

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
OF THE MACON COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT
September 17, 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, 2nd Vice President Schneller, Secretary Rade

Board Members absent: Trustee Chapman, 1st Vice President Reed

Trustee Allen MOVED to approve the Minutes of the Regular meeting on August 20, 2025. Trustee Rade SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Schneller, "AYE"; Trustee Allen, "AYE"; Trustee Rade, "AYE". Motion carried.

Trustee Rade MOVED to approve the Treasurer's Report and Disbursements from August 2025, in the amount of \$547,634.64 as presented. Trustee Allen SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: 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. Annual Treasurer's Report Approval

Director of Finance and Human Resources Besser presented the Annual Treasurer's report for review. She discussed the layout of the report which reflects information provided by the audit, plus some more specific breakdowns of vendors paid over \$2,500 during the fiscal year and salaries by groupings of specified values. This will be filed with the County Clerk.

Trustee Allen moved to approve the Annual Treasurer's Report as presented. Trustee Rade SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Allen, "AYE"; Trustee Schneller, "AYE"; Trustee Rade, "AYE". Motion carried.

2. Annual Board Member Role Approvals

Executive Director Culp discussed that an MCCD Liaison still needs to be assigned. The Board decided to table the final decision until the full Board was present and President Schneller agreed to attend the next day's meeting.

3. Christy-Foltz Payout # 11 & #12 Approval

Executive Director Culp explained that Christy Foltz did the interior work on the Indoor-Outdoor Classroom and completed approximately 99% of the work related to their contract including demolition, electrical and plumbing, new partition walls, lower-level offices and collection room. They do still have their retention in place so they will have another payout. Staff would ask for a motion to approve Payout Request #11 and #12 from Cristy-Foltz in the amount of \$36,584.10 for expenses related to the Indoor/Outdoor PARC Grant PARC-23-127.

Trustee Rade MOVED to approve the Christy-Foltz Payout #11 and #12 as presented. Trustee Allen SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Schneller, “AYE”; Trustee Rade, “AYE”; Trustee Allen, “AYE”. Motion carried.

4. Woodbine Farm Pavilion Purchase Approval

Last month the Board approved changing the bid from renovations to instead purchasing a pavilion kit. The initial bid for the conversion project came in significantly over budget. After further research, staff determined that purchasing a pavilion kit and contracting separately for installation would result in substantial cost savings for the District. Staff evaluated several manufacturers that offer pavilion kits which include integrated restroom facilities. During this process, the District sought a product that would align with the historic character of the site. Cedar Forest Products PAC 11 Shelter Kit was identified as a suitable option, as their pavilion designs replicate timber frame construction that complements the architectural style of the existing house and barn.

The shelter kits are available through HGACBuy cooperative purchase program which allows the District to purchase a pre-bid structure and then bid the installation. The cost of the pavilion is \$120,852.80. The purchase of the Cedar Forest Products PAC 11 pavilion kit includes all stamped architectural drawings and a set of bid specifications for bidding the installation. Cedar Forest Products also assists with the bidding process by providing a list of contractors that are certified installers of their product.

Funds are budgeted in the Capital Fund Account 6810-700 for this Project. There are sufficient funds in Capital Account 6810-700 for this expense totaling \$120,852.80.

Trustee Allen MOVED to approve the Woodbine Farm Pavilion Purchase as presented. Trustee Rade SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Schneller, “AYE”; Trustee Rade, “AYE”; Trustee Allen, “AYE”. Motion carried.

5. Woodbine Farm and Rock Springs Asphalt Bid Approval

Operations Director Phil Julius discussed the bid for asphalt for Woodbine Farm and Rock Springs. Nearing lane needs resurfacing due to its age, years of use and winter freeze/thaw. The roadway has developed cracks that are too large for seal coating to repair. Adding a new two-inch layer of asphalt will take care of these issues. Milling will be done at all adjoining roadways for smooth transitions. The road will be striped at completion.

The second part of this project is the paving of a new parking lot at Fort Daniel Woodbine Farm as well as resurfacing the driveway to the Ulery house. This part of the project is funded by the OSLAD grant. This is the grant that also involves the plaza, restroom/pavilion and the pothole prairie restoration. There were 2 alternates – one for oil and chip and one for asphalt. The Oil and Chip is more aesthetically appealing, but the asphalt will have less maintenance.

There was one bid submitted. The sole bidding company is Dunn Company. Dunn Company bid \$120,840.00 for the Nearing Lane Resurface, \$95,165.20 for the Ford Daniel Parking lot and \$22,599.00 for resurfacing the driveway to the Ulery house. This bid is congruent with MCCD’s budget and grant funding awarded.

