

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
OF THE MACON COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT
August 16, 2023**

PURSUANT to written notice given all members of the Board, the above meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by President Bendsen

Board members present: President Bendsen, 1st Vice President Castor, Treasurer Allen, and Secretary Reed.

Board Members absent: 2nd Vice-President Sams

Trustee Reed MOVED to approve the Minutes of the July 19, 2023 Public Meeting. Trustee Castor SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Reed "AYE"; Trustee Allen, "AYE"; Trustee Castor, "AYE"; and Trustee Bendsen, "AYE". Motion carried.

Trustee Reed MOVED to approve the Treasurer's Report and disbursements in the amount of \$158,677.48 and additions to disbursements in the amount of \$51,708.15 as presented. Trustee Castor SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Castor, "AYE"; Trustee Allen, "AYE"; Trustee Bendsen, "AYE"; and Trustee Reed, "AYE". Motion carried.

COMMENTS FROM AUDIENCE: No comments from the audience.

PRIOR BUSINESS

1. Deer Herd Management Update

Ethan Snively updated the Trustees on the dates and deer-related vehicle accident data that was not available last month. As reported last month, Ethan indicated to the Trustees that the start date of the program may have to be altered to accommodate the Restricted Archery Zone implemented by IDNR. IDNR is proposing that this be extended through the end of October which affects the District's Deer Herd Program. In anticipation of this being approved, staff recommend beginning the program on November 3 (previously was October 31) and extend it two weeks. It would still be the same eight weeks just with different start and end dates. There was some discussion regarding notifying the hunters and Ethan had already put the new dates on the applications for the hunters to see. He did emphasize that the dates change every year so the hunters know it's not consistently the same start date. Trustees did express some concern regarding the program running into the Christmas Holiday and interfere with families using the trails. One option was to cut the program short a week, but it was noted that many of the hunters have vacation the week that would be cut. After some discussion, all were in agreement to accept the new dates as long as staff was cognizant of any issues arising the weeks around Christmas.

Ethan also reported that the overall number of deer/vehicle accidents in Macon County for 2022 dropped from 134 to 106 and 44% of those accidents happened within two miles of the four Conservation Areas open to hunting.

Trustee Reed MOVED to approve changing the Deer Herd Management Program to begin November 3, 2023, instead of October 31, 2023, and extend two weeks into December as stated above. Trustee Allen SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Allen, "AYE"; Trustee Reed, "AYE"; Trustee Castor, "AYE"; and Trustee Bendsen, "AYE". Motion carried.

2. Appointment of IACD Liaison

Trustee Allen confirmed that his calendar is free to continue as the IACD (Illinois Association of Conservation Districts) Liaison for the next year.

Trustee Reed MOVED to approve Mark Allen as the IACD Liaison as discussed. Trustee Castor SECONDED the motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Castor, "AYE"; Trustee Bendsen, "AYE"; Trustee Allen, "AYE"; and Trustee Reed, "AYE". Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS:

1) Presentation of the Audit by MCK CPAs & Advisors:

Cathy Mansur with MCK CPAs & Advisors reported to the Trustee that the District had a "clean" audit and briefly explained the modified cash basis of accounting. Under the modified basis, the District operates on cash so that there are no accounts payables or accounts receivables. Fixed assets are accounted for in the Government Wide Financials and not the fund accounts. The net income over expenses for all the fund accounts was \$152,867.00. She explained that the notes to the financials explain the numbers that comprise the financials. Cathy did have some suggestions as follows to the Board and Staff:

- 1) An accounting manual be created for training purposes to ensure that policies and processes are being followed to help prevent errors, misunderstandings, and situations that can result in inaccurate or untimely accounting records.
- 2) She also emphasized that Department Heads and supervisors should be reviewing all invoices for accuracy and signing off on the invoices. Pam Smith added that original credit card slips giving details of the transactions should also be submitted as supporting documents for credit card statements.

Some discussion followed concerning the accounting manual. Pam Smith has already begun the process of creating the manual and had reached out to other agencies for examples to follow. Cathy Mansur stated that the manual should be specific to the District's processes and procedures.

2) Approval of Audit Payment:

Pam Smith explained that this was the second year of a three year agreement with MCK CPAs & Advisors and the amount owed to the firm as per the agreement was \$12,600.00. Staff recommended Board approving the payment for the completed audit.

