

Meeting Minutes July 8th, 2025

Call to Order:

6:35pm by Chair Wacha.

Board Present:

Wacha, Allen, Dunning, Behrens

Staff Present:

Director Behrens, Horne

Approval of Consent Agenda:

- Claims: Motion to approve by Behrens, second by Dunning.
- Meeting Minutes from June 4th: Motion to table meeting minutes for additional review time by Dunning. Seconded by member Behrens. All voting in favor.

Public Comment:

No public comment

Action Items:

Ranger Tech:

Director Behrens provided an update on interviews for two potential candidates, detailing pros and cons between the two applicants, including one already being certified in law enforcement, but with less conservation experience, and the other having more conservation experience but requiring law enforcement academy enrollment eventually.

The Board discussed need for a park ranger and seasonals and their anticipated duties and visit frequencies. Allen inquired on number of visits necessary for various outlying areas including Wolf Creek Trail, Lohberger and around other main parks. Wacha and Dunning expressed opinions in favor to having boat ramps, parks and wildlife areas patrolled to reduce trash dumping, vandalism, other bad behavior from the public, checking fishing licenses etc in between the ranger's conservation duties when in route to various park areas.

Allen inquired on the specifics of the Director vs Park Ranger patrol priorities. Wacha discussed limitations of non-certified staff member during patrol duties, including inability to write fishing license tickets, respond to severe incidents, etc. Wacha highlighted importance of letting Director and staff manage the parks within their budgetary confines, and Board cannot dictate what staff do during day to day.

Information Items:

Maintenance Supervisor Horne provided a monthly report:

Insurance benefits day. Sprayed- playground equipment west side, T.F. Clark's swings, picnic pads, thistles by big shelter, shoreline woodies and thistle. Placed no parking signs- along roadway from handicap jetty to nature center, and kayak launch. O.K. tire put new front tires on 6040 Kubota. Rented stump grinder- ground stumps at OCLAP, T.F. Clarks, Ike's. Cleaned up down trees on OCLAP trail and T.F. Clark's park, Wolf Creek Trail. Ray Com serviced hand held and truck radios. Replaced 2020 Ford battery . DOT about replacing T.F.Clark's park sign. Back filled and grass seeded stumps holes. Got a load of rock delivered and spread on Clarks park road. New mulch

between entrance kiosk and boat ramp restroom. Trim trees along trail at OCLAP. Park Ranger Interviews. Fixing and repairing picnic tables. Hauled rock and filled wash outs on shoulders of OCLAP road. Put dock in at boat ramp. Cleaned up flood debris on wolf creek trail. Fixed and replaced parking post @ ike's and reining. Helped Curtis landscape between kiosk and boat ramp restroom. Put up stationary bat boxes for ISU bat study. New battery 4030 john deere. Bladed roads at OCLAP and wolf creek trail. Checking campers @ OCLAP and T.F. Clarks. Patrolling busy weekends and holiday. All out parks and trails have been mowed and weedtrimmed.

Director Behrens provided Naturalist report:

NETWORKING/STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR FUTURE TCCB PROGRAMMING:

- School of the Wild – Met with the Director, Jay Gorsh (via Zoom)
- Iowa DNR – Met with Gus Elliott – Conservation Education Specialist (via Zoom)
- South Tama and North Tama School Districts –
 - Working towards a meeting with Superintendent (shared between districts), curriculum directors and each level principal.
 - Was organized for June and ended up needing to be postponed
- ISU EXTENSION -
 - Met with Cheryl Bruene, Executive Director.
 - Cheryl pulled Jenny (Hulme), Youth Coordinator into meeting as well
 - Discussed historic/previous programming
 - Discussed possible collaborations for Adult programming as well as ideas for continued youth programming
- PILGRIM HEIGHTS -
 - Impromptu meeting with director
 - Programming and future collaboration possibilities
- Tiny Ones TimberNook at Camp Kawnipi in Blue Grass.
 - NaturePlay and Forest School concepts combined with developmental process engagement
 - 18 months to 5 yrs
 - Observed and participated with camp in two format over three days
 - Those who came every day for a week
 - Those who came every week for 7 weeks
- Wild Ones - TimberNook at Camp Kawnipi in Blue Grass.
 - NaturePlay and Forest School concepts combined with developmental process engagement
 - This was the 5-9 yr old group.
 - Observed and participated with camp for 2 days
- Mike Anderson, Endeavors Wilderness & Wellness -
 - Possible future programming in Wilderness First Aid, tripping, etc...
- iGo – Iowa's Geochaching Group
 - possible future programming and events
- Toledo Farmer's Market
 - Spoke with organizer and we are determining dates for TCCB's presence at multiple dates over the summer.

