

## Minutes October 9, 2024

### Call to Order 6:32

The Tama County Conservation Board met in regular session on Wednesday, October 9, 2024 at the Tama County Nature Center. The meeting was originally scheduled for October 2<sup>nd</sup> and was postponed due to staff illness. The meeting was called to order at 6:32pm by Chair Keenan.

Board members present: Keenan, Wacha, Kenkel, Allen, Dunning

Staff members present: Behrens, Horne, Conrad

Public present: None

### Approval of Meeting Minutes:

Minutes from September 4<sup>th</sup> were reviewed. It was moved by Kenkel and seconded by Wacha to approve. All voting Aye.

### Approval of Bills:

Bills were presented for September totaling \$165,685. Behrens reviewed the large total and distribution of payments across the general fund for the purchase of a Forestry ready skid steer. Deposits were made totaling \$24,595, accumulated through camping revenue, donations and grant reimbursements. It was moved by Wacha and seconded by Kenkel to approve the bills. All Voting Aye.

Public Comment: None

### Environment Ed Report:

Carried out 8 programs in September with a total attendance of 520. Had Knee-High Naturalist at Toledo Library, Star-Watching night, assisted with teaching archery at STC for 4<sup>th</sup> grade PE class, presented for Kiwanis Club, hosted Ms. Lacy's Preschool for field trip, visited STC special ed class for caterpillar lesson, taught at Cedar River Rendevous in Osage (had approx. 400 program contacts), led turtle storytime at Toledo Library, and had Homeschool Adventures program on orienteering & geoacaching. September OWLS was scheduled with Curtis as speaker but cancelled due to illness. Met with Haley from 4-H to plan out upcoming WHEP kickoff and presentations for Fall IAN conference. Attended harassment training at engineer's office. Picked up Smokey Bear suit and merch from Ames. Attended virtual meeting for Letters to a Pre-Scientist. Attended Science Education Symposium at Drake University and met with Keith Summerville, ecology professor and president of the Ding Darlin Association, to discuss future mapping project at OCLAP. Discussed having Drake students create vegetation map, trail map, and informational kiosk towards from of park. Will likely receive project proposal later in month. Attended MyCountyParks website E-Commerce training in Webster City. Attended Middle Iowa Watershed Association meeting in Tama. Drafted lesson plan for MIWMA outreach. Attended archery meeting with other STC coaches. Did preliminary planning with 4-H for annual lock-in and Ice Camp. Met with Mel Bro at USDA to discuss Fest Fest & Envirothon opportunities. Updated square site and added online donation option. Responded to rental questions, NC reservations, Fall IAN questions, and Fall Fest vendor questions. Sent out rental codes. Sent out Fall Fest vendor info. Had lots of Fall Fest vendors cancel last minute but would still consider event a success. Estimated attendance was 250-300 visitors. Sent out quarterly newsletter. Planned 2025 Homeschool Adventures & OWLS programs & made flyers. Posted a thank-you & pictures from Fall Fest on Facebook and Instagram.

#### Maintenance Report:

Checked boundary signs at Clarks and hung archery only hunting zone signs. Been trimming trees and shrubs around the park. Started harley raking the beach to get grass and weeds killed for next year. Clear jetty for wedding. Trimmed trees, brush cut around trees, weed deeded and clean up Clarks. Clark's civil war reenactment. New geothermal pumps installed nature center. Harassment and active shooter training. Meeting with secondary roads about borrowing equipment. Replaced battery at ike's. Took deer to DNR for EHD/CWD test. Weed deed OCLAP. Mow parking lots and trails at Columbia, Oxbow, Heritage Wetlands. Set up for fall fest set up tables, move picnic tables, clean N.C., picked apples, hay rack ride ready, spread remaining mulch on playground filling low spots/wash outs. JRF poured an apron and drain at shop. Tear down and clean up from fall fest. Service F-150. All parks and trails got mowed reining, ike's, Clarks.

