

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
OF THE MACON COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT
May 17, 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, 2nd Vice President Schneller, Secretary Allen and Treasurer Reed.

Board Members absent: None

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

Trustee Schneller MOVED to approve the Treasurer's Report and disbursements in the amount of \$173,467.02 and additions to disbursements in the amount of \$60,753.76 as presented. Trustee Allen SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Castor, "AYE"; Trustee Reed, "AYE"; Trustee Allen, "AYE"; Trustee Bendsen, "AYE"; and Trustee Schneller, "AYE". Motion carried.

COMMENTS FROM AUDIENCE: No comments.

PRIOR BUSINESS

1. Approval of additional cost for Turf Mower

Phil Julius explained to the Board that they had approved the purchase of a turf mower at the last Board meeting for \$15,777.76 (which included a \$2,000.00 trade in value) but the actual cost to purchase the mower was \$17,777.76, so he needs Board approval for the \$2,000.00 difference. When he proposed approval for the purchase last month in the amount of \$15,777.76, Phil moved forward thinking he would auction off the mower and purchased the new John Deere for \$17,777.76. Phil believes that he can get \$2,000.00 at the auction for the 2014 Toro, but Board approval is needed for \$2,000.00 more making the total purchase for the John Deere Z994R mower \$17,777.76, making it possible to auction off the Toro Mower.

Trustee Reed MOVED to approve the additional cost of the John Deere Z994R mower of \$2,000.00 for a total cost of \$17,777.76. Trustee Castor SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Bendsen, "AYE"; Trustee Reed, "AYE"; Trustee Castor, "AYE"; Trustee Allen, "AYE"; and Trustee Schneller, "AYE". Motion carried.

2. Approval to apply for PARC Grant for Outdoor Classroom

Jerry Culp presented pictures of the design for the outdoor classroom, which will be funded partially by a Park and Recreation Facility Construction (PARC) Grant. This grant was announced in May and Board approval is needed to complete and submit an application for the grant. The Board needs to approve a resolution to complete the application which certifies that 100% of the funds necessary to complete the project, pending the project is completed within the grant time frame. The grant should fund between 75-90% of the cost with an estimated cost of approximately \$1,000,000.00.

Trustee Schneller MOVED to approve the Resolution for authorization to submit an application to the Illinois Department of Natural Resources for a Park and Recreation Facility Construction Grant for the Rock Springs Indoor/Outdoor Classroom addition. Trustee Reed SECONDED the motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Reed, "AYE"; Trustee Castor, "AYE"; Trustee Schneller, "AYE"; Trustee Allen, "AYE"; and Trustee Bendsen, "AYE". Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Local Government Efficiency Resolution Approval:

The Decennial Committees on Local Government Efficiency Act requires local government units to form a committee to study local government efficiencies and issue a report to their local County Board. Though this is an unfunded mandate, the law gives the various Districts the ability to appoint the committee membership and the opportunity to demonstrate the ways in which they work efficiently to deliver park, recreation, and conservations programs, facilities and services to their residents. The committee will be composed of the President of the Board, Jerry Culp and two local residents (James Keith and Laura Richardson) who will meet over an 18 month period to produce a report to the County which will be on file for 10 years. Staff prepared a resolution to form the Committee with the help of two residents as required by the act. Staff recommends Board approval of the resolution to form the Local Efficiency Act Committee to fulfill the requirement of the Local Government Efficiency Act.

Trustee Allen MOVED to approve the Resolution to form the Local Efficiency Act Committee as per the Local Government Efficiency Act as presented. Trustee Castor SECONDED the motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Reed, "AYE"; Trustee Castor, "AYE"; Trustee Schneller, "AYE"; Trustee Allen, "AYE"; and Trustee Bendsen, "AYE". Motion carried.

2. Foundation Board Member Approval:

Jerry Culp presented Robin Caceres for approval to serve on the Macon County Conservation Foundation Board of Directors. Robin's Board Member Application was included in the Board Packet. Robin is a registered nurse and very involved in community activities. The Conservation Board of Trustees must approve all new Directors to the Foundation Board. Staff ask for approval of Robin Caceres as a new member of the Board of Directors for the Macon County Conservation Foundation and would like to present this new member to the Foundation Board of Directors tomorrow, Thursday, May 18th.

