

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
OF THE MACON COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT  
May 21, 2025, 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: President Castor, Treasurer Allen, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President Reed (arrived 5:57pm), and 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President Schneller  
Board Members absent: Secretary Sams

Trustee Schneller MOVED to approve the Minutes of the Regular meeting on April 16, 2025. Trustee Allen SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Schneller, "AYE"; Trustee Castor, "AYE"; Trustee Allen, "AYE". Motion carried.

Trustee Allen MOVED to approve the Treasurer's Report and disbursements from April 2025, in the amount of \$271,433.40 as presented. Trustee Schneller SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Castor, "AYE"; Trustee Allen, "AYE"; Trustee Schneller, "AYE". Motion carried.

**IV. COMMENTS FROM AUDIENCE:**

No comments.

**V. OLD BUSINESS:**

No old business.

**VI. NEW BUSINESS:**

**1. MCCF Board Member Approval – George Tyrolt**

George Tyrolt was recommended by Executive Director Culp for approval on the Macon County Conservation Foundation Board. He is a native of Macon County, went to Purdue, and is now back to help with the family business and wants to get involved. He is highly recommended.

Trustee Allen MOVED to approve George Tyrolt as an MCCF Board Member as presented. Trustee Schneller SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Schneller, "AYE"; Trustee Castor, "AYE"; Trustee Allen, "AYE". Motion carried.

**2. Christy-Foltz Payout #8**

The Macon County Conservation District applied for and received an Illinois Park and Recreation Facility Construction grant to construct an Indoor/Outdoor classroom at Rock Springs Nature Center. The Board of Trustees approved a contract with Christy-Foltz in the amount of \$750,578 to complete the interior portion of the project. Christy-Foltz has completed approximately 55% of the work related to their contract including demolition, electrical and plumbing, new partition walls, lower-level offices and collection room. Christy-Foltz has submitted their eighth payout request for this project in the amount of \$87,555.60 for work completed. Funds 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 \$87,555.60.

Trustee Schneller asked if the work is satisfactory, and Director Culp said yes, it is very good.

Trustee Schneller MOVED to approve the Christy-Foltz Payout #8 as presented. Trustee Allen SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Allen, “AYE”; Trustee Schneller, “AYE”; Trustee Castor, “AYE”. Motion carried.

### **3. Deer Management Report**

Natural Resources Manager Mitch Lovgren presented the Deer Management report. Revenue from last year was up, mostly because the VA gave the money to pay for the blind, although participation was slightly down. A few notable things include that there was a successful year for the handicap blinds. The social media post about one of these hunters had tens of thousands of hits on social media, so it was well received. All-in-all the season went well. There was only one incident, handled internally, where a hunter shot a deer another hunter had already injured.

For this year, there are some recommendations. First, it is to open the Seay property at Fort Daniel for hunting. During burn season, the deer trails here were making it harder to burn. With hunting pressure, this can reduce this over-herding. This would double acreage, and this would add 2 more people, totaling 6 people hunting there. We would also add a parking area big enough for a couple of trucks. Another recommendation is adding a 9<sup>th</sup> week. Historically, it was always 8 weeks ending before Christmas because there was in-person check-in. Now, this is a good opportunity for people to hunt since we are no longer doing in-person check-in. Finally, the youth hunt is recommended to continue from last year. There is some paperwork that needs to be submitted, but it should be approved. Youth have to be accompanied by an adult. The youth get to hunt for a week and if they are successful, they get their deer. Currently, there is no fee recommendation for youth hunters. It can be the same for the adult program, or we could consider making it free for young people. The blinds also make it safer, and the VA will be sponsoring the extra blind there as well. The blind will be slightly elevated, so the angle is more likely to guarantee success.