Trustee Castor MOVED to approve the payment of \$12,600.00 for the audit work completed by MCK CPAs & Advisors. Trustee Allen SECONDED the motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Castor, "AYE"; Trustee Bendsen, "AYE"; Trustee Allen, "AYE"; and Trustee Reed, "AYE". Motion carried.

3) Resolution Approval for the purchase of the Floyd Property:

Jerry Culp presented the resolution for the purchase of the Floyd Property for Board approval. This resolution gives Jerry the authority to move forward with the purchase of the property and signing the sale agreement. The cost of the property is \$600,000.00 with the grant paying 50% of the cost. The final steps needed to complete all the requirements of the grant are in process with hopes to complete the final sale transaction in a few weeks. Staff need Board approval of the resolution to continue with the purchase of the Floyd Property.

Trustee Castor MOVED to approve the Resolution for purchase of the Floyd Property as presented. Trustee Allen SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Allen, "AYE"; Trustee Reed, "AYE"; Trustee Castor, "AYE"; and Trustee Bendsen, "AYE". Motion carried.

4) Approval to apply for an OSLAD Grant for Fort Daniel Improvements:

Jerry Culp explained that the District purchased 242 acres of property in 2022 adjacent to Fort Daniel funded by a Clean Energy Community Foundation Grant. Currently the property is being farmed but as per the grant, within three years the land must be converted to its natural state. Before being farmed this property was once a combination of oak savanna, upland prairie and seasonal wetlands. Staff is proposing to apply for a grant to fund the restoration of the new acquisition which would include restoring the agricultural areas and adding a small parking area, interpretive/restroom area and a system of trails. Just recently the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) designated Macon County as an economically distressed county and if the grant is awarded will provide 100% of the project costs up to \$600,000.00. Trustees questioned if the project would stay within the \$600,000.00 and Jerry assured them that he was working on submitting the costs. He will submit a full master plan to include the land restoration, parking lot and trail system as it is easier to add now verses later. Most of the work will be contracted out. Staff recommend approving the resolution to apply for the Open Space Land Acquisition Development (OSLAD) grant.

Trustee Reed MOVED to approve applying for an OSLAD Grant for the cost of improvements at the Fort Daniel Conservation Area. Trustee Allen SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Bendsen, "AYE"; Trustee Castor, "AYE"; Trustee Allen, "AYE"; and Trustee Reed, "AYE". Motion carried.

5) Approval to Waive Special Event Permit for Sand Creek Run:

Phil Julius informed the Trustees of an upcoming Trail Run Event that is held every year hosted by the Decatur Running Club. This event is a fund raising event for the "Wounded Warrior Foundation." Very little staff time is used for this event outside of emptying trash cans and Gage Elder, Site Superintendent, briefly speaking before the start of the event. Staff is recommending that the event fee be waived for this fundraiser. Discussion followed amongst the Trustees expressing concern about the consistency and what steps will be taken to decide if a special event fee should be waived for non-for-profits. Trustee Reed emphasized that there must be consistency across the board and a policy should be established and a statement included on the application itself explaining the process for waiving the event fee. Her recommendation was to establish how much time staff put into these events and establishing a policy/statement saying in order for the event fee to be waived for any "Not-for-Profit", will be determined by the amount of staff hours that must be allotted for that event. One recommendation was waiving the fee if less than 1.5 hours of staff time was needed for the event. Staff were to determine what a feasible amount of time would be and establish the policy based on that time. Recommended wording for the application was "Consideration of waiving the event fee for any Not-for-Profit 501(c)3 organization will be contingent upon the number of staff hours needed to hold the event."

Trustee Allen MOVED to approve waiving the special event fee of \$200.00 for the Annual Sand Creek Run but with staff implementing a policy with guidelines for granting a waiver of the special event fee for any not-for-profit that meet the

guidelines established in the policy. Trustee Reed SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Reed "AYE"; Trustee Allen, "AYE"; Trustee Castor, "AYE"; and Trustee Bendsen, "AYE". Motion carried.

6) Staff Reports

Jerry Culp has been working on the OSLAD Grant for the proposed improvements at Fort Daniel Conservation Area and just received word that IDNR has designated Macon County as an Economically Distressed County which will enable the District to receive 100% reimbursement on the grant. Staff met with Regions Bank who is wanting to become more involved with District Events as a sponsor. The Foundation Board met at the newly acquired Penhallegon Farmstead at their last meeting. The Board decided to schedule the 5K Ramble for May 18, 2024, reviewed the status of the Prairie Pedal as well as other possible events that could be held at the Farmstead. Prairie Pedal preparation is underway with the route selected which will head south and east through the county and have stops at Lincoln Trail Homestead, Willow Branch and Fort Daniel Conservation Area. Staff continues to work with MMLP Architects for a plan on the siding repair at the Oglesby Mansion. Staff is proceeding with the grant process for the purchase of the Floyd Property, working toward finalizing the agreement and setting a closing date.

