

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
OF THE MACON COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT
December 22, 2022**

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, 2nd Vice-President Schneller; Treasurer Reed, and Secretary Allen

Board Members absent: None

Trustee Schneller MOVED to approve the Minutes of the November 16, 2022, Public Meeting. Trustee Allen SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Bendsen, "AYE"; Trustee Allen, "AYE"; Trustee Reed, "AYE"; Trustee Castor, "AYE"; and Trustee Schneller, "AYE". Motion carried.

Trustee Castor MOVED to approve the Treasurer's Report and disbursements in the amount of \$312,885.69 and additions to disbursements in the amount of \$29,142.05 as presented. Trustee Schneller SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Castor, "AYE"; Trustee Allen, "AYE"; Trustee Bendsen "AYE"; Trustee Schneller, "AYE"; and Trustee Reed, "AYE". Motion carried.

COMMENTS FROM AUDIENCE: No comments.

PRIOR BUSINESS: No prior business

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Health Insurance Premium Approval:

Pam Smith discussed the annual renewal of the employee health insurance with the Board. As already explained in an earlier meeting, United Healthcare's (UHC) premium was increasing by 9% so Pam asked the District insurance broker to search for other proposals. We received a quote from Health Alliance, Blue Cross Blue Shield (BCBS), and Allstate Insurance. Health Alliance came in higher than UHC and BCBS still does not have a contract with Springfield Clinic, so those were not an option. Though Allstate's initial proposal would have been a significant savings, they required all employees to complete a health application. After this process, their quote came in higher with a lower savings for the District and originally stated. The broker reached back out to UHC and they decided to lower the premium to only a 5% increase. Staff felt that the savings with Allstate was not significant enough to warrant changing to a new insurance. The Broker also advised us to not make the switch to Allstate until they have a little more experience with them. The District has been with UHC for approximately 10 years and always maintained a 500 deductible. UHC's proposed monthly premium would be \$24,838.16 while Allstate's would be \$23,548.90. Staff recommends remaining with UHC another year and then next year reach out to other brokers to see what options they can find for the District.

Trustee Castor MOVED to approve renewing the employee's health insurance with United Health Care for calendar year 2023 as presented and contacting other brokers for other options for the District next year. Trustee Allen SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Castor, "AYE"; Trustee Allen, "AYE"; Trustee Schneller, "AYE"; Trustee Reed, "AYE"; and Trustee Bendsen, "AYE". Motion carried.

2. Approval of additions to Employee Handbook:

Pam Smith reviewed the proposed changes to the employee handbook which included changing the number of days to give notice for vacation from 30 to 14, added a more detailed explanation of purposes in using sick leave and changed the number of days absent requiring a doctor’s slip to return to work from four days to three days. A new addition under the sick leave benefit included providing employees that resigned or retired from employment a monetary compensation for accumulated sick leave based on the chart below (employees terminated do not qualify for this benefit):

YEARS OF COMPLETED SERVICE	PERCENTAGE PAYOUT
0 through 4 Years	0%
5 through 9 Years	10%
10 through 14 Years	20%
15 Years or Greater	33%

The number of days’ notice for requesting personal leave was changed from a three day notice to the following: *“Employees should request the use of personal time a minimum of two days’ notice of the desired date except for unforeseen circumstances (for example furnace issues and the need to meet with a contractor for repairs).”*

Staff also propose adding a new “Voluntary Sick Leave Donation Policy” to allow fellow employees to donate sick leave to an employee who has exhausted all their available leave due to an unexpected medical circumstance. The donors must have at least a minimum of 240 hours leave accumulated in their sick leave bank before donating funds. Both a donor form and a request form were created as a part of the Leave Donation Policy.

All changes were reviewed by the District’s attorney before proposing to the Board. Staff recommends accepting these changes to the employee handbook and adding the new Leave Donation Policy and corresponding forms.

Trustee Schneller MOVED to approve the updates to the current employee handbook as presented along with the new Leave Donation Policy and its forms as presented. Trustee Allen SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Schneller, “AYE”; Trustee Reed, “AYE”; Trustee Bendsen, “AYE”; Trustee Castor, “AYE”; and Trustee Allen, “AYE”. Motion carried.

