

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
OF THE MACON COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT
October 16, 2024, 5:30PM**

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

Board members present: Treasurer Allen, President Castor, 1st Vice President Reed, and 2nd Vice President Schneller
Board Members absent: Secretary Sams

Trustee Reed MOVED to approve the Minutes of the September 19, 2024, meetings. Trustee Allen SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Schneller, "AYE"; Trustee Castor, "AYE"; Trustee Allen, "AYE"; Trustee Reed, "AYE". Motion carried.

Trustee Schneller MOVED to approve the Treasurer's Report from September 2024 and disbursements from September 23, 2024, through October 11, 2024, in the amount of \$228,837.41 as presented. Trustee Allen SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Castor, "AYE"; Trustee Allen, "AYE"; Trustee Reed, "AYE"; Trustee Schneller, "AYE". Motion carried.

IV. COMMENTS FROM AUDIENCE:

1. Mack Thompson 5294 N Kruse Rd. from the last meeting returned to follow-up on scheduling the meeting. Director Culp said he is hoping to meet with him before the next meeting. He commented that it was acceptable.

V. OLD BUSINESS:

1. Board Tour 10/17/24

Operations Director Phil Julius provided an itinerary for the 10/17/24 Board Tour. The board will meet around the Cloud at 8AM, then look at the outdoor classroom project, Friends Creek, and Fort Daniel, before lunch. Julius was most excited to show the new timber frame being built at Friend's Creek. Directors Schneller and Castor will attend along with Staff and some members of the MCCF Board.

VI. NEW BUSINESS:

1. Christy-Foltz Payment Request

Executive Director Jerry Culp provided a memo to inform Trustees regarding the payout request from Chrisy Foltz for building construction related to the Illinois Park and Recreation Facility Construction (PARC) grant to construct an Indoor/Outdoor classroom at Rock Springs Nature Center. The plan includes converting the old office area on the first floor into a programming space and constructing an outdoor classroom area adjacent to the building that will provide a connection to an outdoor learning area. The District separated the project into two separate bids, one for the indoor work and one for the outdoor work. Christy-Foltz was the low bid on the indoor work and the board approved a contract in the amount of \$750,578. Christy-Foltz has submitted their first payout request for this project in the amount of \$6,300 for work completed.

Funds in the amount of \$1,161,000 are budgeted in the Capital Fund Account 6800-700 for this Project. There are sufficient funds in the Capital Account 6800-700 for this expense totaling \$6,300. Staff would ask for a motion to approve Payout Request #1 from Cristy-Foltz in the amount of \$6,300 for expenses related to the Indoor/Outdoor Park Grant PARC-23-127.

Trustee Reed asked if the contract required something that had to be completed before payout. The Executive Director confirmed that they are beyond the requirements for payment 1. This is often true because of the timeline for approvals.

Trustee Scheller moved to approve the Christy-Foltz Payment Request 1 as presented. Trustee Allen SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Allen, "AYE"; Trustee Reed, "AYE"; Trustee Schneller, "AYE"; Trustee Castor, "AYE". Motion carried.

2. Staff Reports

Jerry Culp, Executive Director:

Executive Director Culp discussed the OSLAD Grant Fort Daniel Pothole Prairie and Season Wetland Restoration. The District is currently working with consultants on the topography and wetland concept design for the pothole prairie and seasonal wetlands. The archeological study has been completed and submitted to the IDNR for review. They have communicated that approval is pending. They have been awarded the grant, but no work can be done in the field until this approval. Surveying and engineering are being done. As soon as the review is complete staff will begin grant implementation. It looks like it will be late spring/early summer when work starts. On the PARC Grant for the Rock Spring Nature Center Outdoor Classroom, both contractors have mobilized and started work. The demolition is almost complete on the interior and new walls are beginning to go up. There was a lot of jack-hammering last week, which was noisy in the building. Tree removal and layout was completed on the exterior part of the project and the contractor will soon be starting on the concrete work associated with the project. The Contractor, Christy-Foltz has been good to work with. Staff organized another successful Prairie Pedal. The number of registrations was down a little from last year, but it was a great event organized by the Foundation that helps support District projects. Everyone there is in a good mood because it's a great event. It's a long, all-day event but it's great. The District received notice that the Recreational Trails Program Grant that was submitted last spring has been approved. The grant will construct a bike trail from the Rock Springs Trail to Scovill Park West. The grant also includes the restoration of a section of the Rock Springs trail. Staff will be working with the IDNR on contracts for this grant and begin preparation for construction of the trail. As part of this fiscal year budget, the District has scheduled the replacement of the server and five of the staff computers, that has been completed. The District has also completed the migration to Office 365 to improve workflow and communication between staff. The budget also included reorganizing the IT center that houses the network and switches for network connections. The next tech area of focus is on remote access for satellite sites and access to the network from outside locations to improve flexibility. The District is continuing to work through the collective bargaining process with the newly formed American Federation of State County & Municipal Employees Union. Staff have spent many hours researching, collecting data, and reviewing proposals from the Union. Negotiations continue as they work with the Union and its representatives to work out an agreement. Staff will keep the board informed as progress is made. Staff attended a Chamber Luncheon to meet the new City Manager. The District will continue to build that working relationship and partner on projects that will help protect and preserve the natural resources in Macon County.