Pam Smith spent a considerable amount of time in July working with MCK Auditors reviewing and finalizing the audit for Board approval. Staff kept busy finalizing the Deer Herd Management paperwork and process as well as completing the new Trustee Manual for the new Trustee as well as completing the Director's manual for the new Foundation Board member. Paper was finalized for an employee's IMRF Disability Claim. Staff attended an Employment Law Compliance Update for 2023 and shared the information with the HR Consultant. Staff met with the HR Consultant to discuss updating the employee handbook and other projects. The District had a certificate of deposit mature and was renewed with First Mid Bank and Trust at a 4.99% interest rate. Staff resolved an issue between the new Camping online Registration software "Firefly" and the old program, "Astra" as there was over \$3,000.00 in revenue that never hit the District's bank account.

Phil Julius reviewed the work being done at each of the Conservation Areas. Staff is also putting together damage/cleanup costs along with other municipalities in Illinois to get Federal Funding for the storms that came through the area on June 29th. Staff has submitted costs totaling \$4,300.00 for reimbursement. A few highlights from the various conservation areas included trees and fencing being removed along the road at the newly acquired Farmstead for better visibility. At Rock Springs, there was river trail pruning, treating the Cattail Pond with Algaecide, replacing a sewer grate that was missing by the canoe launch, and repair of stone wall caps at the Rodney T Miller wetland. The disabled hunting blind was installed behind the Franklin Street Barn at Sand Creek Conservation Area as well as treating invasive species with herbicide. Work continued on the Wetlands at Friends Creek Conservation area requiring a joint effort of all operations staff.

Alysia Callison gave an update on programs with four of the five summer camps wrapping up at the end of July. Overall the camps went very well and staff are already brainstorming for new ideas and improvements for next year's camp. Staff continue to work on updating the Educator's Guide which was last updated in 2018. Staff spent time preparing the Fall Prairie Islander Newsletter and brainstorming for new ideas to be included in the next publication. Alysia was appointed as regional co-chair for the East Central Region of the Environmental Education Association of Illinois (EEAI). Next year's conference will be held in Decatur so Alysia will be in charge of helping plan the event. Ashton Nunn continues to work hard coordinating

the Prairie Pedal with flyers and banners distributed, and route finalized. A few special events are coming up: The Monarch Madness on September 23rd along with the Prairie Pedal on September 24th. The Audubon Society once again agreed to sponsor \$10,000.00 for schools for busing transportation for field trips to the Nature Center. The City Bus Route ended its trial period with very little interest.

7) Other Business

No other business.

COMMENTS FROM TRUSTEES:

No further comments from the Trustees.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Trustee Allen MOVED to go into Executive Session at 6:30 p.m. for the purpose of

- 1. The appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance or dismissal of specific employees of the public body, including hearing testimony on a complaint lodged against an employee to determine its validity. 5 ILCS 120/2 (c) (1)**

Trustee Castor SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Castor, "AYE"; Trustee Reed, "AYE"; Trustee Bendsen, "AYE"; and Trustee Allen, "AYE". Motion carried.

Trustee Allen MOVED to return to the Regular Public Meeting at 6:55 p.m. Trustee Castor SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Allen, "AYE"; Trustee Reed "AYE"; Trustee Bendsen, "AYE"; and Trustee Castor, "AYE". Motion carried.

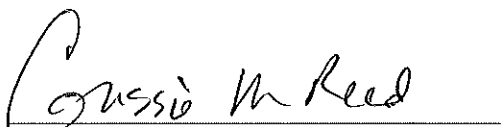
Trustee Reed MOVED to approve the Executive Session Minutes of August 16, 2023. Trustee Castor SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Bendsen, "AYE"; Trustee Castor, "AYE"; Trustee Allen, "AYE"; and Trustee Reed "AYE". Motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, Trustee Castor MOVED to adjourn the Public Meeting at 6:57 p.m. Trustee Allen SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Reed, "AYE"; Trustee Allen, "AYE"; Trustee Bendsen, "AYE"; and Trustee Castor "AYE". Motion carried.



President



Secretary