3. Approval of Seed Purchase

Ethan Snively, Natural Resource Manager, explained the need to purchase native seed for planting at the Fort Daniel Conservation Area for the third and final phase of the 110 acre prairie restoration. The District went out to bid on the purchase with four bids being received from Cardno Native Plant Nursery, Prairie Moon Nursery, Pure Air Natives and Shooting Star Native Seeds. Natural Resource staff reviewed the bids and selected suppliers that most closely matched the quantity requested and provided the best price. Ethan shared a document with the Board that showed their selection for each species. The total amount from those suppliers recommended by the staff totaled \$26,787.96. This amount is less than the budgeted amount of \$45,000.00 for this purchase. This price excludes shipping and will be calculated when the order is placed. The Macon County Conservation Foundation will reimburse the District for the cost of the seed plus shipping. Staff recommends that

that the Board approve the purchase of two species from Cardno Native Plan Nursery for \$6565.60, eighteen species from Prairie Moon Nursery for \$12, 414.00, nineteen species from Pure Air Natives for \$5,650.10 and nineteen species from Shooting Star Native Seeds for \$8,158.16.

Trustee Reed MOVED to approve the purchase of seeds from Cardno Native Plant Nursery, Prairie Moon Nursery, Pure Air Natives and Shooting Star Native Seeds as presented for a total amount of \$26, 787.86. Trustee Schneller SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Allen, "AYE"; Trustee Reed, "AYE"; Trustee Castor, "AYE"; Trustee Bendsen, "AYE"; and Trustee Schneller, "AYE". Motion carried.

4. Staff Reports

Jerry Culp gave an update on activities since the last Board meeting including attending the Forest Preserve and Conservation Foundation quarterly meeting, reviewing the budget, joining the Community Foundation on the Steve Byers radio show to discuss the Conservation District and meeting with Pat Penhallegon regarding his farmstead. The budget needs to be compiled and finalized before the budget study session in February. Jerry and staff met with various IT Consultants for consideration in hiring one of them to help the District plan technology upgrades and IT Support. Staff worked on changes and updates to the Employee Handbook, mostly clarifying existing policies but also adding a new "Sick Leave Donation Policy" where employees can request donation sick time from eligible employees when the need arises. Staff continues to work on the Rock Springs Ramble scheduled for May 20, 2023.

Jerry Culp also updated the Board on work being done by the Operations Staff. The Operations Department is working with the City of Decatur on the watershed management plan for Lake Decatur which involves the installation of two floating wetland projects at Friends Creek. At Rock Springs, the framing for a new overhead door was completed, awaiting the delivery of the door. Staff worked on shutting down and winterizing the Griswold house now that it is empty. Staff is preparing equipment for the winter weather by installing plows and salt spreaders on equipment. Demolition of the Xanders Property house on Dipper Lane continues and the contractor is scheduled to complete the demolition. Natural Resources received the new excavator and staff have been completing a training program before using the equipment. Staff is working on the removal of a barn at Friends Creek Conservation Area, which was previously approved by the Board. Restoration of the 17 acres of the Xander Property has gone well with staff clearing invasive plants. The campground was shut down and winterized and the electrical breaker upgrade was completed which was part of the Friends Creek electrical upgrade at the campground. The Friends Creek shop addition is almost complete and the new wood heat system has been installed at the shop, which is a hydronic heating system that heats with water through floor heat in the new addition. The cold storage equipment building at Sand Creek has been completed. Staff are working on honeysuckle removal along the trails at Sand Creek. The new skid steer that was ordered through the cooperative purchase program has been delivered.

Pam Smith reported that she continued working on gathering information for the Foundation's Liability Insurance for its special events serving alcohol. She was waiting to hear back from two different insurance brokers. Pam worked with Jerry Culp and the District attorney on tweaking the employee handbook and creating the new "Leave Donation Policy" and corresponding forms. We had 19 staff/family volunteer at the "Trees on the Tees" as a new community involvement venture.

Outside of a few glitches, the staff seemed to have a good time. Staff worked on cleaning up the Foundation Donor database and preparing the year-end letter for Dynagraphics to process and mail out. All tax levy distributions have been received for a total of \$2,007,129.15, which is 98% of the total requested.

Alysia Callison reported that November is usually a slow month for Program Services but they did have visits from a school, a large Cub Scout Troop, as well as several off-site programs. The Candlelight Tour at the Homestead saw 56 people in attendance. The Winter Prairie Islander newsletter was mailed out at the end of November and staff are working on spring programs. Alysia and staff have been brainstorming on ways to spend the funds from a large donation toward education earlier in the year. They have already purchased educational materials such as posters, skulls, aquatic nets as well as supplies for creating new displays and presenting programs. Several new pairs of ski boots were also purchased with the funds. Alysia received six marketing applications and the position was offered to Ashton Nunn, the current Animal Care Naturalist.

5. Other Business: No other business.

COMMENTS FROM TRUSTEES: No comments.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, Trustee Allen **MOVED** to adjourn the Public Meeting at 6:20 p.m. Trustee Castor **SECONDED** the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Schneller, "AYE"; Trustee Allen, "AYE"; Trustee Bendsen, "AYE"; Trustee Reed, "AYE"; and Trustee Castor "AYE". Motion carried.



President



Secretary