MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE MACON COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT
August 20, 2025, 5:30PM

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

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

Trustee Reed MOVED to approve the Minutes of the Regular meeting on July 16, 2025. Trustee Allen SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Schneller, “AYE”; Trustee Allen, “AYE”; Trustee Reed, “AYE”; Trustee Rade, “AYE”. Motion carried.

Trustee Allen MOVED to approve the Treasurer’s Report and Disbursements from July 2025, in the amount of $323,536.36 as presented. Trustee Reed SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Reed, “AYE”; Trustee Allen, “AYE”; Trustee Schneller, “AYE”; Trustee Rade, “AYE”. Motion carried.

IV. COMMENTS FROM AUDIENCE:
No comments.

V. OLD BUSINESS:
No old business.

VI. NEW BUSINESS:

1. **Audit Report Presentation and Payment Approval**

MCK Auditor Cathy Mansur presented the Audit. The audit was performed for both the Macon County Conservation District Foundation and Districts. An audit under government controls had to be conducted per GAGAS standards due to capital expenses, which is more rigorous than typical audits. This is why there are 2 findings. This finding is found in most government audits just because it is hard to keep up with if you’re not a full-time CPA. The report includes both a general finding as well as the individual funds. The General funds have a balance of 2.6 million. The best practice to hold is 6 months in reserve. The other funds with the tax levy, you must be sure that you don’t have too much, or too little based on their purpose. The Capital Fund is at $0.00 as it should be. She mentioned that we have a lot of obligated funds that the grant administrators have not yet fulfilled.

Executive Director Culp discussed that now things in the Amplifund grant management system are working more efficiently and the District is starting to apply for refunds.

Trustee Allen moved to approve the Audit Report Presentation and Payment as presented. Trustee Rade SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Allen, "AYE"; Trustee Reed, “AYE”; Trustee Schneller, “AYE”; Trustee Rade, “AYE”. Motion carried.

2. **Annual Board Member Role Approvals**

Executive Director Culp explained that discussions on Board Secretary, MCCD Liaison, and 2nd Vice President had been tabled for future Board members as they were elected to the Board. Trustee Rade proposed he serve as Secretary.

Trustee Allen moved to approve the following Board Roles for 2025-26: President: Trustee Schneller; 1st Vice-President: Trustee Reed; Treasurer: Trustee Allen; Secretary: Trustee Rade. Trustee Reed SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Rade, "AYE"; Trustee Allen, "AYE"; Trustee Reed, "AYE"; Trustee Schneller, "AYE". Motion carried.

3. 4MC Payout #4 Approval

Executive Director Culp explained that 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. The District staff worked with 4MC Corporation to issue a change order that reduced the contract amount to $578,035.65. 4MC has completed over 99% of the project and is scheduled to complete the balance of work by August 22. 4MC Corporation has submitted payout request #4 payout based on completed work in the amount of $102,309.84. Director Culp noted that Operations Director Julius saved the District $64,000 by finding cheaper furniture.

Executive Director Culp asked if the Board wanted to have the next Board meeting in the new space downstairs and they agreed. Trustee Allen asked what materials the chairs were made of and Julius responded it was partially recycled milk jugs.

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

4. Ft. Daniel OSLAD Wetland Bid

The Macon County Conservation District acquired 242 acres of land in 2022 adjacent to Fort Daniel Conservation Area. The acquisition was mostly funded by a Clean Energy Community Foundation Grant. The District stopped farming this property last year and planted a cover crop in anticipation of the restoration process. The site was previously an area that had a combination of oak savanna, upland prairie and pothole prairies or seasonal wetlands. The District applied for and received an OSLAD grant to complete the Restoration of these Wetlands.

The Project was advertised and let for bidding on July 25 with bids due on August 11th. Two contractors submitted bids on the project. KP Fencing out of Wenona, IL was the lowest bidder with a bid amount of $447,917.86. After review with the low bidder, it was determined that a mistake was made in sourcing the seed mix and the contractor bid the wrong seed mix for the Seeding of the Dry Mesic Prairie. The other bidder also noticed this error and wrote an email requesting review to ensure it was a fair process. Staff reviewed with legal counsel and is recommending the line item for the seeding be removed from the bid and rebid the seeding as a separate bid. The results after removing the seeding line item from the bid still has KP Fencing of Wenona IL as low bidder at $352,917.86 (see bid results attached). After review of references and projects, KP Fencing appears to have the expertise and means to complete the project and staff would recommend KP Fencing for the project.

