

Clinton County Conservation Board

Meeting Minutes

September 15th, 2026
and Via Zoom

Welcome & Introductions:

The regular meeting of the Clinton County Conservation Board was called to order by Jeff Beckwith on September 15th at 6:01 pm.

Board members present: Gloria Friederichsen, Brian Grell, and Jeff Beckwith.

Staff: Director Philip Visser, Office Manager Tiffany Wink, EE Coordinator Jill Schmidt, and Park Supervisor Colton Jones.

Guest: Jessica Steines, Ally Weller, and Dave Stedwell

Agenda: Brian Grell motioned to approve the agenda striking e. under New Business due to Dr. Brian Tugana being absent, Gloria Friederichsen second, motion carried.

Meeting Minutes: Meeting minutes from August 18th, 2026, meeting was presented. Gloria Friederichsen moved to approve the minutes, Brian Grell second, motion carried.

Financial/Treasurer's Report: Review of current budget report and upcoming expenses.

Approval of Bills: Bills were presented for Conservation, Brian Grell moved to approve the bills; Gloria Friederichsen second, motion carried.

Department Report:

Administrative: Camping numbers are down from last year, but they are still good. Labor Day Weekend was busy at all parks except Sherman Park, we were about 70% full at the other parks. Some of the team will be attending the ICCS Conference tomorrow and Thursday.

We are currently using a forestry mulcher, Darren and Al are running that. They were out at Sherman today. We talked about renting one and we had this opportunity to do that through the Fish and Wildlife grant

West District: Eden Valley has experienced some electrical issues; the main breaker was tripping in a section of the campground. We did have some hot days and with the bigger campers running their A/C units may have contributed to the issue. We had an electrician come out to look and he stated that section is overloaded. He will submit a quote to add and additional panel to the system.

East District: Since August the seasonals are done for the year, Colton and Katie are keeping up with the mowing and the maintenance, along with the switching of every other weekend for patrolling the campground.

They did some electrical lighting upgrades in the shower building, they went from all the halogen bulbs to LED light glaciers in there, which will be much brighter and nicer that they don't have to worry about light bulbs burning out every so often. They recently changed all of the air filters up the Eco Center, which has been a fun learning process, and got those taken care of, just finished them up today. They are going to put them on a 6-month schedule, just to keep up with them.

Colton received a quote from Goats on the Go to help with the poison ivy along the trail, he plans to present it to the Conservation Foundation at the next meeting. And the new pit toilets are scheduled to be delivered October 6th.

EE: The Naturalists are in the thick of field trip season, and with the low waters, they have had to go back and read configure schedules, because they are not able to take the Blue Heron out currently. Instead, they have been using their Voyager canoes a lot. Dave Steadwell, one of our volunteers, has been able to help with that.

We get a lot of out-of-county groups in the fall, Pleasant Valley School District 2nd grade, which is 6 elementary schools that come out on different days and ranges from 30 kids to 70 kids. West Branch, Mount Vernon, Fulton, and Riverdale is coming this year. We have a lot of out-of-county in the fall.

The new Heron Newsletter is out and that covers all our public programming and goes through December.

We also celebrated Jessica's 20-year anniversary with the county. That was a big deal, and she was crazy enough to schedule a program every day of the week, so she had a very busy week, and we were able to celebrate her and thank her for all of her things that she's done for us, so it's been great.

The USDA is now requiring a different permit for the live birds of prey. We had the inspection and went very well; we do need to make some adjustments. The Veterinarian

came out and was very happy with the conditions of the bird rooms. Al will be helping the Naturalists with some adjustments that are needed.

New Business:

- a. FY2027 Fall Budget Amendment – Phil discussed the need for a budget amendment for the Eden Valley deck. In June we purchased materials in FY2026, however it was paid in FY27.

Resolution to authorize the proposal for an amendment to the Fiscal Year 2027 budget.

