

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
OF THE MACON COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT  
October 18, 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, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President Castor, Treasurer Allen, and Secretary Reed  
Board Members absent: 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-President Sams

Trustee Reed MOVED to approve the Minutes of the September 20, 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 Castor MOVED to approve the Treasurer's Report and disbursements in the amount of \$168,677.67 and additions to disbursements in the amount of \$34,334.87 as presented. Trustee Allen 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 audience

**PRIOR BUSINESS:** No prior business.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**1. Prescribed Burn Report:**

Ethan Snively, Natural Resources Manager, presented the prescribed burn report for 2023 and the proposed report for 2024. The District was able to burn 1,734 acres across seven District locations and four non-district locations. The weather was less than ideal for the fall season but better for the spring. Included in the burn season, the District assisted the City of Decatur, the Decatur Park District and the Sanitary District with prescribed burns. With several staff being certified as Prescribed Burn Managers, staff were split into multiple crews enabling the District to be more efficient with their burns. Ethan explained how necessary the burn process is for the ecosystems of Macon County. In addition to being important to the ecosystems, it is also extremely efficient and cost saving. Using chemicals and mechanically removing vegetation is much more costly than to conduct a burn. The District burned about 32% of the 3,870 acres in 2023 as compared to only 17% in 2022. Ethan displayed maps to show the burn areas at each different site. Natural Resources is proposing to burn 1,336 acres in 2024 which is 35% of the total acreage owned by the District. Ethan reviewed the burn plan for each conservation area. The plan is to perform a first and second burn on the newly planted prairie units on the south end of Fort Daniel. There is a plan to burn a woodland unit on the north side of Friends Creek that has not been previously burned. At the Rock Springs Conservation Area, the plan is to burn a majority of the prairies but will also attempt to burn two woodland units that have not been previously burned. A woodland unit on the northeast end of Sand Creek Conservation Area will also be burned for the first time. The northern half of Willow Branch II will be burned with hopes of burning the southern half in 2025 during growing season.

## **2. Summer Camp Report:**

Alysia Callison reviewed the Summer Camp report with the Board giving some background of the various camps. The central theme for Summer Camp this year was "Conservation Superheroes." Earth Adventures is a weekly camp with the cost being raised from \$125.00 a week to \$140.00 a week this year. Adventure Club, which is a half day camp on Tuesdays, was raised from \$12.00 to \$20.00 this year. The History Camp was brought back this year at a cost of \$20.00 per session. Xtreme Camp was \$35.00 and mini-camp was raised from \$6.00 - \$8.00. The Boys and Girls Club did not participate in the camp this year but the District did partner with the Salvation Army as well as partnering with the Decatur Public Schools (DPS). DPS gave grants for students to participate in the District's summer camp. Last year the District received an anonymous donation for funding Boys and Girls club to attend camp. After 2022 Camp season ended, there was \$20,536.19 of the funds remaining. Of this amount, \$14,042.53 was spent this year with \$5,493.66 remaining. A larger amount was spent this year as compared to last year because an additional counselor was hired to accommodate the extra children coming from the Decatur Public Schools and paid 100% of the Salvation Army counselor's wages. There also was a need to rent a 15 passenger van from Millikin. The District hopes to partner with the Boys and Girls Club again in 2024. The total revenue generated from all camps totaled \$46,096.50 with a total of \$34,870.08 expenses leaving a net profit of \$11,226.42, which is significantly higher than last year's net profit of \$3,101.37. Alysia mentioned several goals including increasing attendance, increasing revenue, and increasing diversity of the campers. Currently the District does not track race or ethnicity. After some discussion, it was recommended that the District begin tracking race/ethnicity not only for summer camp but for all its programs. This will be reviewed by staff. It was also recommended that maybe the District solicit individuals to sponsor a camper. Overall, staff were pleased with this year's summer camp season and have no significant changes to make toward the program.

## **3. Naming of newly acquired Homestead at Fort Daniel**

The homestead at Fort Daniel was acquired last July from Pat Penhallegon, who recently passed away. Pat dedicated hours to restoring the "Ulrey" homestead, severed on the Foundation Board as well as other community Boards. The Foundation Board recommended honoring Pat in some way and staff discussed naming the homestead the "Grover Patton Penhallegon" homestead with placing a plaque on the homestead and eventually interpretive signs giving the history of the homestead. After some discussion, the Trustees thought that "Pat" should be added to the naming arriving at "Grover Patton "Pat" Penhallegon Homestead." Jerry Culp presented the naming resolution to the Board for approval.