Funds in the amount of $883,000 are budgeted in the Capital Fund Account 6810-700 for this Project. Sufficient funds are available in the Capital Fund Account for this expense of $352,917.86. Staff recommends approving this bid.

Trustee Allen mentioned that Sievers contacted him asking if the seeding would be removed if the bid would be redone. ED Culp responded that only the seeding portion would be rebid. Trustee Reed asked what the attorney said about the emailed letter contesting the bid. He explained that one company made a mistake on the seed. In the bid document it included a disclosure that the bid could be adjusted, so they removed the seed portion and moved forward with the rest of the bid. Dir. Culp said that staff needed to decide if they would bid the seed only or the seed and installation.

Trustee Reed MOVED to approve the Ft. Daniel OSLAD Wetland Bid as presented. Trustee Schneller SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Schneller, “AYE”; Trustee Rade, “AYE”; Trustee Reed, “AYE; Trustee Allen, “AYE”. Motion carried.

5. Ft. Daniel OSLAD Parking Lot and Pavilion Bid

This item is also in regard to the Ft. Daniel OSLAD grant to restore the site to its original pothole prairie or seasonal wetland habitat. Part of the grant included improvements to the Woodbine Farm that proposed a small parking area, Converting the existing garage into a restroom/pavilion and a small courtyard area adjacent to the house and pavilion. Bids to restore the current structure were much higher than budgeted, and staff found it was more economic to demolish the existing structure and build new.

Staff is recommending the board reject the bids for the parking lot and pavilion bid and allow staff to review and modify the specifications to reduce the cost to meet proposed grant budget.

Trustee Reed MOVED to approve the rejection of the received Ft. Daniel OSLAD Parking Lot and Pavilion Bids as presented. Trustee Allen SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Reed, “AYE; Trustee Allen, “AYE”; Trustee Schneller, “AYE”; Trustee Rade, “AYE”. Motion carried.

6. Rock Springs Rental Agreement Policy

For several years, the District has been working on a plan to relocate staff offices to the main floor of the Nature Center. This move was intended to enhance interaction between staff and visitors. With the relocation complete, the District developed a plan to convert the former office space on the lower level into additional program space. The plan also includes the creation of an outdoor classroom on the east side of the building, which will complement the new indoor program area.

To support this project, the District applied for and received a PARC grant from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. As the project nears completion, staff have been developing a policy to manage the use of the new spaces. While the primary focus remains on offering educational programs and opportunities for Macon County residents, there has also been growing interest in using the space for private rentals and events.

To ensure a consistent and organized approach, staff researched comparable facilities and policies from similar agencies. Based on this research, a new Rental Request and Agreement form was created. This document outlines the procedures for renting the space and includes a fee structure aligned with similar venues.

Key features of the proposed policy include: (1) Half-day and full-day rental options (2) Clear rules and regulations to guide permitted uses (3) An after-hours fee to cover additional staffing costs for events held outside regular hours. The proposed Rental Request and Agreement form was provided for review. The proposed rental and event policy is designed to generate revenue to offset operational costs associated with the use of the space. It is not expected to negatively impact the District's budget or financial resources. Staff recommends that the Board approve the new Rental Request and Agreement policy, including the proposed rental rates for the Rock Springs Nature Center.

Trustee Reed asked who was responsible for cleaning after an event. Director Culp said the Foundation hired a part-time event specialist who can assist and sometimes it could be staff throughout the day. She expressed concern that it wasn't enough possibly if cleanup was needed. Dir Callison added that presently, people are asked to leave the room as they find it and we provide everything. Staff still typically helps clean up after. Trustee Reed said that it was important that we were at least breaking even. Staff expressed that these prices could be reviewed after a few months to make sure everything was appropriate.

Trustee Allen MOVED to approve the Rock Springs Rental Agreement Policy as presented. Trustee Schneller SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Allen, "AYE"; Trustee Schneller, "AYE"; Trustee Rade, "AYE"; Trustee Reed, "AYE;. Motion carried.

