

Minutes January 8, 2025

Call to Order

6:35pm by Wacha

Board Members Present: Wacha, Kenkel, Allen, Dunning

Staff Present: Behrens, Conrad, Horne

Approval of Meeting Minutes:

Motion to approve as is, with understanding of future amendments to include missing Maintenance and Ranger reports. Dunning motion, Kenkel second, all aye.

Approval of Bills:

Kenkel motion, Allen seconded, all aye

Public Comment:

Jenny Hulme: Jenny expressed dissatisfaction with the turn over of naturalists at Tama County Conservation and voiced appreciation for the prior naturalists partnership.

Lacy Starits: Also expressed regret for the termination of the prior naturalist and that her pre-school children value and miss the naturalist.

Reports and Updates:

Maintenance Reports:

Worked on getting shop budget items and quotes. Cut dead pine trees along the roadway at Ike's. Burned the brush pile at Ike's. Flush cut stumps from saw class. Set up N.C. for a DNR meeting. Clean cold storage and shop for winter/holidays. Hooked up the blower to 6040. Took a tire for the 2012 chevy to ok. Took the 2012 to Hamilton's for quote. Went to the DOT about heritage wetland sign. Closed east side OCLAP road to campground. Burned a brush pile OCLAP. Went to SCC for Fish habitat grant scoring. Safety meeting. Picked up dead geese in the lake. Gone for holidays (week and half). Opened gate at T.F. Clarks. Worked on making a new directory sign for entrance. Picked up trash at Mccoy's. Service F-150. Hearing Test. Moved Snow and salted roads and sidewalks OCLAP, Clarks and Ike's

Park Ranger Report:

Ranger: Work gun 1 opener with Brett Reece. Do NCIC recertification for SO. Give okay to clean at Ikes after hours. Take call from dispatch about hit park sign on hwy 30. Notify DOT

Maintenance: Check for downed trees/limbs after wind and ice storms. Check outparks and boat ramps for dumped deer carcasses after gun seasons. Go through potential budget items. Cut stumps at park and T.F. Clark. Plow snow at Park, Ikes, and T.F. Clark. Get salt and sand mix from secondary roads, salt the park roads and sidewalks. Move equipment around/get ready for snow removal. Get tires patched for 12 chevy at O.K. Get quote for deer damage to truck. Do animal care. Burn brush piles. Get oil and filters for vehicles. Get brake pads and washer fluid sensor for 12 chevy. Start making park signs. Pick up dumped trash at boat ramps. Cut up downed tree at Clarks. Make and paint signs. Hearing test. Safety meeting.

Director Report:

Answered calls, emails, talked with visitors, public, staff, others. Payroll and accounting. Vendor account updates. Supervisor meetings. Staff meetings. Nature Center cleaning and stocking. Weekly Animal care. Safety training. Calls with Drake Professor for summer mapping program. Winterfest and ICCS coordination. Coordination with Engineering for patio project. Budget planning with Auditors office. Vehicle and showerhouse insurance repair coord. Naturalist job posting and reviewing applicants. Grant research and review for 25/26. Trail mapping coordination with Iowa Northland Regional Council. TF Clark property and access coordination with assessor, Bob, Kroymann. Fall Fest planning and coordination.

Board and staff discussed final terms of previous naturalist exit package and employment termination. Specifically that of severance, that Behrens explained was not "severance" in typical fashion, but instead was a bulk payout of leftover benefits and payout to satisfy end term negotiations, but was handled by HR and County attorneys.

Old Business:

Budget Review: Behrens presented a new budget proposal to the Conservation Board with an overall 3% increase. Board and staff discussed funds line by line within the budget to assess next fiscal years needs and project demands. The group focused attention on adjustment to mainly maintenance operations, including for its new skid steer, trading in a used mower, trailer, etc. The group discuss Land Acquisition roll over funds and anticipated savings.

Budget approved as shown, motion by Dunning, second by Kenkel, all aye

Fall Fest Planning:

Behrens updated the board that all prior food vendors as well as the Iowa State Insect Zoo have been confirmed for the new Fall Fest event for 2025. The group discussed options and methods for combining the spring Fun Night with Fall Fest due to waning interest from the public and donors in recent years. The board and staff agreed to combine the events by offering a modified raffle/auction during Fall Fest within the Nature Center for Fall Fest of 2025 and weighed new donation collection and prize options for the event. The group also discussed length and time of day for the event to take place, agreeing upon a timeframe of approximately 1pm-6pm. The group discussed improved advertising methods to get greater attendance and how to bring in more games, music and volunteers. Organizations to reach out to include 4-H, Young Guns, IJAG, FFA or the local schools for volunteer forces.

New Business:

Board vacancy with voluntary step down of Chair John Keenan.

Dunning motion to appoint Bryan Wacha as Chair, Steve as Vice Chair, second by Allen, all aye. The group discussed methods for advertising the vacancy and hope to find a candidate from a northern district to improve county representation.

Staff vacancy: Behrens announced that he had already received seven applications for the open Naturalist position, noting varying skill level among the applicants. Behrens stated he would like to move forward on three to four of the current applicants to offer interviews. The Board discussed interview availability so that Behrens could be joined by a minimum of two other county staff, i.e.

HR, Conservation Board members or another department head stand in. Kenkel and Allen volunteered available on several dates, with Dunning offering some availability as well.

Vehicle repair: A deer struck the Park Ranger vehicle while on the road and the Board and Director discussed submitting the damages for insurance coverage, as well as conducting further repairs to the other side of the vehicle that has over gone substantial wear and tear.

A motion was made to submit the vehicle for repairs covered by insurance, and not to repair other side by Allen, second Kenkel. All aye.

Floor Discussion:

The group discussed once again whether or not to keep the gate at TF Clarks Park open for the season, prompted by complaints from the neighbors. The board agreed that the gate ought to remain open as often as possible to provide access to and use of the park year round, with the exception of utilities being turned on at campsites. The board agreed the gates should only be shut as needed per specific circumstances like impending flooding, hazard clean up, etc. or as seen fit by the staff and board.