

Wapello County Conservation Board
Regular Meeting Notice
Monday, April 10th, 2023
5:30 PM Meeting
Pioneer Ridge Nature Center (1339 HWY 63, Bloomfield)

Call to Order:

John Henschied called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM

Roll Call:

Jeff Layton, Marsha Parker, John Henschied, and Aaron Ruff

Staff Present:

Rick Tebbs, Paul Totten, Mike McCall, Sara Runyan, Amanda Jones, Austin Roe, and Cari Nicely

Approval of Agenda:

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

Approval of Previous Monthly Meeting Minutes:

Marsha moved to approve the previous monthly meeting minutes, Jeff seconded, the previous monthly meeting minutes were approved

Guests:

None

Claims:

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

Aaron moved to approve the WCCB claims for the month of March, Jeff seconded, the WCCB claims for the month of March were approved.

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

Aaron moved to approve the AGHC claims for the month of March, Jeff seconded, the WCCB claims for the month of March were approved

Old Business:

- **Office Space for Naturalist**

The board received an update on the Naturalist office being built in the Pioneer Ridge Nature Center. AN electrician is coming this week to wire an outlet and then they will proceed with dry wall. Some materials that were needed were already on site allowing some savings on expenses.

- **Saturday PRNC Summer Schedule**

Discussion was had about the upcoming changes to the summer schedule at Pioneer Ridge Nature Center. The summer schedule is set to start the Saturday of Memorial day and go until Labor Day. Rick listed the days already covered by staff and the remaining days that need covered. Board members offered to cover some days and check their schedules to see if they could cover the remaining days. Discussion was had over advertisement. Advertisement will be done on social media and the newspaper. The board also discussed possibly being closed over State Fair time. The board will revisit this topic in the future and discuss more ideas for programming and schedule.

New Business:

- **On Eagles' Wings**

Sara updated the board on an event in the works with Meet Ottumwa. "On Eagles' Wings" is an event happening Feb 23rd and 24th in 2024. The WCCB has been asked to participate. There will be a variety of different vendors and speakers. Sara asked the board for input and if they knew of any possible speakers to share their information with her. The board and staff discussed what they days of the even would look like and possible events.

- **Legal Notice for the Closing of Kirkville Wildlife Area**

Rick notified the board of the legal noticed needed for the closing of Kirkville Wildlife Area for 18 months starting in October of 2023. A comment period is needed before the closing. It is closing for the reclamation project. Marsha moved to publish a legal notice for comment period for the closing of Kirkville Wildlife Area, Aaron seconded, the motion was approved.

Rick gave the board an update on the reclamation project. He explained they are currently trying to set right away boundary lines with the neighbor before beginning. He showed the board a map of the site and explained where the previous access points to the property and how they have changed due to the road being vacated by secondary roads. The bid period is hopeful to start in Aug and select a bid in September.

The board questioned if the road could be opened back up and maintained by WCCB. Paul explained that we do not have the equipment or budget to maintain that type of road and it differs from the roads at PRNA. The board was concerned about public access to the property. Rick explained that we no longer have access to the south side of the property but there will hopefully be a parking lot going in on the north side so the public will have a place to park.

Rick also explained that our reclamation project is in conjunction with the neighbors so he is working closely with him to have this project complete. HE explained the benefits of this project and how it will help in the future.

- **Proposal for Campground Expansion Schedule**

Rick disbursed the Bolton and Meek proposal for campground development. The fee for the proposal is \$6,500. Because it is a federal grant there are certain things that must be completed and surveyed before we start. He is still waiting on a complete schedule for the campground expansion. Aaron moved to approve spending \$6,500 on the campground expansion proposal, Marsha seconded, the motion was approved.

- **Purchase of Additional Ground at Garrison Rock**

Rick informed the board that the land owner of the property neighboring Garrison Rock approached him about selling the property he originally presented the board in 2019. He would like the originally offer of \$55k. The neighbor would like it to be CRP ground. The board question where the funding would come from for this project. He said he could pursue a habitat grant to cover the cost of the project or REAP. The benefits of buying the land were discussed and included, keeping it from being developed and access to the property. Aaron moved to apply for a habitat grant to purchase the property, Jeff seconded, approved.

- **Resolution for Destination Iowa Grant**

Rick gave the board members a resolution to accept the Destination Iowa Grant. A voice vote was given. Aaron Ruff- Aye, Jeff Layton- Aye, Marsha Parker-Aye, John Henschied – Aye. The resolution passed.

- **Lake study at Pioneer Ridge**

The Wapello County Board of Supervisors approved the Lake study to be done at Pioneer Ridge at the cost of \$24k. Rick discussed the information that was given to him from the surveyors and explained some of the wetland and habitat mitigation that was needed. He explained that the money for the survey would come out of the budget. Aaron moved to approve spending \$24k from the budget for the lake study, Marsha seconded, the motion was approved.

Amendment: The Wapello County Board of Supervisors will amend the Conservation budget to cover the cost of the lake study at Pioneer Ridge.

American Gothic Board Updates

Cari gave the board an update about what has been happening at the American Gothic House Center. They began charging admission fees with parameters previously set on April 1st. They have had positive responses from the public about the admission fees. Cari explained they are now giving discounts for certain groups and organized school events. She talked about how this is a learning experience and they are working with the public the best they can.

Cari has not had anyone apply for her AmeriCorp position. Once her budget is approved she will ask to possible start her permanent part time position early.

Cari talked about the upcoming events and summer camps.

Staff Reports and Comments:

Rick informed the board that he would be advertising for summer help again.

Amanda let the board know that she had a family member call about planting trees at Pioneer Ridge for a family member that is passing away. She will have them sign a waiver and they are providing the trees and planting them themselves.

Rick told the board that the new skid steer was ordered and should arrive in the next 4-6 months.

Rick let the board know that someone would be coming to give a quote to anchor the cabins to their concrete pads.

Sara talked about the Animal Ambassador Program. They had about 50 people show up and the KTVO came as well. They raised about \$200 for the animals. She also gave an update on summer camp sign ups.

Marsha informed Rick that they would soon schedule his performance review.

Conservation Board Comments:

Aaron brought up concerns about bussing to Pioneer Ridge for field trips. Busses for Wilson Elementary now cost \$250 per bus. This is not a cost that most schools in the district can afford. He talked about how excited the kids are for Sara's programs and want them to have access to these trips. They discussed changing the parameters for the grants to be able to grant more money requested. They discussed changing the rates based on the schools percentage of kids on free and reduced lunch. Marsha requested that the change be written up and presented at the next Heritage Foundation meeting. Amanda also suggested contacting area business to see if they would donate.

Marsha asked if there had been an update on the new building for the shop, but Rick informed her nothing had been shared with him.

Adjournment:

Aaron moved to adjourn the meeting, Jeff seconded, the meeting was adjourned at 7:10PM.