Trustee Schneller MOVED to approve Robin Caceres as a new member of the Board of Directors for the Macon County Conservation Foundation. Trustee Castor SECONDED the motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Bendsen, "AYE" Trustee Castor, "Aye"; Trustee Schneller, "AYE"; Trustee Allen, "AYE"; and Trustee Reed, "AYE". Motion carried.

3. Signature Approval for the CRP Land Agreements Resolution:

A resolution was included in the Board packet authorizing Jerry Culp, Executive Director, and Philip Julius, Director of Operations to act on the behalf of the District and the Foundation in signing documents to participate in the Macon County Farm Services Agency programs. Both organizations have land in CRP (Conservation Reserve Program). The Board is required to approve and sign this resolution giving them the authority.

Trustee Reed MOVED to approve the Resolution authorizing Jerry Culp and Philip Julius to sign documents when acting on behalf of the Macon County Conservation District and Foundation to participate in the Macon County Farm Services Bureau. Trustee Allen SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Bendsen, "AYE"; Trustee Reed, "AYE"; Trustee Allen, "AYE"; Trustee Castor "AYE"; and Trustee Schneller, "AYE". Motion carried.

4. Board Member Electronic Attendance Policy Approval :

Staff submitted an Electronic Attendance Policy for Board Approval. Pam Smith explained that the COVID-19 Disaster Proclamation and Executive Order expired on May 11th. During COVID-19, Boards were given the authority to meet electronically without stipulations; but with that ending, a policy needed to be established giving guidelines for meeting electronically. The District has not had a policy in place; and according to the Open Meetings Act (OMA), the Board must adopt rules conforming to the OMA's requirements. The Board may still permit a member to attend a meeting via video or audio due to personal illness, a disability, employment purposes, business of the public body, family emergency or another emergency pending there is a quorum physically present at the meeting. Staff recommends the Board approve the Electronic Attendance Policy in order to be in compliance with the Open Meetings Act.

Trustee Castor MOVED to approve the Electronic Attendance Policy. Trustee Schneller SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Bendsen, "AYE"; Trustee Castor, "AYE"; Trustee Reed, "AYE"; Trustee Allen, "AYE"; and Trustee Schneller, "AYE". Motion carried.

5. Approval of Surplus Equipment:

Phil Julius presented two pieces of equipment as surplus seeking Board approval for disposal. The first piece of equipment is a 2014 Toro Z-Master, which was replaced by a new 2023 John Deere 994R mower in May. The second piece of equipment is a 2011 Ford F-150 truck that was replaced in April with a new 2023 Ford F-150. Staff recommends Board approval declaring the 2011 Ford F-150 and the 2014 Toro Z-Master mower as surplus property and allow the District to sell the equipment.

Trustee Reed MOVED to approve declaring the 2011 Ford F-150 and the 2014 Toro Z-Master mower as surplus property and allow the District to sell them as presented. Trustee Allen SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Schneller, "AYE"; Trustee Reed, "AYE"; Trustee Allen, "AYE"; Trustee Bendsen, "AYE"; and Trustee Castor "AYE". Motion carried.

6. Staff Reports:

Jerry Culp gave some highlights from his Executive Director's report to the Board. The fiber optic line from the Nature Center to the Information Shelter was installed and functioning providing the staff Wi-Fi connections for operating programs and events from the info shelter. Staff shared a booth with the Decatur Park District at Parks Day at the Capital on May 2nd and then afterwards attended the legislative reception and conference. Staff attended the Central Illinois Directors meeting on April 21st and the Joint Legislative Committee meeting. Staff is preparing for the Rock Springs Ramble on May 20th. Despite the cool weather, the Festival of Spring was a successful event and the concession sales went smoothly with the new Wi-Fi

installed in the info shelter. The District is working with MMLP Architects to complete the drawings and get historic preservation approval and permits from the City for installation of railings on the east porch of the Oglesby Mansion. The District received an OSLAD Grant to acquire 47 acres adjacent to the Bois du Sangamon Nature Preserve and is planning for the closing in late summer. Contracts are complete for closing on the Penhallegon Farmstead in late July. Exciting news is that the City approved a bus route to Rock Springs. This will be a test until they determine the ridership interest. Even more exciting is the fact that the District will be able to advertise on the side of the buses.