Trustee Rade agreed that asphalt was a good decision.

Trustee Rade MOVED to approve the Woodbine Farm and Rock Springs Asphalt Bid as presented. Trustee Allen SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote

was as follows: Trustee Allen, “AYE”; Trustee Schneller, “AYE”; Trustee Rade, “AYE”. Motion carried.

6. Birthday Party Rental Cost Adjustment Approval

Director of Program Services Alysia Callison discussed rentals for birthday parties which include a room and program. The adjustment is to align with the newly approved room rental costs. She utilized the room rental cost and the cost of the program with a 10% discount for the package. The Recommendation is as follows:

| | Small Room | Large Room/Patio |
|--------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| Birthday Party for 1-15 | \$ 139.50 | \$ 207.00 |
| Birthday Party for 16-30 | \$ 166.50 | \$ 234.00 |

Trustee Allen MOVED to approve the Birthday Party Rental Cost Adjustment as presented. Trustee Rade SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Allen, “AYE”; Trustee Schneller, “AYE”; Trustee Rade, “AYE”. Motion carried.

7. Woodbine Farm Agriculture Rental

Director of Operations Phil Julius discussed that a local farmer was interested in renting a pole barn and a grain bin. Woodbine Farm has two large pole buildings and three grain bins. The District doesn’t use the north pole building nor any of the grain bins. The south pole building has sufficient space to house the supplies and equipment the district needs to store at Woodbine Farm. A local farmer has expressed interest in renting the north pole building and the larger grain bin of the three, to store machinery and grain. The recommended lease will be a year-to-year contract, so if the district obtains funding to incorporate the use of the buildings, the lease will not be renewed.

The financial impact for the pole building will be a rental fee of \$2250.00 and a rental fee of \$1300.00 for the grain bin. The grain bin and pole build are on a separate electrical meter than the house and barn. This will allow staff to monitor the electrical use by the farmer during the rental period, and the farmer will be charged for the electrical use during the rental period. The farmer is also aware that the large fan on the grain bin does not work, and the district will not pay to repair it. (If he wants the fan operational, he will have to pay to have it repaired). This rental will be a total income of \$3550.00 for the District.

Trustee Rade moved to approve the Woodbine Farm Agriculture Rental as presented. Trustee Allen SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Allen, "AYE"; Trustee Schneller, “AYE”; Trustee Rade, “AYE”. Motion carried.

8. Star Lab Pricing Proposal

Dir of Program Service Alysia Callison discussed that the staff just got trained on the Star Lab and it is a great asset. They must set a fee to offer it as a program. She considered what the pricing had been when the District borrowed one from the Children’s Museum in the past, and across Illinois and the rest of the country. She recommends:

Off-Site Programs: In-County: \$200 per day; Out-of-County: \$250 per day, with a \$20 mileage surcharge over 80 miles round-trip

On-Site Programs: \$50 setup charge, plus \$3 per student

Dir Schneller asked about the logistics of on-site programs with the size of the star lab. Callison responded that it will need troubleshooting, and it can be done outside if it is good weather. She said in the past most of the programs were off-site and held in gymnasiums. Phil Julius suggested it might fit under a pavilion. Callison mentioned it could be revisited if the pricing didn't work. Trustee Rade mentioned there is an app that can help in tracking mileage expenses for review when considering mileage charges.

Trustee Allen moved to approve the Star Lab Pricing Proposal as presented. Trustee Rade SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Rade, "AYE"; Trustee Allen, "AYE"; Trustee Schneller, "AYE". Motion carried.

9. Staff Reports:

Jerry Culp, Executive Director:

Executive Director Culp discussed the Indoor-Outdoor Classroom is mostly complete and he is working on reimbursement. The next project is the Ft. Daniel Wetland Grant. We are around the corner from moving dirt out there and the contractor is getting their final permit to start work. With the change in the pavilion, there had to be several approvals from the IDNR, but everything looks good. The idea is to get it wrapped up by spring. Prairie Pedal is around the corner. Rock Springs and Scovill Park West Bike Trail is in the works, with summer construction as the goal. Last week there was another Collective Bargaining meeting, and the District is hoping things are moving forward. We have been working on a lot of paperwork on the PDRMA application, and they just sent us proposal for review today. It does look like there will be substantial savings. They have a lot of attentiveness to their members to increase safety and mitigate risk, so we are hoping it works out. He thanked the Board for coming out to the opening event for the Indoor-Outdoor Classroom.

