

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
OF THE MACON COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT
June 18, 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, 1st Vice President Reed, and 2nd Vice President Schneller
Board Members absent: Secretary Sams

Trustee Schneller MOVED to approve the Minutes of the Regular meeting on May 21, 2025. 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 Allen MOVED to approve the Treasurer's Report and disbursements from May 2025, in the amount of \$313,611.54 as presented. Trustee Schneller SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Castor, "AYE"; Trustee Reed, "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. 4MC Payout #3

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 4MC Corporation in the amount of \$642,885.65 to complete the exterior portion of the project. 4MC Corporation has completed the majority of the site elements including the concrete walks, seat walls, fire place, fire pit, teaching area, water feature and dry stream bed. 4MC has completed over 80% of the project and is scheduled to complete the balance of work by the end of June. 4MC Corporation has submitted a request for payout based on completed work in the amount of \$137,230.70. After this payout, the remaining balance for payout is \$211,427.41.

Trustee Schneller MOVED to approve the 4MC Payout #3 as presented. Trustee Reed SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Schneller, "AYE"; Trustee Castor, "AYE"; Trustee Reed, "AYE,"; Trustee Allen, "AYE,". Motion carried.

2. Christy-Foltz Payout #9

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 75% 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 ninth payout request for this project in the amount of \$157,912.20 for work completed. Director Culp discussed that the work has been delayed beyond expectations, mostly due to the operable doors. He is hoping the next Board meeting can be located in the new board room. However, it is exciting to see progress and to be so close. He is especially impressed with the quality of the chairs.

Trustee Reed asked what the remaining balance was. Director Culp responded that after this payout, the amount remaining is \$184,344.80.

Trustee Allen MOVED to approve the Christy-Foltz Payout #9 as presented. Trustee Schneller SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Allen, "AYE"; Trustee Schneller, "AYE"; Trustee Castor, "AYE"; Trustee Reed, "AYE" Motion carried.

3. Star Lab Disbursement

In 2024, the Heart of Illinois Community Foundation awarded a CommunityWorks Education Grant to the Macon County Conservation District for the purchase of a StarLab Planetarium. The StarLab was identified as a sole source purchase as it is in the only item of its specifications that aligns with NextGen Science Standards, utilized by the Illinois State Board of Education. This allows its programming to align with not only the Macon County Conservation District's mission to educate, but also to provides the school system content that will closely align with their educational standards. StarLabs are portable, inflatable domes that groups of people can go inside. It comes with a laptop and projector that casts projections of stars, constellations, geological features, and much more, allowing guests to learn about space and astronomy any time of day and from anywhere. The Heart of Illinois Community Foundation awarded the District a \$50,000 grant toward the purchase of a new StarLab, and the Macon County Conservation Foundation funded the remainder of the money needed for the purchase, in the amount of \$7,300. The purchase of the Star Lab is budget at \$57,300 in account 6851-700. Staff would ask for a motion to approve the purchase of the StarLab Planetarium from Science First LLC, in the amount of \$57,290, \$10 less than the budgeted amount.

Trustee Allen asked how many people can fit in the Dome. Callison responded that 30-35 children could. The staff expressed that there is a lot of excitement about the purchase. Trustee Reed asked if there were different versions. Callison said that she is not sure, but they recently switched to this new, digital version. As the technology improves, they will get updated and upgrades for the lifetime of the product which is included with the purchase. Callison also included that the purchase includes the following: Digital StarLab with a 6m dome and blower, Satori 4K Saturn Projection Package with laptop and NextGen-aligned content; Bundle of 5 digital cylinders; Four-hour remote digital training for staff; Shipping and handling from Florida.

Trustee Reed MOVED to approve the StarLab disbursement as presented. Trustee Schneller SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Reed, "AYE"; Trustee Castor, "AYE"; Trustee Allen, "AYE"; Trustee Schneller, "AYE". Motion carried.

