

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR PUBLIC MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
OF THE MACON COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT
May 19, 2021**

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

Board members present: President Schnelller, 1st Vice-President Bendsen, Treasurer Johnson, Secretary Castor and 2nd Vice President Beckhart
Board Members absent: None

Pam Smith noted a correction to the minutes that was found after the Board Packet was delivered in regards to the meeting schedule. The minutes should have reported that the Budget Study Session would be held in February (not March) so the March (not April) Board meeting would be held later to accommodate the 30-day budget review. Correction was made and printed prior to the Board meeting.

Trustee Bendsen MOVED to approve the Minutes of the April 21, 2021, Regular Public Meeting with correction and the May 10, 2021 Special Meeting. Trustee Johnson SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Schnelller, "AYE"; Trustee Beckhart, "AYE"; Trustee Johnson, "AYE"; Trustee Castor, "AYE"; and Trustee Bendsen, "AYE". Motion carried.

Trustee Benson asked about the historic intern's stipend. Pam Smith explained that a stipend has always been paid for the intern as normally they are having to relocate to Decatur and find a place to stay. Due to COVID, an historic intern was not hired last summer. Trustee Bendsen also raised some questions regarding the Timber Framing workshop that was attended by three staff. Shane Ravellette explained that had been approved by Richie Wolf and the training would be used to build a shelter at the group camp at Friends Creek and Sand Creek.

Trustee Castor MOVED to approve the Treasurer's Report and disbursements in the amount of \$193,121.29 and additions to disbursements in the amount of \$21,776.61 as presented. Trustee Beckhart SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Castor, "AYE"; Trustee Beckhart, "AYE"; Trustee Bendsen, "AYE"; Trustee Johnson, "AYE"; and Trustee Schnelller, "AYE". Motion carried.

COMMENTS FROM AUDIENCE: No audience.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Archery Deer Herd Management Program

Ethan Snively presented the annual Deer Herd Management Program report briefly summarizing the program, reviewing deer stats and presented proposed changes to the program. He reported that the disabled deer blind was successful and every hunter using the blind was able to harvest at least one deer. A question was presented to Ethan as to turkey hunting at Friends Creek. Currently it's not allowed but Trustee Johnson inquired if the state could move turkeys from another area to the

Friends Creek Conservation Area. He suggested that the District hire the State to move the turkeys. Ethan is to check into the possibility. Trustee Bendsen asked Ethan if he knew how many deer were harvested by each hunter. Ethan guessed that maybe 30-40 did not harvest a deer but he would get that answer for her and send to the Board. A few highlights from the report were as follows: the District accounted for 13% of the total archery harvest in Macon County, there were 110 participants in the program with 76 deer harvested (up from 67 the year before), the season closed without incident, and 41% of all deer-related vehicle accidents occurred within two miles of the four Conservation Areas open to hunting. Staff recommends continuing the archery deer hunting program for 2021 Season. Ethan did explain that he did not include the browse survey results as the past 10 years' survey indicated browse pressure had been 50% or greater. Staff decided it was not worth the staff's time to conduct the survey with the same results year after year. The 2021 Season will run from October 15th to December 10th. Ethan presented two new recommendations to the Board: (1) Trail Cameras limited to one per hunter and (2) add an additional 90 acres into Friends Creek. A lengthy discussion followed concerning the use of trail cameras. Ethan did explain that hunters had been using trail cameras but it had become an issue so they wanted to address the issue by instituting a new rule that only one trail camera per stand. The overall consensus among the Trustees was that using trail cameras was not a good idea, and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources does not allow the use of trail cameras. Paul Marien stated that the District should follow state guidelines. Further discussion took place concerning what to do if the new rule is violated and a camera was found. The overall consensus was to immediately dispose of the camera if found. Ethan would publish and announce the new rule for all hunters. There was some discussion on opening up more acreage at Friend Creek for hunting. After discussing the lack of parking space and buildings being on the property, the consensus was to hold off for now on adding an additional hunting area.

Trustee Bendsen MOVED to approve continuing the Deer Herd Management Program with the addition of the new rule: *"No trail cameras will be permitted on District Property and if found would be disposed of immediately"*. Trustee Castor SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Beckhart, "AYE"; Trustee Johnson, "AYE"; Trustee Schneller, "AYE"; Trustee Bendsen, "AYE"; and Trustee Castor, "AYE". Motion carried.