Jerry Culp gave highlights from the Operations Report to the Board. The Xander Property was looking beautiful with all the buildings cleared and three truckloads of metal recycled from the structures. An ADM volunteer workday was held on May 11th removing fence along the property. David Horn's class from Millikin University held a workday at Rock Springs removing Honeysuckle. Natural Resources held a Native Garden workday and removed Honeysuckle around the Nature Center. Work was completed at Rock Springs by staff including stump grinding, pine forest clearing from storms, hazardous trees removed, herbicide application on invasive species, and flag stone was removed at the base of the west deck of the Nature Center. Trees along the lane to Blue Mound were pruned making it easier to maneuver the turf mower around them at Griswold Conservation Area. Forestry mowing was completed behind the shop at Sand Creek as well as along some boundaries and along trail edges. Food plots were planted in multiple locations throughout Friends Creek to try to increase food supply for upland game. Large Oak and Hickory hazard trees were removed from the campground just before the opening of the camping season. The City of Decatur Watershed has received a grant that will be paying for a good portion of the wetland projects at Friends Creek which will be an effort to reduce soil erosion in the Lake Decatur Watershed.

Pam Smith gave highlights from her Director of Finance and Human Resources Report. Staff were busy preparing the "point of sale" system for the Foundation's food concessions at the Festival of Spring. The revenue totaled \$394.00 with the majority being cash and \$64.00 in credit card transactions. Though revenue was less than the expenses of \$419.84, it was a great opportunity for the Foundation to make contact with the public. Much of the month was spent gathering documents to enter the final journal entries in the accounting software. The Auditors will be on site in early June for the District's audit. The District's liability insurance was reviewed and updated for submission with the insurance renewing on July 11th. Staff worked hard at entering all the registrations for the Decatur Public Schools registering 32 campers as well as registering a family using the Richie Wolf Memorial Scholarship. Staff is still working on the final details to move the Campground Reservation System to the cloud using "Firefly". Two days were spent with the Integrity, the new IT Consultant acquainting them with the outlay of the District's setup. Software was loaded on each employees system enabling them to submit support tickets directly to Integrity. The District received the Delta Dental renewal for employee's dental insurance with an increase of only 2% locked in for two years. Also, the District received their 2024 IMRF Employer rate increasing from 1.95% to 2.08%, which is approximately a 7% increase but within the 10% increase budgeted for the 4th quarter of FY2024. Staff worked with getting better interest rates for money markets which included switching a Foundation Savings Account to a Money Market account. The District received another Personal Property Replacement Tax distribution in the amount of \$107,089.85 which is 42% of the total revenue budgeted for that line item.

Alysia Callison gave highlights from the Program Services Report as well as the Marketing Specialist's Report. The District held the annual Volunteer Recognition Dinner on April 11th and Jenny Garver did a great job planning and coordinating the event. Though the weather was uncooperative, the Festival of Spring saw approximately 375 people in attendance and overall was a successful event. Program Services Staff attended the Environmental Education Association of Illinois Conference in Moline, Illinois. It was an opportunity for staff to learn what other educators were doing through the State and get ideas to enhance our programs. Next year's conference will be held right here in Decatur so staff are excited about the opportunity to provide assistance. School field trip season began at the end of April with a school program planned for almost every day from April 25 until the end of May. Brent Wielt interviewed Pat Penhallegon to begin building the history of the Eli Ulery house that will be purchased by the District. Decatur Public Schools is providing grant funds for students to sign up for the summer camp of their choice with about 33 students signing up for the District's summer camp programs. Alysia noted that the District's program attendance and visitor count were up and back to pre-Covid numbers. She gave some highlights from the Marketing Report pointing out that one particular Facebook posting of a lost unicorn attracted approximately 27,000 views and shared 447 times. The District has approximately 4,523 followers on Facebook, 221 followers on Instagram and 27 followers on TikTok.

7. Other

No other business.


COMMENTS FROM TRUSTEES:

Trustee Reed inquired as to what safety protocols the District has in place for its programs and special events, particularly asking if an off-duty police officer was at the events. She thought the District should make the public aware that their safety is of concern to the District. The Fire Department and Sheriff's office is made aware of the special big events that are held annually. Discussion followed suggesting ways to enhance safety such as a police officer on a bicycle or just a Sheriff's car being parked in the parking lot. The question was also raised as to whether or not the District had a process if there is ever an active shooter on the premises. Phil Julius as Director of the Safety Committee will look into training for staff in regards to an active shooter.

Karen Schneller's last meeting serving as Trustee on the Board will be June 21st. Jerry Culp is working on recommending a new member at the next meeting.

ADJOURNMENT:

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


Secretary


President