Trustee Allen MOVED to approve the naming of the Homestead as the "Grover Patton "Pat" Penhallegon Homestead" as presented. Trustee Castor SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Sams, "AYE"; Trustee Castor, "AYE"; Trustee Allen, "AYE"; Trustee Bendsen, "AYE"; and Trustee Reed, "AYE". Motion carried.

#### **4. Staff Reports**

Jerry Culp gave highlights from his Directors monthly report. Staff continues to work through the Illinois Department of Natural Resources to complete the acquisition grant of the Bois Du Sangamon Addition. The Prairie Pedal event was a success with increased registered riders as compared to prior year. The Rock Springs Ramble is scheduled for May 18, 2024. Staff also have worked on preparing the paperwork to change the status of properties to tax exempt. The Budget process for FY2025 has begun and staff will begin incorporating District Goals into the budget process this year. After going through the transition process with a new IT Consultant, staff has a better understanding of the District needs and found a local company to review the District's system and give a proposal for their services.

Jerry Culp asked the Board members if they had any questions regarding the Operations Department Monthly report since Director Phil Julius was absent from the meeting. There were no questions asked.

Pam Smith gave a few highlights from her monthly report reporting that the budget process had begun with a slight change made to the budget sheets. Last year's budget numbers will be included on the budget sheets as a comparison as well as a column indicating what has been spent year to date. Staff continued volunteering with the Good Samaritan as well as volunteering two nights at Boo at the Zoo. The District will sponsor a tree again this year at the Park District's "Trees on the Tees" as well as volunteer one night. Prairie Pedal was successful with 179 riders this year and approximately \$18,000.00 net profit. Staff is still waiting to receive final revenue and expenses. As a continued effort to ensure efficient and sustainable use of tax levy dollars, the District is looking at partnering with Staples using a government program called "Sourcewell" to purchase in bulk. For the first time this year, seasonal employees will be asked to complete a performance evaluation so that the District has a formal record of their performance from year to year. Pam reported that approximately \$85,973.00 revenue has been generated since January for the Friends Creek Campground. Staff also collected \$140.00 in dump station fees.

Alysia Callison gave highlights from her monthly report. Monarch Madness that was held on September 23 had an exceptional and unexpected turnout of approximately 350 people attending the event hosted by Rock Springs but administered by the University of Illinois Extension Office. Program Services staff assisted with the Prairie Pedal with special kudos to Ashton Nunn for all her hard work preparing and coordinating the program. Staff conducted some team building activities for The Department of Children and Family Services. Staff hosted booths at Mercy Market, Pride Fest and CHICO's Hispanic Heritage Festival. With the Fall Harvest Festival around the corner, staff have been busy preparing for the large event. Other activities included a staff canoe trip to show appreciation for staff's hard work, a Volunteer Site Tour, and the Historic Intern completed her last day at the District and secured a position with the Lincoln Library in Springfield.

#### **5. Other Business – no other business**

**COMMENTS FROM TRUSTEES:**

Trustee Reed complimented staff on the Trustee Tour and thanked everyone for a great day. She felt it was a great learning experience. Other Trustees commented on how much they enjoyed it as well.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

Trustee Castor MOVED to go into Executive Session at 6:47 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)**
  
- 2. The purchase or lease of real property for the use of the public body. 5 ILCS 120/2 (c) (5)**

Trustee Allen 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 Castor MOVED to return to the Regular Public Meeting at 7:10 p.m. Trustee Allen SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Allen, "AYE"; Trustee Reed "AYE"; Trustee Bendsen, "AYE"; and Trustee Castor, "AYE". Motion carried.

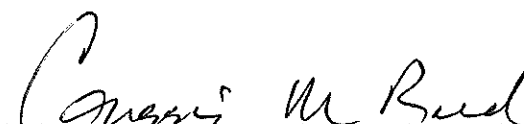
Trustee Allen MOVED to approve the Executive Session Minutes of October 18, 2023. Trustee Reed SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Bendsen, "AYE"; Trustee Sams' AYE"; Trustee Castor, "AYE"; Trustee Allen, "AYE"; and Trustee Reed "AYE". Motion carried.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

There being no further business, Trustee Allen MOVED to adjourn the Public Meeting at 7:11 p.m. Trustee Castor SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Reed, "AYE"; Trustee Allen, "AYE"; Trustee Bendsen, "AYE"; Trustee Sam's "AYE"; and Trustee Castor "AYE". Motion carried.



President

  
Secretary