

Minutes: February 13, 2025

**Call to Order:**

6:31pm by Wacha

**Board Present:** Wacha, Allen, Dunning, Kenkel on speaker phone

**Staff Present:** Behrens, Conrad, Horne

**Approval of Meeting Minutes:**

Motion to approve January 2025 meeting minutes by Dunning, second by Kenkel, all Aye.

**Approval of Bills:**

Motioned by Dunning to approve the bills. Seconded by Allen. All aye

**Public Comment:**

No public comment

**Reports:**

**Maintenance Report:**

Worked on making an arrowhead sign for long point boat ramp. Finished up painting wooden signs. Serviced F350, 05 Dodge, Polaris Ranger, 6040 Kubota, Edge. 2012 Chevy went to Hamilton's for finder replacement. 2012 Chevy replace windshield washer fluid sensor. 05 Dodge replaced windshield wiper transmission arms. Had a random drug/alcohol test. Picked up/ replaced wheel bearings for planter and disc. Brought the planter to OCLAP from Columbia. Trimmed trees along lake shore trail. Replaced arms and welded braces on box blade. Burned brush piles at OCLAP. Cleaned up the tree out of field at Clark's Park. Replaced Shop water heater. Winterfest. Walked east/south boundary at IRNA for public signs. Placed Cedar trees pile in main lake and pond below N.C. Moved rocks to Kayak launch and playground to prevent people from driving in grass. Worked on spring burns plan. Forestry mow- by the pond below N.C., widen roadways and trails, mowed some trails for equipment for burns by far shelter. 960m recall Vanwall fixed/ Started servicing mowers. Coordinated with MCC for seed drill in spring. Order cover crop seed for spring. Worked on CID order summer (put on hold for budget). Fixed water leak in shop. Moved snow/ salted roads OCLAP, Ike's, Clarks.

**Ranger Report:**

Get materials for sign making. Make new directory signs for the park and paint them. Get old planter from Columbia and fix it up to get it working. Get new fingerprints done by the sheriffs office. Plow roads and shovel and salt the nature center. Get salt and salt/sand roads at park. Move snow at Ikes and Clarks. Burn brush piles. Get new bearings for disc and fix the broken side. Fix bent box blade arm and support brace. Forestry mow along tent section roadside. Make concrete anchors for cedar trees. Move cedar trees onto lake and tie them in piles. Get Ranger truck body work done. Go to Winterfest. Check trash at ikes reining and boat ramps. Clean shop and some vehicles. Get new oil, filters, spark plugs, ect. Service vehicles and equipment. Have a burn plan meeting. Discuss budgeting items. Cut brush along entrance road at park. Install new fender flare on truck. Move cut and downed brush into pile for burning. Clean the Nature center and check geothermal levels. Fix burst waterline at shop.

**Director Report:**

Answered calls, emails, talked with visitors, public, others. Payroll and accounting. Several Department Head meetings. Supervisor meetings. Maintenance shop meetings. Budget meetings with numerous staff, department heads, supervisors. Animal duties. Naturalist app review, interviews and coordination. Rental reservation with WMA, DNR. Shooting Range pass sales. Winterfest Conference. Calls with potential Conserv Board applicants. Summer shooting range use coordination with youth groups. Safety committee meeting. Use/visitor totals and tallies to DNR and ISAAC for yearly data collection. Coordination with Rent.Fun for kayak dispenser setup. Trail camera troubleshooting. Additional new phone setup coord with Auditor office. Insurance claims coordination with new HR firm.

### **Old Business:**

#### **Budget Changes**

Behrens gave a break down of budget changes per direction from the BOS based on the current financial situation across the county. Large budget cuts are taking place across all county departments. A hiring freeze is in place with exemptions possible when presented to the BOS. It has also been recommended to hold on all “non-essential” purchases. Roll over of funds from the General Fund account also can no longer be rolled over into Conservation savings funds.

The group reviewed ways to reduce the budget by 10% as requested by the BOS. Large budget line items were reviewed that could be trimmed without negative affects to the overall operations and Conservation mission. The group largely agreed that substantial cuts could be taken out of bulk line items that generally see most roll over in following years and agreed to reduce Building and Permanent Improvement budget to start. It was also agreed that if no rollover is allowed to occur, then strategic spending of the remainder of funds from these resources should be priority for remainder of the year.

#### **Naturalist Position:**

Behrens provided an update on interviews that had taken place that included HR and Board members Kenkel and Allen. This interviewing body met with three top applicants from the application pool together at the Nature Center or via Zoom call.

Based on qualifications and responses from the interview, Behrens proposed moving forward with applicant Angela Tague, citing over 20 years of professional education and field experience. The Conservation Board discussed timing of hiring, new naturalist goals, and agreed to encourage the Director to fill the position as necessary, as soon as possible.

### **New Business:**

**Hiring Freeze:** The group discussed the current hiring freeze in effect in response to the county financial situation and how it affects the Naturalist position and its roles throughout the year. Behrens also stated that the BOS wanted to also see the fifth Conservation Board member seat filled prior to filling any new full time roles. Behrens presented the importance of getting this role filled as soon as possible to catch up on program development and school coordination for the year. It was agreed that the position remains an important asset to both Conservation and the county as a whole as it provides one of the few affordable things to do in the County. The Board again urged Behrens to work with the BOS to fill this position as soon as possible.

County Fiscal Staffing Adjustments:

The group discussed further the effects of the budget cuts to full time and seasonal staff. The Board and Director agreed to trying to keep all full time, and all seasonal positions filled if possible, while cutting other items, in an attempt to maintain job opportunities in the department. With the current cuts, the group agreed the Conservation Board should be able to hire all staff as usual, pending exemption approval from the BOS.

**Floor Discussion:** None

**Adjourn:** Motion by Kenkel to adjourn, seconded by Dunning. All aye.

Meeting closed at 8:35pm

Next meeting March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2025, 6:30pm