsha questioned if there would be room to put in solar energy later and Emily informed here that the expansion would leave room for a solar panels. Jeff moved to approve the bid packet, Marsha seconded. A roll call vote was held. The motion passed.

- 2024-2025 Fiscal Year Budget/ Review Committee appointment

The director asked if any board members would like to volunteer to be on a budget review committee for the upcoming fiscal year budget for the conservation department. Beth and John volunteered. Aaron moved to appoint Beth and John to the budget review committee, Marsha seconded. Approved.

#### **New Business:**

- Hiring Freeze for Conservation Technician Position

Due to legislative changes the budget for the next year may require a reduction in staff. Because the Conservation department has an open position the Director brought up freezing the position to hopefully avoid layoffs of current employees. Jeff moved to freeze the hiring of a new Conservation Technician, Aaron seconded, approved.

Marsha questioned if during the freeze AmeriCorps positions could be applied for. Rick said while they are beneficial they are not a replacement for staff due to the limitations of experience and allowable work with AmeriCorps.

- Approval of New Personnel Policy

The board received the Personnel Policy late and will table approval until the next meeting to allow them time to review. Beth moved to table the approval, Aaron seconded, tabled.

- Approve Conflict of Interest Policy

There is no new Conflict of Interest Policy to review. Beth moved to table, Aaron seconded, tabled

- Memorial Day Weekend Annual Ride Request to Camp in Equine Trailers

Due to the campground being closed a group of equine riders approached Rick about camping out of trailers for a weekend ride. They must fill out a special use permit, pay primitive camping rates, and register with the office. Beth moved to allow the special use permit, Marsha seconded, approved.

#### **American Gothic Board Updates**

None.

#### **Staff Reports and Comments:**

Staff discussed various parts of their reports including prairie seed planting at the halfway house.

Sara updated the board on Eagle Days and new displays for the nature center.

Amanda informed the board that cabin reservations for the winter months have been very low. She suggested maybe running a special or switching to winter rates of \$65/wk night \$100/Friday & Saturday night. Discussion followed over if the new rates would cover expenses and occupancy. Jeff moved to approve the winter rates, Beth seconded, approved.

#### **Conservation Board Comments:**

none

#### **Adjournment:**

Marsha moved to adjourn the meeting, Aaron seconded, the meeting was adjourned at 6:16PM.