

**Wapello County Conservation Board**  
**Regular Meeting Notice**  
**Monday, May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023**  
**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:**

Beth Doggett, Jeff Layton, Marsha Parker (Zoom), 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:**

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

**Approval of Previous Monthly Meeting Minutes:**

Marsha requested to have the previous monthly minutes amended to state that the Wapello County Board of Supervisors approved to amend the Conservation budget to cover the cost of the lake study at Pioneer Ridge. Jeff moved approve the previous monthly minutes with the amendment, Aaron seconded, the previous monthly meeting minutes and amendment were approved.

**Guests:**

Darren Batterson

**Claims:**

- WCCB claims for the month of April were submitted for approval.  
Jeff moved to approve the WCCB claims for the month of April, John seconded, the claims were approved.
- The American Gothic House Center claims for the month of April were submitted for approval.  
Jeff moved to approve the American Gothic House Center claims for the month of April, John seconded, the claims were approved.

**Old Business:**

- **Kirkville Parking lot**  
Rick informed the board that since the reclamation project at Kirkville Wildlife area is no longer moving forward they are still working on getting a parking lot at the area. Recently a large group of people were at the area for mushroom hunting and it created a situation where people could not park adequately. The Wapello County engineer is willing to put the parking lot in with approval of the Board of Supervisors. Discussion was had on the parking lot and how to make the area more accessible for the public while respecting the neighboring land owners. The Board of Supervisors will revisit the issue of the parking lot and road at Kirkville.

- **Garrison Rock Property**

The appraisal was completed for the purchase of the additional ground neighboring the Garrison Rock property. One of the Supervisors showed support in the purchase of the ground. A habitat grant which was originally discussed cannot be applied for until November. Discussion was had on grants and how to move forward. The Board of Supervisors will continue to discuss the purchase.

**New Business:**

- **23-24 Budget**

The Conservation department received their budget for the 23-24 fiscal year. The budget amendments appear to meet the requests of the department. The only item not included is the purchase of an additional vehicle, but the Supervisors said that will fall under local option sales tax. Staff asked if the raises included part time employees. Darren Batterson stated that the Conservation salaries are still being reassessed.

- **Lake engineer study**

A meeting will soon be scheduled to go over the progress completed so far on the engineer study for the lake at Pioneer Ridge. Rick listed off the possible amount of money needed for mitigation. Rick said he will keep the board informed and let them know the date of the future meeting.

- **Barn roof at Pearson**

Rick shared pictures with the board of the damage to the roof of the barn at Pearson park. ICAP would like an appraisal done for the cost to repair the roof. Discussion was had on what happened to the roof and what it is currently being used for. The roof was repaired a few years ago and recently damage during a storm. It is not currently used to store equipment because of the very low ceiling height and small inner rooms. The appraisal will be completed and the board will make a decision on whether to fix the structure or have it removed.

- **Destination Iowa Grant agreement**

The Destination Iowa Grant agreement was reviewed by the attorney and then given to the board. The Conservation department and Wapello County will keep track of expenditures related to the project and be reimbursed at a rate of 40%. Jeff moved to approve the county procurement process, Aaron seconded, approved.

The supervisors passed an amendment to give the Director authority to sign the docusign.

Jeff moved to give the Director authority to sign on this grant and oversee the process moving forward, John seconded, approved.

- **Director Evaluation**

The board members discussed a good time to hold the director's evaluation. They decided to hold a closed meeting on June 12<sup>th</sup> after the regularly scheduled board meeting for the director's evaluation and then schedule a later date to review the evaluation.

- **Donation for county employee picnic**

The health and wellness committee requested a two night cabin donation for the employee picnic. The board members discussed and had no issues with the donation.

- **County employee working picnic**

Wapello County is holding their employee picnic at the Pioneer Ridge Red Haybarn. The committee has requested the conservation staff to assist with nature center tours, fishing, and different games. The board is giving the other departments the afternoon off for the picnic, but because the conservation department will be working they will not get the afternoon off. The board agreed that the staff can flex time on a different afternoon.

- **Flex full time on weekday for Saturday or time and a half**

The director printed off policy amendments and handed them to the board. Current policy states that staff members working Saturdays will get paid at a rate of time and a half no matter the hours worked previously in the week. Discussion was had over the conservation department's hours and how they work unique hours that include weekends. Darren Batterson let the board know that the handbook is getting revised, but needs input from boards and directors. The board agreed that the current handbook needs to be followed until it is changed.

Rick showed the board the step increases. The board would like to start everyone currently employed with the department at step seven, and new employees after July 1<sup>st</sup> at step one.

Current employee job titles were discussed. Amanda is listed as a Clerk 2 but is an Office Manager and Paul is listed as a Park Ranger, but is Operation's Supervisor. Darren requested that Rick write up a job description and salary fair for an Office Manager and present it to the Supervisors. Jeff moved to have all current employees moved to step seven as of July 1<sup>st</sup> and all new hires to start at step one, Aaron seconded, approved.

- **Approval of parks regulations and rules**

The board received tentative rules and regulations for the parks to be reviewed by the board. The Director suggested taking the rules home and reading them to make notes of changes they would like to see. The rules will be discussed in depth at a later meeting.

### **American Gothic Board Updates**

Cari updated the board on events from the last month at the American Gothic House Center. Admission fee is going over well and they were able to raise over \$900 in the month of April. Cari stated that they are very busy and is excited to get more help. She was asked if many people volunteered. Cari stated that aside from board members and local banks she does not get much volunteer participation.

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

None.

### **Conservation Board Comments:**

Marsha requested an update on the naturalist office. Paul informed her that the wall is framed and electrical has been ran, but drywall is not completed yet.

Marsha asked if anyone had asked for a scholarship from the bus fund and if the protocol has been changed yet. Sara stated that Wilson Schools have been the only school to apply for bus grants and she has not rewritten the policy yet. She will work with Aaron and other staff to present a new policy at the next Heritage Board meeting.

Darren asked if the trust had been discussed yet. The current proposal for the trust would be 50% of all revenue and donations would go into the trust. It is believed that this will be the best way to benefit both the

Conservation Department and Wapello County. It was also discussed that the trust will be beneficial in grant matching.

Aaron requested the all of the staff's emails. He will be sending out a survey to the staff. He hopes that this will better the department and help the board makes improvements.

Aaron asked Darren if there was an update on the bridge that had previously burnt down and if any funding was needed to finish the project. Darren informed him that the bridge is almost completed. The final step of hooking it up is still in discussion and will hopefully be completed soon.

Amanda stated that it was recently brought to her attention that personal phone numbers for board members are listed on the county website. She asked if the board members would like their personal numbers to remain listed or if they would like it switched to the Pioneer Ridge Nature Center number. All of the board members requested their numbers be changed to the office number.

**Adjournment:**

Jeff moved to adjourn the meeting, Aaron seconded, the meeting was adjourned at 6:51PM.