Trustee Reed asked if the computers were desktops or laptops. Executive Director Culp said they were desktops, but the next phase is to get laptops for those who need remote access. Trustee Schneller asked if there was anything found in the archeological study. Executive Director Culp said nothing significant was found.

Phil Julius, Director of Operations

Operations Director Phil Julius informed the Board that The Friends Creek staff have been working most of the summer on getting materials prepared for a new timber

frame pavilion. The timber came from non-native trees growing at Sand Creek, and they were sizeable enough to have good lumber. All operations full-time staff and one seasonal helped so it was a great team effort. The new pavilion is located at the group camp site at Friends Creek. This will allow patrons to have shelter at this location that is special as the wood came from District land. Staff did a great job. An Eagle Scout came to the District with a project to put in a stepping pad crossing at Sand Creek. This was a welcome idea as many patrons don't want to get their feet wet crossing the creek while hiking. Staff thought this was for one creek crossing but the Eagle Scout made enough pads for three creek crossings. So now patrons have the potential to cross the creek in four locations and not get their feet wet. Thank you to the Eagle Scout. A stream bank stabilization project was completed at Fort Daniel by a contractor. This project was briefly mentioned at the last board meeting. The creek bank was eroding into one of the trails at Fort Daniel. The trail happens to run next to the boundary where the neighbor has a concrete retaining wall. As the creek bank had eroded the trail had almost become impassable. The contractor came in and added riprap to the creek bank allowing for the trail to be expanded several feet. The contractor was able to use broken concrete from the Friends Creek farm cleanup project to line the creek bank. This was a great opportunity to recycle material the District already had. Once again operations staff were heavily involved with the annual Prairie Pedal. The event went smooth with only one cyclist needing a lift to complete the event. Finally, Julius received an email from the AmpliFund Administrator that the Department of Natural Resources application for the Illinois Bicycle Path Grant Program (FY24) had been approved. This is the \$100,000 grant for stream bank stabilization along Stevens Creek and repaving a portion of the Rock Springs bike path. This was very exciting as this is the first substantial grant he had ever submitted. More details can be found in his staff report.

Trustee Schneller asked if the timber pavilion was connected with wood nails. Julius confirmed they were. Trustee Allen asked if it was hard to cut the Pine wood. Julius said it was not too bad, especially as the wood sat for 2 years. Trustee Reed asked if there would be a roof. Julius confirmed that it was a metal roof. Regarding the Eagle Scout project, Trustee Schneller asked if they were poured on-site. Julius confirmed it was. Trustee Castor asked if the stones were spaced properly. Julius confirmed they were. Trustee Castor commented that it looked like it was a lot of hard work and wanted to thank the staff for their work.

Alysia Callison, Director of Programs

Director of Programs Alysia Callison reported that September kept the Program Services department busy, with several special events, programs, and planning days. The District had two special events in September, Monarch Madness and Prairie Pedal. Monarch Madness is an event spearheaded by the University of Illinois Extension office and hosted at Rock Springs. The event features monarch tagging and release, activities for kids including face painting and yoga, and education on these unique pollinators. The event was well attended and well received by about 100-150 people. Prairie Pedal is one of the Macon County Conservation Foundation's annual fundraisers. Kudos to Ashton Nunn, Marketing Specialist, for pulling off another great event for the Foundation – she works very hard throughout the year to make sure their events run smoothly. Program Services staff assisted on the day of the event. When not in programs or setting up and tearing down, staff spent much of the month prepping not just for these events, but also for big events coming up. Fall Harvest Festival was held on October 12, so there is a lot of prep-work involved, including finding and purchasing pumpkins, taking inventory of existing stocks of craft supplies, and other needs and purchasing necessary items, creation of signage, maps, flyers, and more. The weather was very warm and sunny that day, so there was a great turnout. Program Services has added another special event this year, Treat Trail. Staff have been busy