2. MCK CPAs & Advisors Audit Proposal:

Pam Smith presented the audit proposal submitted by MCK CPAs & Advisors. She explained that Richie Wolf had spoken to the audit firm about renewing another three to five year contract. Fiscal Year 2021 was the last auditing year on the current contract. After speaking with MCK, Cathy Mansur suggested that the Foundation Board didn't require a separate audit and was already included in the District's audit as a separate component. When the suggestion was presented to the Foundation Board, they asked questions that were addressed by the firm. The Foundation fell below the \$300,000.00 contribution threshold warranting a separate audit, the District's audit would be included with the filing of the Illinois 990 tax form and MCK would still present the audit to the Foundation Board. The Foundation Board asked the staff to get a proposal for a combined audit and one for

separate audits as in years past. Pam presented the outcome in chart form to the Board. By combining the audits, the Foundation would save considerable funds which could flow back through to the District. Staff recommended combining the audits for a three-year contract verses a five-year contract. The Board was in agreement to pursue the three-year contract with MCK combining the two audits.

Trustee Bendsen MOVED to approve renewing a three-year contract for combined audits for the District and Foundation with MCK CPAs & Advisors as presented. Trustee Johnson SECONDED the motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Castor, "Aye"; Trustee Schnellert, "AYE"; Trustee Beckhart, "AYE"; Trustee Johnson, "AYE"; and Trustee Bendsen, "AYE". Motion carried.

3. Staff Reports:

Interim Director, Paul Marien, reported that a nomination letter for the new Trustee had been sent to the County Board but did not get placed on the May agenda but will be presented on the June agenda. Paul reported that \$4,015.00 had been received for Richie Wolf's memorial and thank you letters were mailed. Paul enjoyed the all staff meeting and learning what was happening in the different areas.

Alysia Callison was happy to report that her department had been busy. Library Program requests had been coming in, the summer concert series was finalized, three summer camp counselors had been hired, and due to the bridge phase were able to increase the number of summer campers to thirty but having to keep the Tuesday morning Adventure Club camp separate from the week long Earth Adventures camp. Staff were excited to be back in the swing of things again. Staff were busy putting up a new exhibit in the exhibit hall entitled "*The Evolution of Rock Springs Nature Center*," celebrating 45 years of education and outreach.

Shane Ravellette reported that the District had its biggest burn season this year, giving the credit to Ethan Snively. Staff have been finishing up projects from 2020 and ordered some large vehicle purchases early in the fiscal year that had been approved in the budget such as a Polaris trail vehicle (Friends Creek), implements for the tracked loaders, a heavy duty pallet storage rack (Rock Springs), and a new mower (Fort Daniel). Staff along with David Horn's science class and the *Living Lands and Waters Organization* planted 150 trees at the Sand Creek Conservation Area. Trustee Bendsen commended the project saying that it was a good project and nicely done.

Pam Smith reported that most of the last past two months had been spent on wrapping up year end and preparing for the upcoming audit as well as working with Paul Marien as he transitioned into the Interim Director position. She also was very thankful to be able to work with the insurance broker and securing a new Employee Assistance Program that she felt would be valuable to the employees. The phones were keeping the staff busy with camping reservations and commended Joy Potter for her diligent work in answering the phones and keeping on top of her many responsibilities. Pam thanked the Program Services staff and Paul Marien for a great outdoor all-staff meeting.

4. Other

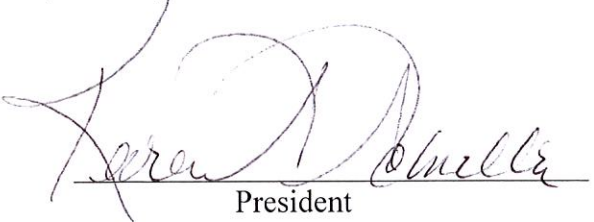
No other business.

COMMENTS FROM TRUSTEES:

Trustee Bendsen wanted to discuss the remaining projects that needed to be completed and suggested that major projects be put on hold until the new director is hired. One major topic of discussion was the remodeling of the lower level of the Nature Center. After some lengthy discussion, President Schneller recommended that Shane Ravellette make a list of projects for the Board's review and she would meet with him to discuss the next day.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, Trustee Castor MOVED to adjourn the Regular Public Meeting at 6:45 p.m. Trustee Bendsen SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Beckhart, "AYE"; Trustee Bendsen, "AYE"; Trustee Johnson, "AYE"; Trustee Schneller, "AYE"; and Trustee Johnson, "AYE". Motion carried.



President



Secretary