Whereas the Clinton County Conservation Board proposes to the Board of Supervisors the following budget amendment for Fiscal Year 2027

Account Number	Line Description	Reason for Amendment	Original Amount	New Amount	Difference
0001-22-6110-000-4410	Building Maintenance	Eden Valley Deck Supplies	\$50,000	\$60,000	+ \$10,000

Therefore, BE IT RESOLVED that the Clinton County Conservation Board proposes that the Executive Director make the aforementioned proposal to the Clinton County Board of Supervisors.

Roll Call

Gloria Friedrichsen	Yes
Brian Grell	Yes
Jeff Beckwith	Yes
Brian Tugana	Absent
Karen Bradway	Absen

- b. **Syracuse Boat Ramp Management Agreement** - Phil let the Conservation Board know that the Old Highway 30 bridge is about to be open to the public again. There is a boat ramp down at the end of that and in the past, the Conservation Board managed it. We did have an agreement with the Riedesel family, who own that property, that we took care of the management of it, and

that agreement has now expired. We did not renew it because the area was closed off for some time and you couldn't access it. There was another ramp that was put in on the other side of the river for access. Phil will meet with the county attorney with the new agreement and have it ready for the Conservation Board at the October meeting.

- c. **Eden Valley Nature Center Phase 3 Displays** – Jill has been working with Edwards Creative to complete the displays at Eden Valley Nature Center. There are 3 Phases the 1st being The Snapping Turtle Display, 2nd Iowa Habitats Display, and 3rd Box Turtle Display. Jill addressed the project with the Conservation Foundation for the project and has been given the approval to move forward. The Conservation Board will pay the invoices, and the Conservation Foundation will reimburse the Conservation Board. Also, she is hoping to use some of the taxidermy out of the storage unit so we can get rid of that. She is meeting with them on Thursday via teams, and the cost will be \$33,000. Appreciate the Conservation Foundations' help and hopefully the project will be completed before April 2027.

Gloria Friederichsen motioned to move forward with Eden Valley Nature Center and to get reimbursed from the Conservation Foundation, Brian Grell seconded, motion carried.

- d. **Discussion of Slip Renters Liability Insurance** – Dr. Brian Tugana had asked if we required liability insurance for our dock leases. Other local marinas do have insurance requirements for their dock rentals. Colton Jones is going to look at the wording on the dock lease contract to make sure it is clear that the county is not liable for damage to boats or damage caused by other boaters. The Conservation Board suggested speaking with the County Attorney on this matter for guidance.
- e. **Request for Assistance Exploring the Rock Creek Channel** – Brian Grell motioned to strike item due to a Conservation Board member being absent, Gloria Friederichsen seconded.

- f. **Review of Conservation Board Bylaws** – Human Resource Director Ally Weller was here to get clarity from the board members on the Conservation Board Bylaws and what the expectations are for board members. Example taking time with individual employees to manage their day-to-day or their performance, whatever that looks like.

Ally was questioning the Conservation Board to fully understand the process and rules; stated "Bylaws and Chapter 350 are what the Conservation Board uses to govern, and it doesn't explicitly state what the process for performance evaluations or having those conversations with employees." She then asked, "But it does or can indicate or infer as a whole that, the executive director is responsible to the board as a whole, right?" All And then the executive director manages the employees under their performance, correct?

Ally asked the Conservation Board, "So, if we could get clarity, or a motion, or something... basically, what I would like to hear from the board is, are you okay with one member of the board acting outside the hole, taking an hour of an employee's time one-on-one to performance manage them, or do you expect that any performance management is done as a whole group?"

Jeff Beckwith responded, "Well that, it should be done as a whole group, and I thought we do this every year for Phil, don't we?"

Gloria Friederichsen responded, "we do an evaluation for Phil, but as far as the staff, we don't have nothing to do with their management. We go directly to Phil if we have an issue." She also stated, "And then Phil takes up the issue if it's something that's important."

Ally asked, "You, as the board as a whole, goes directly to Phil?"

Gloria responded, "Yeah."

Jeff Beckwith also responded, "Yes."