planning this event, which will take place on the evening of October 19, 2024. Participants will be able to visit a series of six treat stations along the bike trail and into the pine forest, collecting spooky treats and interacting with a nature-related activity. Guests are invited to wear a costume and finish the evening with cookies and apple cider. As part of this event, Callison put out a call for sponsors and have had a great response. At present, all 6 sponsorship slots have been filled and 125 treat-collectors have signed up already. Each sponsorship is for \$150, which will help the District stock each treat station with treats and activities. Everyone is very excited about this event and hopes to have good attendance. Other things in September include preparing for the Program Services annual program planning meeting; Brock Rowland, Taylor Buley, and Beth Lane attended an educational program about pawpaws; Brent Wielt and Callison spoke at two different Golden K meetings; Callison attended a Safety Committee meeting; the admin team continued to give feedback on the Penhallegon barn project; and Callison held several event-planning meetings for staff.

Trustee Reed commented that Program Services is doing great, especially with media coverage.

Ashton Nunn, Marketing Specialist (not present)

Marketing Specialist Ashton Nunn was not present, so Director of Programs Alysia Callison also gave this report. Callison reported that Engagement and Follows are increasing every month on social channels. Nunn spent the majority of September prepping for the Prairie Pedal, but also attended a few community events as well in-person. Since the Prairie Pedal, she has been helping with other marketing including the Fall Harvest Festival and the Treat Trail. She has gotten a new tent, and it is very impressive.

Nicky Besser, Director of Finance and HR

Director of Finance and Human Resources Nicky Besser discussed that she worked on creating the budget templates, schedule, and information for 2025-2026 budget planning, assisted with prep and execution of the Prairie Pedal, and attended meetings and provided data for collective bargaining negotiations. Notable receivables for the District included the second Tax Levy installment for \$49,385.43. Notable payouts were to MCK for the audit, Williams Architects for their concept designs, and Vieback and Sons for various construction and maintenance items approved at the last meeting. She also scheduled several volunteer opportunities including at Good Samaritan Inn, Trees on the Tees, and Boo at the Zoo. Finally, she continued work on a new “phone tree” to create a more efficient phone answering system.

Trustee Reed asked if the District would sponsor a tree again, Besser confirmed that they would and Joy Potter, Administrative Assistant, is heading that effort.

Other Business

a. No New Business.

VII. COMMENTS FROM TRUSTEES:

No comment.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Trustee Allen MOVED to go into Executive Session at 6:01p.m. for the purpose of:

1. Discussion of minutes of meetings lawfully closed under this Act, whether for purposes of approval by the body of the minutes or semi-annual review of the minutes as mandated by Section 2.06. 5 ILCS 120/2 (c) (21)

2. 2(c)(5) The purchase or lease of real property for the use of the public body, including meetings held for the purpose of discussing whether a particular parcel should be acquired.

Trustee Schneller **SECONDED** the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Reed, “AYE”; Trustee Schneller, “AYE”; and Trustee Castor, “AYE”; Trustee Allen, “AYE”. Motion carried.

Trustee Allen **MOVED** to return to the Regular Public Meeting at 6:12 p.m. Trustee Schneller **SECONDED** the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Allen, “AYE”; Trustee Reed, “AYE”; Trustee Schneller, “AYE”; Trustee Castor, “AYE”. Motion carried.

Trustee Schneller **MOVED** to approve the Executive Session Minutes of September 18, 2024, as read aloud in closed session. Trustee Reed **SECONDED** the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Castor, “AYE”; and Trustee Allen, “AYE”; Trustee Reed, “AYE”; Trustee Schneller, “AYE”. Motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, Trustee Allen **MOVED** to adjourn the Public Meeting at 6:13 p.m. Trustee Schneller **SECONDED** the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Schneller, “AYE”; Trustee Castor, “AYE”; Trustee Allen, “AYE”; Trustee Reed “AYE”. Motion carried.

President

Secretary