

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR PUBLIC MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
OF THE MACON COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT  
December 16, 2020**

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

Board members present: President Schneller (remotely), 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-President Bendsen, Treasurer Johnson, Secretary Castor, and 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President Beckhart  
Board Members absent: None

Trustee Johnson MOVED to approve the Minutes of the November 18, 2020, Regular Public Meeting. Trustee Beckhart SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Schneller, "AYE"; Trustee Beckhart, "AYE"; Trustee Johnson, "AYE"; Trustee Bendsen, "AYE"; and Trustee Castor, "AYE". Motion carried.

Trustee Johnson MOVED to approve the Treasurer's Report and disbursements in the amount of \$117,811.15 and additions to disbursements in the amount of \$29,088.68 as presented. Trustee Castor SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Castor, "AYE"; Trustee Beckhart, "AYE"; Trustee Bendsen, "AYE"; Trustee Johnson, "AYE"; and Trustee Schneller, "AYE". Motion carried.

**COMMENTS FROM AUDIENCE:** None

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**1. Friends Creek Campground Report**

Richie Wolf summarized the Friends Creek Campground Report prepared by Operations Manager, Shane Ravellette. He reported that it was the highest revenue ever recorded despite the late start to the season due to COVID and staff are happy with the results. There were no major issues reported this season. Staff suggests fees remain as they are with no increase at this time. Staff plan to budget for a major upgrade to the electrical problem at Friends Creek Conservation Area as well as budget for the placement of a pond near the campground. Trustee Bendsen gave kudos to the staff for a job well done.

**2. Prairie Moon seed payout for Ft. Daniel Property:**

Richie Wolf recommends Board approval of the payout to Prairie Moon in the amount of \$26,000.00 for the purchase of seed for the new property purchased at Fort Daniel through the Clean Energy Community Foundation. The Macon County Conservation Foundation had pledged to fund up to \$20,000.00 to help with the seed purchase in addition to the Clean Energy Grant contributing \$10,000.00. Staff will be spreading the seed by hand within the next few weeks.

Trustee Castor MOVED to approve the payment of \$26,000.00 to Prairie Moon for the purchase of seed for the new property at Fort Daniel Conservation Area. Trustee Beckhart 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.

**3. Approval of Ameren Easement:**

Richie Wolf used a map to demonstrate the location where Ameren was needing access to lay underground gas lines that will cross the Sand Creek Conservation Area's property. Richie worked with the District's attorney in finalizing an ordinance authorizing approval of the easement agreement between the District and Ameren. This project is slated to take place sometime in spring. Operations will not be affected by this project and Ameren will restore the site to its original condition.

Trustee Beckhart MOVED to approve the Ordinance Authorizing Approval of Easement Between Ameren Illinois Company and the Macon County Conservation District. Trustee Castor SECONDED the motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Beckhart, "AYE"; Trustee Bendsen, "AYE"; Trustee Schneller, "AYE"; Trustee Johnson, "AYE"; and Trustee Castor, "AYE". Motion carried.

**4. Approval of Foundation Board Candidates:**

The Macon County Conservation Foundation is losing four members whose terms are ending January 1, 2021. Richie Wolf presented four possible candidates for the Board's approval in replacing these members. The current Foundation Board members highly recommended having a CPA on the Board. The four candidates are as follows:

**Pat Penhallegon** grew up in Decatur and is a retired farmer. He currently lives in a historic home and has been renovating it since he moved in. Pat has also served on the Oglesby Mansion Board. Pat has spent a lot of time on Lake Decatur and enjoyed boating in his youth.

**Tom McQuiston** is a retired Millikin University researcher who taught mostly micro biology and parasitology. He has published over forty papers with his students. Tom served in the military and received his PhD from Bowling Green State University. He retired from Millikin in 2010 and enjoys hunting in Macon County.

**Dean Bottrell** is a common sight at Rock Springs hiking the Bike Trail. He has extensive background in agriculture and worked for DeKalb Ag in DeKalb, Illinois, for Beckett's in Blue Mound and for 24 years with Monsanto. Dean currently farms about 1100 acres with his brother.

**Tom Leach** grew up in Cerro Gordo but has lived in Decatur for many years. He is a CPA with Sikich. He has been in public accounting since 1985 and with the same firm his whole career. He is the partner in charge.

Tom says he is a simple man who enjoys being outside and doing yard work. His four adult children all live in central Illinois and have five children between them.

Trustee Bendsen commented that she was impressed with the slate of nominations. All Board members were in agreement and no further discussion was needed.

Trustee Schneller MOVED to approve the slate of Macon County Conservation Foundation Board Member candidates as presented: Pat Penhallegon, Tom McQuiston, Dean Bottrell and Tom Leach. Trustee Beckhart SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Castor, "Aye"; Trustee Schneller, "AYE"; Trustee Beckhart, "AYE"; Trustee Johnson, "AYE"; and Trustee Bendsen, "AYE". Motion carried.

## 5. Staff Reports

In order to limit the number of members present for the Board meeting, Alysia Callison and Shane Ravellette were not in attendance. Richie Wolf asked if he could address any questions concerning their Board reports.

Richie Wolf reported that the staff of Program Services were trying new ideas for programs due to the closure of the Nature Center. Some virtual programs were being planned such as "Meet the Animals" and a scavenger hunt online. Staff were trying to be creative during the Pandemic. Jenny Garver created mini-camp kits for children to work on at home and all 24 kits sold out in December. Richie was excited to report that the Foundation had received a donation in the amount of \$90,000.00 from a past volunteer with \$40,000.00 being earmarked for the design phase of the ECO Center remodel and \$50,000.000 toward the electrical project in the picnic area at Friends Creek Conservation Area. He was also happy to report that the District had been awarded the \$400,000.00 grant from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources for the ECO Center remodel. The project will be sent out for bid and will take approximately 8-10 months to complete installation. The Deer Herd Management program was also a success this year with 76 deer being harvested, the highest number since 2015. The Deer Herd Management report will be presented to the Board in the summer.

Pam Smith gave a report on the status of employees with COVID and stated that she regularly provided reports to employees on the status to keep them as informed as possible. She commended the staff on working together during these difficult days. The Foundation's year-end ask letters were sent out before Thanksgiving and donations were coming in. Pam reported that the District had received a FOIA request from the Illinois Department of Employment Security asking for titles, hours worked and wages of all District Employees. The District attorney was consulted before replying to the request. A certificate of deposit had renewed with the State Bank of Pana for another six months. This was part of a "six month increasing interest rate" certificate over a 24 month period with the last six months earning an interest rate at 3%. This will be the last six month renewal. Going forward it will be difficult to find good interest rates for investments with the rates falling. The Illinois Funds interest rate at the end of November was .093%. It may be a few years before the District will see increased interest rates for investments.

**6. Other** – No other business.

**COMMENTS FROM TRUSTEES:**

Trustee Bendsen gave Kudos to the Program Services staff for the outstanding job in being creative in continuing to educate the public. Trustee Schneller commented on the beautiful photograph on the winter greeting card.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

There being no further business, Trustee Johnson **MOVED** to adjourn the Regular Public Meeting at 5:55 p.m. Trustee Beckhart **SECONDED** the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows Trustee Beckhart, “**AYE**”; Trustee Bendsen, “**AYE**”; Trustee Castor, “**AYE**”; Trustee Johnson, “**AYE**”; and Trustee Schneller, “**AYE**”. Motion carried.

---

President

ATTEST:

---

Secretary