

January 3, 2024

### **Call to Order**

The Tama County Conservation Board met in regular session on Wednesday, January 3, 2024 at the Tama County Nature Center. The meeting was called to order at 6:32 pm by Chair, Keenan.

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

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

**Public present:** Marty McCoy, Soren Peterson with the Tama-Toledo Newspaper

### **Approval of Meeting Minutes**

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

### **Approval of Bills**

Bills were presented for January 2024 totaling \$6,702.05. Deposits were made totaling \$13,222.69. It was moved by Adolphs, seconded by Kenkel, to approve all bills, all voting aye.

### **Public Comment**

Marty McCoy came to this meeting for information on the shooting range and commented that current range use rules reflect historical issues that occurred with shooting range use. McCoy expressed his belief that any new rules for the range should not be more lenient than in the past. He also mentioned installing an electric gate and raising the membership fee for Ike's Range. Behrens suggested adding a camera to Ike's Range to monitor use of the facility. Keenan and McCoy commented on historical issues with range use and discussed continued need for range use rules. McCoy said his biggest complaint with living next to the range is afterhours use by members of the public. McCoy also brought up that since the driveway has been widened, many people have been using it as a parking area.

### **Reports & Updates**

**Environmental Education Report:** Carried out 9 programs in December with a total attendance of 145. Since starting in May, naturalist has carried out 91 programs with 3,003 attendees. That averages to around 11 programs and 375 contacts per month. Presented on winter birds for this month's OWLS

program and had about 30 people show up, which is the highest attendance at any OWLS program since they were started up again. Continued coaching archery for South Tama. Did a presentation on winter birds at the Toledo library for homeschool kids. Was a guest reader at the Traer library for story time. Also talked about winter birds at Sunny Hill care center. Visited Ms. Lacy's preschool and talked about bears and what they eat. Wrote an article on winter animal adaptations and made a personality quiz that were posted online. Have also been making and posting educational graphics on our social media pages. Prepared for paper-making class. Submitted yearly report for USFWS migratory bird permit and wrote up annual report for DNR salvage permit. Also filled out gambling license application for Fun Night and did annual report to keep NASP certification. Received word that the Americorps host site application I submitted a while back is approved and we will be able to have a member to assist with educational programming over the summer. Hedgehog is on display in the nature center again. Poweshiek county naturalist will be visiting later this month on the 9<sup>th</sup> to present on bats and there will be a paper-making workshop on Jan 20<sup>th</sup>.

**Park Officer's Report & Maintenance report:** Got materials for Ranger House. Moved and spread rock around boat house. Got rid of scrap metal at shop. Checked boat ramps for dumped deer/ guts. Got and installed new door handle on Chevy. Attended safety meeting. Worked on ranger house/ moved dirt. Attended sexual harassment training. Completed S-190 training and began S-130 training (firefighting training). Moved brush piles. Cut dead ash trees along road and moved the brush. Began cutting and moving thorny locust trees in public hunting tree planting near public hunting parking on northeast side of OCLAP. Installed new first aid box in the shop. Began clearing remnant prairie on the hill at Oxbow Bottoms. Checked all our parks and boat ramps for trash. Picked up Kubota mower from dealer. Serviced vehicles and side by sides. Attached snow blower to Kubota mower. Got new tires for Kubota RTV. Flagged hiking trails at Columbia because Derecho caused lots of damage and obscured trails. Fixed heater in the wellhouse. Fixed wiring in nature center. Tried to trap nuisance beaver at IRNA. Picked up Dodge Dooley from shop. Split firewood to sell this summer. Got maintainer ready for winter. Got the plow truck ready to clear snow.