MATERIALS:

Procured the following donations:

- 75+ high viz safety vests (MAINLY large adult sizes)
- 12 brand new wood canoe paddles (still in plastic sleeves)
- 20+n LED lights (pillar candles) that can be used to illuminate night hike area, etc...
- Curriculum materials from retired NOAA Education Coordinator

Procured the following at extreme low costs :

- 12+ high grade compasses and teaching kit (to supplement previous inventory) (NEW)

THE GREAT REORGANIZATION – finished!!!!

ANIMAL RESCUE/ANIMAL CARE:

Pigeon

- Organized transportation of homing pigeon (concerned citizen call) as it had apparently gone off course via a race from Chicago to Des Moines.

Great Horned Owl

- Picked up young owl that had been caught in fence (about ready to fledge completely) near Traer and transported to RARE.

Live Animal Care

- 3x – 4x a week care
- new enclosures (ponds – via 300 gallon stock tanks) seem to be

ADVERTISING / SOCIAL MEDIA / WEBSITE/REGISTRATIONS/FEEDBACK

Website, Facebook, media – have spent many, many hours the last month:

- Determining best use of website's layout (via MintChipLabs and county contract) and how to change, manipulate, enhance postings
- self-teaching how to use backdoor functions of Website to post programming and updates on multiple areas of the Conservation website page, County's news, and County's calendar.
- Facebook – learning how to post via a business page
- Created, published disseminated programming flyers (canoeing, summer offerings, camps, etc...)
- Streamlining registration process for camps, etc... via online forms rather than paper documents (can still mail or email paper version, if needed)
- Created online feedback form that will be pushed after each program/event

PROGRAMMING

- Get Outdoors Day
 - Went over well for first attempt
 - 23 people with 20 being new to Otter Creek Lake and Park
- Nature Center Day
- Creature Feature @ TF Clark
- Dysart Library – went VERY well, high scores on evaluation
- MUD DAY
 - Had a great time with this.
 - 12 kids and 5 adults

COMING UP

Nature Center Day – July 6

Water Detectives Camp – July 8

Nature Art Camp – July 10

Farmer's Market July 11
Full Moon Float – July 12

Director Behrens provided his monthly Director report:

Answered calls, emails, talked with visitors, public, others. Building clean up. Calls for rentals and Ike's pass. Payroll and accounting. Staff meetings. Department Head and HR meeting. Attend BOS meeting. Park Ranger/Tech Interview coordination. Budget planning and spending. Weeding nature center. Herbicide applications around park and nature center. Setup and assistance with Naturalist for programming. Pilgrim Heights Grandparents Day Camp program. Planting Coordination and install at Boat Ramp. Contractor coordination for kayak launch, sidewalk. Website updates with Naturalist. Help with Canoe day.

Discussion:

Dunning inquired on status of previous Ranger Conrads contract reimbursement from the City of Belle Plaine and asked Director Behrens to follow up with the Belle Plaine City Clerk.

Allen inquired on why the format of the meetings looked different than previous months. Director Behrens explained that agenda items were simply renamed and consolidated to expedite the meeting agenda, per suggested reorganization from Vice Chair Kenkel at a prior months meeting.

Allen inquired why the beach area was currently so short. Horne and Behrens described that after beach and lake renovations the beach has shrunk a bit and the lake still is a few inches shy of full, preventing the full visible volume from reaching capacity. Wacha provided background on DNR permitting and design of the beach shallows to be minimal to prevent vegetation growth. Allen expressed desire to see beach and swimming area expanded for the public.

Allen asked about 1.5 acres of mowing within the timber at Otter Creek along with the gas line running through the park. Horne explained that the gas line has been mowed for brush and use as a trail.

Dunning inquired about Director's vehicle being brought home. The group deliberated revising use of the Director vehicle to being parked within the County limits at a County location. Wacha suggested reviewing minutes of meeting with past Directors use of vehicles as well as county policy.

Dunning inquired on the care and quantity of animals housed at the Nature Center. Dunning motioned that any new animals coming into the nature center be approved by the Board. No seconds were made. Motion dies at the table. Member Behrens suggested having current animal inventory on naturalist report.

Dunning made a motion for a volunteer secretary position to take minutes for County Conservation Board meeting minutes. Member Behrens seconded the motion stating a desire to see Director doing more field duties. Vote: Behrens aye, Dunning aye. Motion does not pass. Wacha inquired need to discuss with BOS any new position generation.

Allen inquired on need for speed bumps in the park.

Adjourn:

Motion to adjourn by Allen, Dunning second. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 8:03pm.