#### Park Officer Report:

For ranger duties: Collect and file camping receipts. Check on campers and rentals. Deal with after hours issues at Ikes. 3 day certification update training at Camp Dodge for CCPOA, Learned about Implicit bias, de-escalation, hazmat, elder and minor abuse, emergency medical, shooting qualification, officer bill of rights. Patrol Parks, boat ramps, and public hunting areas  
For Maintenance duties: Get ready for fall festival including; Deep clean Nature Center. Mow parking lot. Trim trees along level B road. Create and place signage around the park. Clean facilities. Pick up supplies. Move tables. Weed eating. Repaint Handicapped parking lots. Work fall festival. Cut trees and brush out of the jettys. Trim trees along the road. Trim weeds on jetty for a wedding. Put up archery only signs at Clarks park. Get trash at Ikes, Clarks, reigning etc. Trail mowing. Look at skid steer. Make multiple parts runs. Fix mowers and Kubota issues. Look for sick and dead deer at OCLAP and outparks. Spray thistles in food plot. Mow down weeds in foodplot. Mowed heritage, Columbia, and oxbow bottoms.

#### Director Report:

Behrens attended Board of Supervisors Meetings, held budget and fund related meetings with the County Auditors. Coordinated payroll and timesheets. Attended employment practices seminar and safety trainings by the County. Held informal meetings with various staff. Helped with Fall Fest parking preparation, and assisted at Fall Fest. Coordinated skid steer purchase and delivery. Placed orders for supplies, and new uniforms for staff. Applied herbicide to invasive species at OCLAP and Otter Creek over several days, focused on willow, reed canary grass, crown vetch, locust trees. Completed ICCS Salary Survey and coordinated workshop with ICCS CEO. Made minor updates to the parks pages on the website. Planning and coordination for District 1 meeting and New Director Summit. Talked to other Directors, Roadside managers about IRVM rules and goals, and no spray actions in Tama County. Conducted various calls and emails to the public. Coordinated with Civil Wars reenactors. Assisted with rentals, reservations, NC tours and questions. Completed weekly deposits and revenues, and updated vendor tax accounts and had a meeting with DNR about Otter Creek marsh objectives.

## Old Business

Fall Fest Recap – Behrens discussed pros and cons of new parking field and parking coordination. Board and staff agreed that trying to bring the public in from the field drive, and blocking/stationing a staffer at the main entrance may improve confusion. Parking area should be enough space for future events. The group discussed vendor turn out, public turn out, and brainstormed possible improvements to draw in more crowd, including stepping up advertising at local events/businesses. It was agreed that the social media advertising reached lots of people and helped a lot. Vendors that were there were overall well received and seemed to bolster some busy traffic. Overall consensus among staff and board was that Fall Fest was a success. The Board expressed interest in having live music back, and utilizing the mowed space by new parking field to book additional vendors. Finding alternative routes for the hay ride were also discussed. The group also discussed combining Fall Fest with Fun Night and dedicating a weekend every year to the single event and potentially moving to a Saturday. The room discussed setting a time and date that doesn't compete with any other local event. The group suggested having a modified version of the auction/raffle at Fall Fest as a passive attraction as the nature center reserved lots of space for this still despite all the attractions. Further discussion on this event planning was tabled for next meeting.

## New Business:

Winter slow down and work goals: Behrens gave an update on campground use and potential closing of utilities. Maintenance duties are shifting away from mowing and towards invasive tree and shrub removal. Staff will be working on new directional signage, trail clearing and widening, overdue derecho cleanup, new prairie seeding prep, and burn plans. It was agreed that the campground would overall continue to stay open until roads are snowed shut, but utilities (water, electric) will likely be shut off after major frost, likely within the first weeks of November.

Motion by Wacha, to discount rate to \$15 per night for modern (electric, water) campsites will take effect when water turns off. Seconded by Dunning. All Ayes.

Front Entry Updates: Behrens made a case for the front concrete patio to be updated for safety and ADA standards as soon as possible. Groups with mobility issues are finding even the flattest areas difficult to navigate with walkers, chairs, etc. Behrens proposed removing a great deal of concrete to replace with a minimized ADA acceptable sidewalk from the handicapped ramp and stair case, and replacing the bulk of the excess concrete with a native rain garden type expansion. The idea was well received but Behrens and Wacha discussed the need for a wall and drainage inspection if replacing the patio with newly permeable services. Behrens to work with available engineering peers to determine what ought to be considered before the project progresses.

## Floor Discussion:

The Board and staff discussed the recent State Auditor report for the prior Director. The group discussed the positive change in accountability standards put in place across multiple County departments since the prior Director's departure. The Board is looking forward to moving forward with new wildlife and campground plans and plans to continue to ensure that staff policies are buttoned up and revised record keeping procedures are maintained in order to help prevent similar issues in the future.

Motion to Adjourn: Allen, Wacha Second at 7:43pm