**Director's Report:** Behrens has been working on understanding the budget. Helped with rental reservations. Attended sexual harassment training, safety meeting, and Board of Supervisors meeting, talked with Bob Etzel, and met with Rob Kroyman (sp?) about fence line at TF Clark Park. Kroyman discussed concerns with crop damage in his field due to deer and suggested opening TF Clark's park to trapping or hunting. He also requested permission to clean up the fence line along his property (East fence line) and may replace fence. Behrens says that signage showing true property line of TF Clark's Park will be installed. In exchange for Kroyman's use of the property at TF Clark's Park, Kroyman offered free use of the easement connecting areas of Clark's Park that had previously been paid for monthly. Adolphs commented that, in a discussion with Kroyman, deer have been a nuisance on his farm. Adolphs commented that a limited number of hunters could be allowed to hunt deer on the property to control deer population if it was no longer designated as refuge. Wacha commented on a need to review former details of the property to determine if it can be taken out of refuge. The board commented that hunting may be restricted to the north side of the property. Wacha and Conrad suggested opening it up to archery-only hunting. McCoy offered a public comment, asking who maintains the existing fenceline at

TF Clark's Park. He commented that, legally, any fence within a certain area of a property line that has been in place for ten years defines a new property line. He also suggested that the landowner to the East is legally required to provide access to the easement connecting the two areas of property. Wacha commented that offering archery tags at Clark's Park is the least invasive way to deal with the excess of deer if the park can be opened to hunting. McCoy commented that the state of Iowa owns the deer at Clark's Park. Adolphs commented that there is a general excess of deer in Iowa. Wacha suggested having a raffle to choose hunters to give hunting tags to. Adolphs also inquired about hunting raccoons at Clark's Park. Conrad commented that hunting raccoons year-round is only allowed on private ground, and flushing wildlife out from a refuge to private land in order to hunt them is not allowed.

Behrens continued his report, saying that he met with the auditor to discuss accounts and budgeting. He signed staff up for Winter Fest, which will be near the end of the month. He did some Ike's training prep. He coordinated a meeting with Mel Bro from USDA and has been discussing getting some trees with them. Has been reviewing staff and seasonal job descriptions to post soon. Spent lots of time getting mobile unit for winter.

### **Old Business**

**Alcohol at Nature Center:** Behrens says he has made some progress figuring out how and if alcohol could be allowed at nature center. Talked with county lawyer but did not garner anything new on the subject. Behrens suggests asking the Board of Supervisors to repeal the ordinance regarding alcohol at the nature center. Wacha suggests that the ordinance was put in by the Conservation Board rather than the Board of Supervisors. Adolphs says she believes it was the Conservation Board that put the ordinance in effect. McCoy commented that alcohol has been banned from the center for a long time but he believes it would be good for promoting center use. Behrens commented on value of allowing alcohol in balance with necessity of preventing damages. Keenan commented that wedding parties haven't made much use of the center due to the no alcohol policy. Kenkel commented that allowing alcohol at weddings only may be a good first step. All members commented on former director Bob Etzel's passion for preventing alcohol use at the center.

**TF Clark update:** See director's report.

**Ike's training date and access:** Training date was set for January 30<sup>th</sup>, with a snow date of January 31<sup>st</sup>. Access to the range will be switched from key use to code access with yearly re-certification for shooters.

**Mobile unit updates:** Behrens discussed winterizing the mobile unit. The heater was repaired. Behrens constructed an insulated wood frame for the unit at a cost of about \$1,000. He will also need to create a panel to go around the AC unit.

### **New Business**

**Fun Night 2024:** Wacha is working on getting a gun for the raffle and will update the board later. Wacha expressed that previous gun rifles have costed about four to five hundred dollars to purchase the gun. Wacha also suggested raffling a youth rifle as well. Wacha suggested having a discounted ticket for children if they are part of the target audience for fun night.

**2024/2025 Budget:** Behrens presented a tentative budget for the 2024-25 fiscal year, reviewing each change in the budget. Wacha requested a kayak launch at the Southwest corner of the lake. Kenkel commented on a projected 5% increase of living cost that could be better reflected in the total budget. Wacha also commented that budget surplus gets placed into the LAD fund each year, in addition to the large amount of money placed into the account that is allocated in the yearly budget. Adolphs commented that the LAD fund could be used to develop bathrooms at Clark's Park or other improvements now that the lake restoration is done. Behrens will be presenting the budget to the Board of Supervisors on January 15<sup>th</sup> at 10:30 a.m. and is requested to email his final draft to the conservation board beforehand.

### **Floor Discussion**

Adolphs commented on the lake deepening a bit. Conrad said that it has definitely gotten deeper.

### **Adjourn**

With no further discussion items, it was motioned by Adolphs, seconded by Wacha, to adjourn the meeting at 8:10 p.m.

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**Board Chair**

**Tama County Conservation Board**