Trustee Schneller asked about the incident that happened with the hunters shooting the same deer. Lovgren responded that the hunter initially lied about what happened, then changed his story, so it warranted a conversation, but it was hard to completely prove intent. This person has previously been kicked out for shooting a buck before a doe, so this is “strike two” and a third offense will result in his complete ban from the program. Schneller said that she was glad he was addressed and that the incident was taken seriously and the conversation was had. Trustee Allen asked if there was an issue with blue tongue disease, but Lovgren said that we did not have an outbreak here. There was an outbreak farther north.

Trustee Allen MOVED to approve the deer management program recommendations as presented. Trustee Schneller SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Castor, “AYE”; Trustee Allen, “AYE”; Trustee Schneller, “AYE”. Motion carried.

### **4. Woodbine Farm Plans**

Director Culp presented drawings and plans for the Woodbine Farm. There will be restrooms and a parking lot soon via an awarded grant. For the large barn by the road, we are looking for a wildlife management center possibly, more parking, and opportunities for programming and events. For the barn in the back, we are looking for a natural resource interpretation center. This could be a site where we have our milling process and wood stored for a long-term vision of having volunteers help build another timber frame. These are just concepts presented in the site plan so we could introduce this to the public. The next step is the barn since it's in the same area as the house. We worked with the architect to get these plans together, but basically there is program/event space, restrooms, elevators, and stairs, and caterer's kitchen to keep up accessibility. This is just a general floor plan as we are still conceptualizing this space. Downstairs there is

a larger footprint with a smaller upstairs. We are trying to especially keep the view from the road more historic so that as you're driving in you get the historic view, and perhaps the back of the building can be most modern. Culp presented some indoor concepts as well, showing the two levels. This is just conceptual as it is a long-term project. Right now, the cost-estimate is 3.88 million. However, this includes everything, and the final cost may be very different. Some historic elements we want to include are historic water tanks as well as original beams, etc. We do want to preserve as much history as we can.

Trustee Allen asked if it was more of a convention space instead of restoring this to what it once was. Director Culp responded that we are trying to find a middle ground as the first plans were too modern and we asked them to come back with more integration of its history. Trustee Allen mentioned he attended a forestry convention where they had an old barn where on the outside it was an old barn and on the inside it was brand new, and it was very impressive.

## **5. Staff Reports:**

### **Jerry Culp, Executive Director:**

Director Culp discussed the PARC grant. It is going well, although behind schedule. Inside we are waiting for the operable doors and walls and some of the kitchen as the cabinets have been delayed. Hopefully this project will be completed on the inside by the end of June for a July board meeting. For the OSLAD grant they are working on engineering so bids can get out for things like parking lot and bathrooms as well as the wetlands. Bidding will hopefully be in June and we are hoping to break ground in August. The Wine in the Wild event is in June. We had the Rock Springs Ramble and it went well. The Rock Springs Scovill Trail grant is still delayed. The Labor relations collective bargaining is going well as progress is being made. We attended a legislative conference in Springfield which is great because we learn a lot about legislation that is coming that affects Conservation Districts. Culp also attended the Central Illinois Director's meeting and hopes to host one in the new space this fall. He is on the joint legislative committee as well, and if anyone wants more details, they can be forwarded. Finally, there was another meeting with United Way. They are working to help local agencies as funding is in question to support different agencies and organizations.

### **Phil Julius, Director of Operations**

Operations Director Julius discussed that with spring's arrival there have been a lot of seasonals hired. A campground host got hired and she started just one week late. Her name is Tiffanie Harley. She is enjoying the job and has even had others compliment her as well as other staff at Friends Creek. With spring the plant life has greened up, and honeysuckle is now already 2-3 feet tall so spraying will be happening a lot in the upcoming months. There was the quarterly all-staff meeting at the pavilion at Fort Daniel and everyone had a nice time. He and Ashton attended the quarterly IACD meeting at Starved Rock and they also met with Boone County, whom they are co-hosting the event with next year. Julius has also been helping move staff into their new office locations. We also have Northwater Consulting working on the stabilization of the bike path.