7. **Staff Reports:**

Jerry Culp, Executive Director:

Executive Director Culp discussed The grand opening of the outdoor classroom is 5-7:30 on September 12, 2025. The bids are continuing on the Ft. Daniel Project. The Prairie Pedal is coming up. We received and RTP grant to do a connection from Rock Springs to Scovill Park and we finally received the contracts after many months of waiting. We are planning to do engineering over the winter time and construction in the spring or fall. We are making progress in labor relation negotiations. Admin have been looking at switching to PDRMA's insurance pool. They have gotten tours etc. This should hopefully save us money in the long run.

Phil Julius, Director of Operations

Operations Director Julius discussed that we are very excited for the Indoor/Outdoor classroom project to be finalized. He has also been spending a lot of time on the other bid projects. The staff has been working aggressively on invasive plant removal. This will also make the burn season more effective. The staff has done a great job and has done a lot of spraying. The staff are preparing for the new hunting season. The applications have been finalized and the setup of the new youth program and blinds are complete. There is overflow on the Prairie Pond due to a rusted pipe, and it is being replaced. He has worked on Prairie Pedal prep as well. He is also working on the bid for the Nearing Lane service lane. Friends Creek staff have milled and fabricated 2 timber frame entry signs. A picture was passed around, and he wanted to commend the craftsmanship. All the wood was harvested and milled from trees on District property.

Alysia Callison, Director of Program Services

Director of Program Services Alysia Callison discussed that July was a very busy month. Summer camps wrapped up August 1st and a summer camp report will come out in October or November. There was a lot of positive feedback and we have some more recommendations on internal processes we want to implement and no major issues were presented. We went to 11 different libraries and "Pokemon In Real Life" and "Wildlife Fun and Games" were most popular. There were two

Summer Concert Series shows and they were very popular this year. Even the one that had to move inside due to rain had over 100 people in attendance. A successful history program about Laura Ingalls Wilder was put on by the History Department and it was attended by more than 50 people. It is great to get people's interest in history. Jenny Garver had a trail monitor training that was featured on the news both WAND and Herald and review and it resulted in 13 more volunteers already. We finished our library digitization process and now the card catalogue is online and available on our website. The library has a lot of great books and even a comfy nook here if you come in person.

Ashton Dukeman, Marketing Specialist

Marketing Specialist Ashton Dukeman discussed that there was a lot of behind-the-scenes work on finishing up the Wine in the Wild, getting the Prairie Islander out, and the new rental agreement. She attended an event at Stephen Decatur MS and a lot of people took the Prairie Islander home. She has been working on the signs for the Indoor/Outdoor classroom. The new tree also went up. The new event coordinator, Kelly Finn, started and she has been looking at the different computer files. She is going to start learning more after this month. We have done a few tours of the new space as well, mostly for team building and interested renters.

Nicky Besser, Director of Finance and HR

Besser discussed that the first tax levy installment came through, which is the largest portion of the payout. Other notable sources of income was a $38,256.88 payment from Corporate Personal Property Replacement Tax. Key disbursements include Sutton Ford for $54,040 for vehicle purchase and Northwater Consulting for $11,745 for grant expenses. Finally, she informed the Board that she was working toward taking courses and exams to earn her certification as a Certified Government Financial Manager from the Association of Government Accountants.

VII. COMMENTS FROM TRUSTEES:

Trustee Reed noted that IAPD posts a lot of information on different policies and best practices and some was on signage and hazards on the road. She asked if we followed it. ED Culp discussed that yes, and this most recent announcement was about making sure to put signage out within a certain amount of time for hazards.

Trustee Schneller said it was a great summer for a huge number of people – great job.

Dir Reed said that she saw that Decatur Club is closing and so there will be a larger need for event space. She also saw the Prairie Pedal in Decatur Magazine and Trustee Schneller said she also enjoyed the pictures on the Wine in the Wild Event. Trustee Schneller also discussed that she wants to follow Robert's Rules of order and the Board was in agreement.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, Trustee Allen MOVED to adjourn the Public Meeting at 6:34 p.m. Trustee Reed SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Rade, "AYE"; Trustee Schneller, "AYE"; Trustee Allen, "AYE"; Trustee Reed "AYE". Motion carried.

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President

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Secretary