4. iParks Renewal

Finance and HR Director Nicky Besser discussed that it was time for the annual renewal of the iParks Liability Insurance premium. iParks is moving to a Jan 1 date for all customers, so this amount is only from July through December, or 6 months. The amount of the invoice is \$45,562 and this is paid in full from the Safety and Liability fund via the Tax Levy. This amount includes all liability coverage. Staff recommends approving the payout. Trustee Castor asked who this insurance covered. Director Besser

responded that it covers all District employees and accidents that happen on District properties as well as auto coverage – it is basic liability so there may be items included in the package that don't apply. We are rarely asked to add other entities to our insurance rider.

Trustee Allen MOVED to approve the iParks renewal disbursement as presented. Trustee Schneller SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Castor, "AYE"; Trustee Allen, "AYE"; Trustee Reed, "AYE", Trustee Schneller, "AYE". Motion carried.

5. Updated MCCD Ordinances Art II ChII : Alcoholic Beverages

Director Culp discussed that in the past it was decided not to have blanket coverage for alcohol. Currently the Macon County Conservation District Rules and Regulation ordinance article II of Chapter II only allows alcohol to be served at the Oglesby Mansion and Rock Springs Conservation Area and Buildings. The District would like to add Woodbine Farm and buildings to the list of District locations that can serve alcohol. The District and the Macon County Conservation Foundation have been in agreement with having events that serve wine for fund raising events of which the funds from the event will help protect, preserve and restore the natural areas owned by the Macon County Conservation District. Having an event that serves alcohol at Woodbine Farm would require the District to amend the current ordinance to include Woodbine Farm and Buildings. Staff is asking the Board of Trustees to approve the amendment to article II, Chapter II of the Rules and Regulations to allow alcohol to be served at Woodbine Farm and buildings through a special use permit.

Trustee Schneller recommended that all references to specific alcoholic drinks be changed to "Alcohol".

Trustee Schneller MOVED to approve the Updated MCCD Ordinances Art II ChII : Alcoholic Beverage as amended. Trustee Reed SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Reed, "AYE"; Trustee Schneller, "AYE"; Trustee Castor, "AYE"; Trustee Allen, "AYE". Motion carried.

6. Staff Reports:

Jerry Culp, Executive Director:

Director Culp discussed that it was a busy month with the new event coming online and the work on the indoor/outdoor classroom. We are so close to getting things done, we are ready to want to use it. We even started the grill today and it works well. It should be finished in 1-2 weeks. The Fort Daniel OSLAD grant is moving forward. The engineering is ready to be finalized for the construction of the bathrooms etc. and ready to be put to bid. Then, the engineering for the wetlands will happen. The Prairie Pedal is starting to be planned, and they have been interviewing candidates for the Event Specialist. We have not been awarded the RTP grant funds yet. Collective Negotiations are moving forward. The IDNR has moved to a fully electronic process, including applying, implementing, managing, and payouts. We enter in invoices, and we can enter payouts quarterly, so this will be a much better process. We are working on ordinances and policies for new venues including the indoor/outdoor classroom and Woodbine Farm.

Director Schneller asked if agencies that award it are included and Director Culp said yes, everything is seamless. Everything goes into the software, and it makes it easy to do everything automatically. Director Allen asked if Wine in the Wild will be held annually. Director Culp said there were conversations about having it at different venues, but we will see what the decision is after this event is over. Director Schneller said she thinks the Indoor/Outdoor space will be especially great in the winter where you can still be connected to outside even when it's very cold.

Phil Julius, Director of Operations

Operations Director Julius discussed that we held our annual trainings including CPR, sexual harassment training, and defensive driving training. This month is a huge month for hitting invasives hard before they seed. The Foundation purchased a new sprayer, and this has helped increase the impact of our spraying. Julius met with a contractor about connecting Woodbine Farm to City water and a septic system. The Ford Lightning came in, but the charger is not available yet. We were able to utilize a charger from a local car dealership. We are waiting for a delivery date. Staff have been working on the downstairs classroom including mudding and other work.

