

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
OF THE MACON COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

July 18, 2018

PURSUANT to written notice given all members of the Board, the above meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m. by President Jensen, with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Board members present: President Jensen, 2nd Vice-President Schneller, Treasurer White, and Secretary Johnson.

Board members absent: 1st Vice President Elliott

I. COMMENTS FROM AUDIENCE:

No comments.

II. BOARD MASTER PLAN WORKSHOP:

Steve Konters from Hitchcock Design Group presented the Master Plan Process to the Board and reminded them that it was only informational at this time and no conclusions were being drawn.

The process included four stages:

1. Analyze (consisting of reviewing conservation areas)
2. Connect (workshops with staff, stakeholders and community)
3. Envision (current stage in the process – alternative strategies)
4. Implement (Master Plan)

In reviewing the analyze stage, Steve reviewed Macon County demographics including age distribution, race, ethnicity, and income distribution. Statistics indicated a declining population in Macon County with the median age in 2017 being 41.7 and by 2022, 35.1% of the population will be over the age of 55. Twenty-six percent of the population are below poverty level (<\$25,000) and another 26% are at an income between \$25,000 and \$49,999.00.

An inventory was taken of the different conservation areas. Macon County Conservation District has 3,489.9 acres with 467.5 of that undeveloped. In comparison to other agencies (conservation districts and forest preserve districts), the Conservation District maintained more sites with less employees than the agency average.

During the connect stage, workshops were held with staff, stakeholders, community and on-line survey. Nineteen staff participated in the staff workshop with staff listing the top three areas of importance as restoration, increasing revenue, and expanded recreation. The areas of importance for the seven participants that attended the Community workshop were providing more public access, public relations/branding, partnering and preserving nature/history. Nine participants attended the stakeholders meeting with some of the main topics of discussion being

- satisfaction with the District,
- expanding water quality efforts and sharing resources
- expanding historical programs,

- utilizing local resources and community knowledge
- expanding volunteer roles
- expanding trail systems

The online survey had 235 participants with 93.6% of them having visited a conservation area and most were between 25-44 years of age. Top two reasons for visiting were to enjoy nature/relax and go for a walk/bike/ride/get exercise. Overall respondents were satisfied with the amenities and facilities with Rock Springs having the most visits. For those respondents who selected unsatisfied, the top two main reasons were the trails and restrooms (needing more of them). The top reason for respondents not visiting the conservation areas was that they were too busy. The top three outdoor activities/amenities were to restore natural areas, create more walking trails and improved or added trail signage. The top three conservation goals were to restore and improve wildlife habitat, acquire additional natural areas, and remove invasive species.

The next phase of the process will be envision: alternative strategies. A joint meeting with the Foundation and Conservation District Boards will be scheduled in August.

Following Steve's presentation, the board decided to have an open dialogue versus a structured format. Discussion topics included the primary needs of the District and how to accomplish those and what challenges lay behind and in front of the District. Some discussion followed with the Board in agreement that areas of restoration are a big challenge including removal of invasive species. The Board questioned whether two of the slides from Hitchcock Groups presentation were right. These slides included the most visited site and the manpower per 1000 acres as presented. Steve believes there was an error made and will correct the data on those slides and send to Paul Marien. One major topic of discussion among the Board was educating the public about the importance of restoration and educating the public in regard to the historical sites such as Oglesby Mansion, Homestead, Bethel School and Springfield Road. Another item of discussion was the need for a marketing study to determine what the public wants. Marketing and education underlie everything. The Board concluded with the need to schedule a joint meeting between the two Boards.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, Trustee Johnson MOVED to adjourn the Special Meeting at 5:21 p.m.

Trustee White SECONDED the Motion. All members of the Board present voted, "AYE". Motion carried.

President

ATTEST:

Secretary