

December 6, 2023

### **Call to Order**

The Tama County Conservation Board met in regular session on Wednesday, December 6, 2023 at the Tama County Nature Center. The meeting was called to order at 6:34 pm by Chair, Keenan.

**Board Members present:** Adolphs, Allen, Wacha, and Keenan.

**Staff Members present:** Horne, Conrad, Genaw, Behrens.

**Public present:** Delania Halter, Chris Behrens, Ruby Bodeker (Tama-Toledo News Chronicle)

### **Approval of Meeting Minutes**

Minutes from the November 1, 2023 meeting were reviewed. It was moved by Wacha, seconded by Adolphs, to approve the minutes as recorded, carried, all voting aye.

### **Approval of Bills**

Bills were presented for December 2023 totaling \$5,771.44. Deposits were made totaling \$1,689.00. It was moved by Wacha, seconded by Adolphs to approve all bills, all voting aye.

### **Public Comment**

Chris Behrens, county sanitarian, introduced himself and expressed his interest in being involved in conservation.

### **Reports & Updates**

**Environmental Education Report:** Carried out 9 programs in October with a total attendance of 192. Programs included Knee High Naturalist at the Toledo Library, GR Nature Explorers Club, WHEP, monthly Sunny Hill Care Center visit, library program on owls, and a preschool visit featuring Olive the hedgehog. Jenni Bonnjukuakal presented the OWLS program for November. She talked about bird rehab and rescue. Sent out press release for muskrat trappers, which got published. Did lots of work preparing for WHEP. Got NASP instructor certification, started helping with South Tama's archery club as a coach. Sent information on OWLS programs to newspaper, which got published. Put upcoming events on Facebook and Tama County website. Got heating pad for cockroach tank. Got ceramic heat emitter for hedgehog tank. Took animals to vet. Painted turtle and red-eared slider had shell rot and needed treatment. Others

visited for general wellness check. Hedgehog had mites and received treatment. All other animals were healthy. Made OWLS schedule for first part of 2024. Received a \$200 gift card from Kwik Star to fund snack purchases for the GR Nature Explorers Club. Wrote short article about how to support birds during winter & put it on the county website. Sent out monthly newsletter.

**Park Officer's Report:** Provided lone camper with final notice to leave the campground and to catch up on all missed payments. Checked for pheasant hunters. Worked first shotgun season and checked licenses. Shut off water to campgrounds and drained hydrants. Shut off electricity to OCLAP campgrounds and bathrooms. Put up more refuge signs at the park. Ordered more signs. Fixed the backstop at Ike's. Mowed wolf creek trail and park entrance. Began cutting brush along road on west side of the park. Closed campground and west side to vehicle access. Picked up trash at Ike's, Reinig, Clark's, and boat ramps/ wildlife area parking lots. Went to the NRCS banquet. Put up new public hunting signs at Iowa River Natural Area. Took mower deck off and took Kubota mower to Montezuma to get fixed. Got plow truck ready for winter (fix flat tire/new battery). Counted missing Ike's keys. Trapped muskrats at the lake. Burned brush piles. Trenched and buried tile lines at the beach. Attended district meeting at Marshall CCB. Reorganized equipment at the shop for easier winter access. Put snow blower on 4030. Got rid of scrap metal, cleaned up and organized pile by the new building. Caught 7 muskrats at Otter Creek basin.

**Maintenance report:** Met with Bob Etzel about park boundary at TF Clark's park. Shut off water to campgrounds and drained hydrants. Shut off electricity to OCLAP campgrounds and bathrooms. Put up more refuge signs at the park. Ordered more signs. Fixed the backstop at Ike's. Mowed wolf creek trail and park entrance. Began cutting brush along road on west side of the park. Closed campground and west side to vehicle access. Picked up trash at Ike's, Reinig, Clark's, and boat ramps/ wildlife area parking lots. Went to the NRCS banquet. Put up new public hunting signs at Iowa River Natural Area. Took mower deck off and took Kubota mower to Montezuma to get fixed. Got plow truck ready for winter (fix flat tire/new battery). Counted missing Ike's keys. Trapped muskrats at the lake. Burned brush piles. Trenched and buried tile lines at the beach. Attended district meeting at Marshall CCB. Reorganized equipment at the shop for easier winter access. Put snow blower on 4030. Got rid of scrap metal, cleaned up and organized pile by the new building. Towed F150 to get starter rebuilt.

**Director's Report:** Met with Bob Etzel about TF Clark and TCCB history. Met Brett Reece. Talked with neighboring directors. Attended NRCS banquet. Coordinated nature center rentals. Toured wildlife areas with Horne. Attended OWLS program. Researched mobile home winterizing, vehicles and equipment, budgeting and expense reports. Helped lay tile with Horne. Attended District 1 board meeting. Got new computer and phone. Wanted to elaborate on goals for future by working on native area management and program/educational outreach. Regarding habitat management, wants to create written maintenance plans for each wildlife area. Honeysuckle removal presents big goal for future at OCLAP. Timber stand improvements at other areas, prairie restoration, and wetland plantings were mentioned as future goals. Established interest in converting turf grass areas to native plants, working on landscaping at nature center, and enclosing underpart of deck at nature center. Keenan expressed interest in focusing on management at Oxbow Bottoms. Wacha commented on habitat cultivated by Pheasants Forever and its success. Conrad said he has a contact for habitat management at Oxbow Bottoms. Adolphs expressed support for landscaping improvements and desires more advertisement of OCLAP.