Gloria then stated, "Okay. So, we get a book, and it gives us a handbook with all our rules in it, what you should and shouldn't do."

Jeff Beckwith asked, "Is that the Bylaws?"

Phil stated, "No, she's talking a booklet, it's put out by ICCS, and it's in reference to Iowa Code 350. You should have a copy of the bylaws in your packet, but what she's referring to is a board member book."

Gloria stated, "It tells you what you should and shouldn't do."

Phil said, "It talks about open meetings law, it refers back to Code 350." And summarizes Code 350.

Gloria said, "In more of a layman's terms."

Phil said, "That's been given to all of the board members, including our newest board member."

Ally then asked, "So would you guys agree, then, that a single board member meeting privately with the executive director to critique their performance without being told to do so by the board as a whole would be acting outside the scope?"

Jeff Beckwith and Gloria Friederichsen answered yes to Ally's question.

Ally just wanted to get clarity about how the Conservation Board works and Bylaws, etc. She also wanted to get it all on record.

Ally also stated, "He's entitled to a closed session if there were any true concerns of the board that were performance, but we just want to make sure that, any objectives that are being discussed with Phil are objectives that the entire board agrees on, because otherwise, you're a five-member board, and if each member of the board went to one employee and said, you need to do exactly what I say, and take an hour of their time to do that. Hypothetically, then that's 5 hours of that employee's time, and 5 different opinions."

Ally also stated, "So what we would like to do, then, is protect the executive director's time, and make sure that no one individual on the board is using their board authority to act outside the scope of their duties."

Gloria Friederichsen responded, "Correct."

Gloria Friederichsen motioned to clarify that it's the intent of the Conservation Board that any performance directives are determined by the whole board and not any one individual, Brian Grell seconded, motion carried.

Brian Grell asked, "I'm wondering,"

Gloria asked, "Is it strong enough?"

Brian Grell replied, "No" then asked, "is this just a, symbolic gesture from the board that has no teeth in the end, because it seems like kind of a shotgun approach when we have a specific issue. You know what I mean by that?"

Ally replied, "Yeah, I do know what you mean by that, and I don't think anyone sh hear wants to embarrass any one person, and I think that it's a good idea to clarify certain things. At the end of the day, what we really want to do is protect the time of the executive director, and I think if he is hearing from you guys, you do not have to accept meetings of that substance, and that's the opinion of the board. Empowering him to be able to have that ownership of his time back is the minimum.

Jeff Beckwith asked, "Do we have that in the motion?"

Ally responded, "We do not have anything about employment."

There was more discussion with the Board, Ally and Phil about clarification and language for the motion.

Brian Grell asked, "I don't know that we need a motion, because it's not like it's taking action, but we can, reaffirm that it's our belief that no one board member's agenda is above the board as a whole, when dealing with the director's performance and behaviors, or perceived behaviors?"

Ally said, "I wouldn't recommend trying to, edit the bylaws with two people not here anyway. So that would just not be great for all relations, honestly. So, I think just for you guys to publicly state that hey, we're reading the bylaws, this is what we infer from it, we're in agreement, and now Phil knows how he's to move on this, and I think we'll be in an okay spot for now and see how it goes."

Motion above is scratched.

One last item Ally was asked to pass along, she said, "Erin George would like to, through me, reiterate her recommendation for TW training to meet with the board so that they can understand communication styles of each other, if they are interested in doing so."

Old Business:

- a. County Attorney Review of the Polar Plunge Event at Rock Creek – Phil reached out to Mike Wolf for help with the Polar Plunge and a facility agreement between Conservation Foundation and Clinton County Conservation Board that takes off the liability of the county. Phil will work with the Foundation to get an agreement in place.

Public Comment:

Adjournment – Jeff Beckwith to adjourn the meeting at 7:30 p.m.

Next meeting: Tuesday, October 20th, 2026 – 6pm - Location Grand Mound or via Zoom

Jeff Beckwith, Chair

Brian Grell, Secretary/Treasurer