Trustee Schneller asked how winter camping went, and Julius thought it was successful and they would like to do it again.

### **Alysia Callison, Director of Program Services**

Director of Program Services Alysia Callison discussed that April was very busy as there were many public programs and field trip season started. We had the Festival of Spring and it was a beautiful day. Attendance was low, but one of the issues with this was possibly the BSA Adventure Summit which was a once in ten-year event that all St. Louis Area Scouts could attend and they were camping out of the county. We filled several positions including interns and seasonals. We are still wrapping up camp prep

and camp registrations went well. We received some funding through United Way to offer scholarships. We had a decent response and have awarded several scholarships. Two staff moved from part-time to full-time, and each has taken on additional responsibilities. One is going to be the District's GIS coordinator and the other is going to start doing some wildlife monitoring and surveying so we can see what's on our sites and how we can accommodate the animals we find on our properties. She has some trail cams, and she has caught some fun things, including a bobcat. She has also seen some interesting animal behaviors which is exciting. We also had an intern through the Decatur Public Schools spring internship program, and we have an intern through the Civic Leadership Institute through May. The Gallery of Hope with Heritage was displayed for 2 months and it was successful. Callison attended the Bilingual Parent Advisory Council meeting, and it was very enlightening. The coordinator invited different organizations out and translated the information for her. Although she knew we had a significant population of Spanish-speaking community members, she learned there were around 250 families and it inspired her to try to get more District materials in Spanish.

Trustee Allen asked if we are going to post the videos of the trail cams on social media. Callison said yes, but they want to be sure that if they do it it's not too easy to have people find the cameras and possibly interfere with them or the wildlife. A live feed came up, and Callison said that they do have a live feed for the bird cams, but it is very difficult to operate. She is open to it if they can figure out the technology. Trustee Schneller asked if the bobcat looked healthy and Callison said yes.

#### **Ashton Dukeman, Marketing Specialist**

Marketing Specialist Ashton Dukeman discussed the volunteer recognition dinner on April 2<sup>nd</sup>. She and Brock Rowland went to the Decatur Public Schools summer signup event as well. She also attended KidsFest and had 1075 unique visitors to the booth. WAND came out for Earth Day and she also did a segment about Festival of Spring. She and Phil attended the IACD quarterly meeting and it was neat to see what people in this field might want to see. She and Joy Potter attended the State of the Community event through the Chamber of Commerce. At the Festival of Spring, the Foundation did concessions. She attended the Parks Day at the Capitol with Jerry Culp. The new website maconccd.org went live as well as new email addresses. She has had several applications for the seasonal event specialist and she is excited to start interviews. She redid the format for her marketing report to be more visually-and-user-friendly. District Facebook reach has increased because the content has been recognized as having high quality.

#### **Nicky Besser, Director of Finance and HR**

Besser discussed that another Signatories resolution would be done once the Board Members changed, most likely in July. She was involved in a lot of new-year transitions with tracking and financial documents. A lot of onboarding was completed and will continue for a few weeks. She also moved offices, prepared for the audit, and attended a demo of fund accounting software. She participated in the review of offer letters and job descriptions and participated in Collective Bargaining agreements.

### **VII. COMMENTS FROM TRUSTEES:**

No comments.

### **VIII EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

Trustee Allen MOVED to go into Executive Session at 6:31p.m. for the purpose of:

1. The purchase or lease of real property for the use of the public body.

2. Collective negotiating matters between the public body and its employees or their representatives or deliberations concerning salary schedules for one or more classes of employees.

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 7:08 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 Allen **MOVED** to approve the Executive Session Minutes of May 21, 2025, 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 Schneller **MOVED** to adjourn the Public Meeting at 7:10 p.m. Trustee Reed **SECONDED** the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Schneller, “AYE”; Trustee Castor, “AYE”; Trustee Allen, “AYE”; Trustee Reed “AYE”. Motion carried.

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President

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Secretary