## **Old Business**

**Vehicle repair/replacement:** Dodge Dooley truck has been sitting at shop for months. Was towed. Will be fixed in order to trade it off. Wacha expressed support for trading it off. Wacha suggests re-evaluation of vehicle fleet, especially for Conrad and Genaw's vehicles. Behrens wishes for clarification on vehicle fund. Wacha recommends reaching out to Laura Kopsa for information. Wacha, Horne, and Conrad discussed need for a more economical vehicle for Conrad and tentative planning on a vehicle rotation schedule. Wacha suggested that the Dodge Dooley could be traded in for a Ford Explorer or similar.

**Alcohol at Nature Center:** Behrens provided a packet of information showing an ordinance passed in 2005 regarding banning alcohol at the Tama County Nature Center, as well as Chapter 355 of the Iowa Code regarding authority over the Nature Center. Behrens suggested that the Board of Supervisors has legal control regarding budget only, and don't have legal authority regarding use of the Nature Center. Behrens also suggested a need to have a good relationship with the Board of Supervisors. Behrens discussed justification for allowing alcohol including increased revenue stream; as well as cons of alcohol use relating to public perception and possible property damage. Behrens contacted nearby counties regarding alcohol use in their nature centers. Wacha suggested that renting parties using alcohol are generally required to hire their own security, and this would likely not be a deterrent to potential renters. Adolphs suggested alcohol use should be limited to beer, wine, and champagne. Wacha suggested extra rental costs may be needed for alcohol-using groups. A need to discuss this issue with the Board of Supervisors was discussed.

**Playground update:** Horne presented a quote for an elevated border around the new playground. Adolphs moved to approve the purchase, seconded by Wacha, all voting aye. Wacha inquired about filling in the border. Horne said the playground mulching would end up being flush against the ground.

**Ike's training date selection:** January 30<sup>th</sup>, 31<sup>st</sup>, and February 1<sup>st</sup> were discussed as possible dates for an evening class for Ike's training at the nature center.

## **New Business**

**Bird friendly designation:** Bird Friendly Iowa application was approved. Need to send in our \$100 payment for official designation. An invoice was presented for \$100 to Bird Friendly Iowa/Trees Forever for BFI membership.

**Fun Night 2024:** April 13<sup>th</sup> was chosen as the date for Fun Night. Delania Halter will get quotes for caterers for Fun Night.

**New equipment/vehicle needs:** Behrens discussed desire for skid-steer for dealing with snow, trees, trash, and invasives. Wacha and Horne said this equipment has been budgeted for previously. Wacha and Adolphs expressed desire to buy locally. Behrens expressed desire for fire equipment as well. Chris Behrens expressed his interest in assisting with burning, as he has 10 years of experience and is a firefighter.

**Property boundaries and signage:** Behrens discussed confusion regarding location of the fence line and property line at TF Clark's Park. County records show that Tama County owns property up to the bridge over Wolf Creek, but a member of the public has been renting out an area that is indicated as county property. Horne and Conrad said refuge signs may have been moved. Need to discuss this with the owner of the adjacent property was discussed. Adolphs said she could start dialogue regarding the issue with the property owner. Allen inquired about fence at Oxbow Bottoms. Horne and Wacha discussed impracticality of a permanent fence.

**Ike's shooting range access:** Desire to convert access method for Ike's Range to a key pad with a code was discussed. This would speed up registration, reduce cost to get new keys, and make changing locks easier. Allen discussed a desire for repair of mats at Ike's Range.

**Housekeeping:** Behrens discussed light pole at the beach being disconnected and suggested taking it down. GREC can take the pole down. Behrens discussed electric wiring around Nature Center and desire to hire a professional to fix wiring issues. Wacha suggested getting bids for that service. Behrens discussed desire for more credit cards for staff members. Board wishes to discuss this issue at next meeting. Wacha suggests discussing a reconciliation policy with Laura Kopsa. Behrens inquired regarding more frequent approval of bills with more frequent meetings and the county policy regarding not paying interest and late fees on purchases. Wacha and Adolphs suggested consulting with Laura Kopsa. Wacha motioned to close charge account at Ace after discussing with Laura and resolving late fees. Adolphs seconded the motion, all voting aye. Behrens also brought up the issue of the logo for TCCB, sparking lots of discussion. Wacha motioned to revert to the original logo, seconded by Allen, all voting aye. Behrens requested to be able to occupy the mobile home unit in the park temporarily. Wacha and Keenan expressed support for temporary residence. Wacha motioned to allow Behrens to reside in the mobile home, to revisit the issue after 12 months. Adolphs seconded the motion, all voting aye. Behrens said that the mobile home may need a skirt for insulation for winter.

### **Floor Discussion**

N/A

### **Adjourn**

With no further discussion items, it was motioned by Adolphs, seconded by Allen, to adjourn the meeting at 8:56 p.m.

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**Board Chair**

**Tama County Conservation Board**