Trustee Reed asked if there was anything on the truck indicating that it's electric like a decal to advertise what we are doing. Trustee Schneller echoed that we should promote all the actions we are taking to conserve our natural areas – perhaps on radio or tv.

Alysia Callison, Director of Program Services

Director of Program Services Alysia Callison discussed that the bulk of May was spent doing programs – prepping, researching, executing and cleaning. We had many field trips including from 18 different schools. Each of these 18 schools brought multiple classrooms, so it's approximately 40-50+ classrooms. We also did some off-site presentations including an Open House at American Dreamer STEM and also the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency's Earth Stewardship Day in Springfield. Brock Rowland brings a snake and a turtle to this statewide event and engages a lot of kids we don't typically reach. We were also onboarding seasonal staff including summer camp staff, an audubon intern, a historic sites intern, and an intern interpreter. We also have interns from the Dawson Civic Leadership program. With this comes a lot of training for these new staff members. There will be more info on camps next month, but so far, it's been busy and good as most of the camps are full.

Trustee Schneller asked if Dr. Guillory's presentation was well attended. Callison said there were maybe 20 people. She commented that attendance in these programs seems to have dropped a bit, but they are looking at ways to build it back up.

Ashton Dukeman, Marketing Specialist

Marketing Specialist Ashton Dukeman discussed that the new website has launched, and updates are continuing to come in as we use it. She worked with Cromwell Media to get summer concert series ads on the radio. The first concert had 190 attendees and the second had 290 attendees, so these continue to be popular. We will be at Mercy Market through Good Samaritan Inn once a month to engage people at the market. We are working in signage for the Outdoor Classroom, and we are hoping those will be planned soon. She attended the City of Decatur Health Fair for the employees at the City. People had many positive things to say. Deer Herd management was a popular topic. She attended the Safety Meeting. She also met with a potential sculptor from Richland as there are 3 opportunities for sculptures at the Indoor/Outdoor classroom space. The instructor used to work at Caterpillar and materials and class time may be donated. The Rock Springs Ramble went well. For Wine in the Wild, the ticket sales are over the goal, and we are working on finishing touches. Patton Penhallegon donated 3 cases of wine so that will be exciting. There have been several interviews for the Event Specialist, so we hope to hire someone soon. We did grow website traffic by over 400%, which is mainly due to ads on Facebook driving people to the website. Facebook stats are up as well, mostly due to a popular post about a domestic rat that was eventually adopted due to the post.

Nicky Besser, Director of Finance and HR

Besser discussed that she attended both the quarterly staff meeting and bimonthly safety meeting. She has been working to get new credit cards activated that will earn the District points on purchases. She has been preparing for the Audit, which is

scheduled in June. She is also working to make sure that cash flow is ample for the large payouts for Capital purchases. Collective Bargaining has also picked up, so that requires a bit of work in the form of pulling data, reviewing and editing documents, and attending meetings. She had a FOIA request and an FMLA request she managed and she spent quite a bit of time onboarding all the new seasonal hires.

VII. COMMENTS FROM TRUSTEES:

Trustee Reed noted that there has been a lot of work, and a lot of great work is being done. Director Culp celebrated 5 years of service for Dave Castor, whose last meeting it is. He presented Dave with a sweatshirt. Castor commented that he is still going to be around all the time as he loves the mission and continues to be involved in Camera Club and other endeavors. He appreciates everything and wishes the Board luck. He asked to help keep us going and keep moving in the right direction. Director Schneller said a lot of progress has been made during his tenure and thank you to him from everyone. Executive Director Culp congratulated him on his many years of wonderful service. Trustee Schneller made cookies to celebrate and say thank you.

VIII EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Trustee Schneller MOVED to go into Executive Session at 6:18p.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.

Trustee Allen 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 Schneller MOVED to approve the Executive Session Minutes of June 18, 2025, as read aloud in closed session. Trustee Allen 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 7:11 p.m. Trustee Reed SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Schneller, “AYE”; Trustee Allen, “AYE”; Trustee Reed “AYE”; Trustee Castor, “AYE”. Motion carried.

President

Secretary