President Schneller commented that everyone looked impressed at the new space and the kids especially looked excited at the instruments and rock/water area.

Phil Julius, Director of Operations

Operations Director Julius discussed that they attended the Farm Progress Show in Decatur which is a great opportunity. He executed the asphalt bid and looks forward to moving it forward. The Camp Host at Friend's Creek contacted him to say that she had to leave the position early. He and Ashton worked to post that they needed help, and they were able to find someone that was a good fit who wanted to take the position. His last day is November 2nd. Tiffanie Harley did a wonderful job, and she left on good terms. Natural Resources and Operations staff drained the Prairie Pond to replace the overflow pipe. There was some public concern, and the goal is always to conserve as much nature as possible, but the leak needed to be fixed. Similarly, the culvert at Rock Springs had to be fixed due to rust, and it was good timing that it was done before the resurfacing of the lane. He and his staff also prepared for and attended the opening of the Indoor-Outdoor classroom. Natural Resources is working with South Wheatland Fire Department to create emergency boat access to the Sangamon River. The access will come from Banton Lane onto the old Nature Center lane and then down the access cleared during the bike trail construction.

Trustee Schneller asked if they would keep the campground open in the winter. Julius said yes, it would be open but there is no host after November 2nd because there is no water. Trustee Allen asked about some of the activities he had seen around the Nature Center and Julius said they are still working on invasives including black locust.

Alysia Callison, Director of Program Services

Director of Program Services Alysia Callison discussed that August was a bit quieter and a time for wrapping up the summer and preparing for fall. Staff did a lot of cleaning up and working on preparation. Astronomy Jam was held and attendance is waning, so they are considering revisiting the event. The Hummingbird Festival was very well attended by around 200 people. Public programs include Yoga in the Pines and the Summer Concert Series, and a few off-site programs occurred. Callison attended the Nature Center Administrators Summit in California, and it was extremely valuable. The conference is all people who work in Nature Centers. It's great because everyone is working in a very similar environment. Jenny Garver had a trail monitor training with 15-20 new volunteers signing up. She attended another Collective Bargaining meeting. Everyone is getting ready for fall with many fun events, school field trips, and other programs.

Ashton Dukeman, Marketing Specialist

Marketing Specialist Ashton Dukeman discussed that she did some news interviews for the Astronomy Jam with a star bracelet craft. She worked on finalizing the rental agreement for the new indoor-outdoor classroom and she finalized the "welcome" sign for the space. She did a lot of planning and prep for the grand opening. She attended the SDMS open house, and they invited her to come back for their career day. She is going to do some career-focused handouts. She also attended the Ripple Auto Show, and it was nice. She added a new attraction, a magnifier that you can look at rocks and other things. The Prairie Pedal is coming up. The new Event Specialist has started and has been doing a lot of organizing. The most popular social media post was the new metal tree and fencing. Social media is something that must constantly be re-invented to get people's interest.

Trustee Rade asked if she used AI and that it could be very helpful. She says she mostly uses it to proofread, and she does sometimes use it to keep things fresh when she has to repeat things over and over but in a new way. She always makes sure that she uses it ethically.

Nicky Besser, Director of Finance and HR

Besser discussed that she attended the Do Something Great Awards to acknowledge her earning her Certificate in Fundraising Management over 3 years from the Heart of Illinois Community Foundation. She also worked with the Foundation on some financial updates and campground issues for the District. She worked on collective bargaining documents and meetings, ran volunteer background checks, and onboarded a new employee. Key payouts included those to 4MC and Christy-Foltz for work on the Indoor-Outdoor Classroom, Sutton Ford for the Dump Truck, John Deere for the zero turn mower, and money for the RSNC Shop's updated parking lot. The second tax levy installment came in and camping revenue was high at \$13,000 dollars. A CD from Hickory Point Bank was liquidated, earning over \$12,000 in interest.

10. Board Tour

Every year the Board does a tour of some of the District sites and has lunch. A discussion was had to set a date. October 23rd was set at 8AM. President Schneller also added that the Foundation should be invited and asked if anyone else might be good to invite. Trustee Allen asked if perhaps a member of the media or someone from the Community Foundation.

VII. COMMENTS FROM TRUSTEES:

There were no comments from the Trustees.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, Trustee Allen MOVED to adjourn the Public Meeting at 6:26 p.m. Trustee Rade SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Rade, "AYE"; Trustee Schneller, "AYE"; Trustee Allen, "AYE". Motion carried.

President

Secretary