

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
OF THE MACON COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT  
February 18, 2026, 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: President Schneller, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President Reed, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President Chapman, Treasurer Allen, Secretary Rade  
Board Members absent: none

Trustee Rade MOVED to approve the Minutes of the Regular meeting on January 21, 2026 as presented. Trustee Allen SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Schneller, "AYE", Trustee Reed, "AYE"; Trustee Allen, "AYE"; Trustee Rade, "AYE", Trustee Chapman, "AYE". Motion carried.

Trustee Allen MOVED to approve the Treasurer's Report and Disbursements from January 2026, in the amount of \$356,753.11 as presented. Trustee Reed SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Allen, "AYE"; Trustee Rade, "AYE", Trustee Chapman, "AYE", Trustee Schneller, "AYE", Trustee Reed, "AYE". Motion carried.

**IV. COMMENTS FROM AUDIENCE:**

No comments.

**V. OLD BUSINESS:**

No Old Business.

**VI. NEW BUSINESS:**

**1. Budget Presentation**

Trustee Allen MOVED to approve the Budget Presentation as presented in the Budget Study Session. Trustee Chapman SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Rade, "AYE"; Trustee Schneller, "AYE", Trustee Chapman, "AYE"; Trustee Reed, "AYE"; Trustee Allen, "AYE". Motion carried.

**2. Set hearing date for FY 2027 Budget & Appropriation Ordinance**

Executive Director Culp proposed the following schedule for the Budget Hearing: **March 25, 2026 5:15PM** prior to the specially scheduled Board meeting (fourth Wednesday). All Board Members agreed.

Trustee Reed MOVED to approve the Budget Hearing Schedule as presented. Trustee Allen SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Rade, "AYE"; Trustee Schneller, "AYE", Trustee Reed, "AYE"; Trustee Allen, "AYE"; Trustee Chapman, "AYE". Motion carried.

**3. Illinois Finance Authority IGA Charging Station Grant**

The District included \$15,000 in the capital fund to install EV charging stations at Rock Springs with the idea that those funds would be matched by a grant. The District applied for and received a grant through the Illinois Finance Authority to complete the project. The grant is an 80-20 grant which will require the District to pay a 20% cost share once the project is completed. The \$15,000 included in the budget will allow for

an estimated project cost of up to \$75,000 for the installation of the charging stations. This grant is not a reimbursable grant, the Illinois Finance Authority will pay for and complete the installation of the charging stations, and the District is required to pay its 20% share within 1 year of the project completion. To secure this grant the District has to approve an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with the Illinois Finance Authority. Staff has reviewed the IGA with legal counsel and is comfortable approving the IGA. Trustee Reed asked how many stations we are installing. Director Culp said 4 as that is the minimum for the grant. Trustee Allen asked how it worked. Culp said that you can either use a credit card or have a membership and charge using that. We can then use what they pay to cover the cost of the electricity.

Trustee Allen MOVED to approve the Illinois Finance Authority IGA for the Charging Station Grant as presented. Trustee Reed SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Rade, "AYE"; Trustee Schneller, "AYE", Trustee Chapman, "AYE"; Trustee Reed, "AYE"; Trustee Allen, "AYE". Motion carried.

#### **4. Staff Reports:**

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

Operations Director Julius stated that with the cold weather there have been some water lines that have frozen and staff have worked to repair those. The first one was at Friends Creek and the second one was the water pump in the indoor-outdoor classroom. We should have a warranty to cover the cost to cover this repair. For the Bike Path grant, the architect had some questions on the drawings and they are in discussion. He is hoping to get it finalized next week. He attended the IPRA conference in Chicago which is a great conference to learn about many different things. He spent time working on the budget. We will be working on Janvrin plumbing at Woodbine farm to add the water supply line for the house and new restroom. At Sand Creek, there is more work being done in invasive species removal. They are also doing work at Rock Springs and Friend's Creek. Otherwise, staff have been doing preventative maintenance on equipment. Trustee Schneller asked if they had to tear out drywall for the leak but since it was caught early enough, Julius said it could be done with a carpet cleaner and other items on hand.

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

Marketing Specialist Ashton Dukeman discussed that she had been working on the pancake breakfast and now has moved on to the 1,000 tree planting campaign. She is continuing social media and is now about to attend the IACD conference which the District is hosting with Boone County. She also attended IPRA conference and really enjoyed learning and networking with people across the state. She attended her first Convention and Visitors Bureau Board meeting and really enjoyed it. The new rentals are getting a lot of use and continue to do well. Thank yous and donations letters have been sent out. Trustee Schneller said she thinks her presence on the Convention and Visitor Center Board is going to be very positive. Director Schneller asked what kind of trees are being planted. They are all native and Director Culp will get her a list.

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

Director of Finance & HR Nicky Besser discussed that much of her time had been spent supporting the budget process. She did attend the IPRA Soaring to New Heights Conference along with other staff and gained a valuable experience. She processed the w2s and 1099s. She also worked with the Macon County Conservation Foundation on their budget process. Finally, she worked with our tech company, Network Solutions, to help prevent color printing overages by resetting defaults each week to black and white and to implement a phone tree at the Nature Center to help the public reach staff

members directly. She discussed a few key payments and revenues, including a \$37,992.01 receivable from the Corporate Property Replacement Tax.

**Alysia Callison, Director of Program Services**

Director of Program Services Alysia Callison discussed that January is a lot of planning and prep. She worked on policies and processes for Summer Camp, and she is updating the waiver and working on a handbook for the Summer Camp Counselors. Staff have been working to solidify the weekly camp themes and currently the camps just got put on the website. It goes live April 1<sup>st</sup>. They worked on creating some new library programs. They try to cater them directly to the library theme, which changes every year. This year's theme is "Plant a Seed: Read", so it was difficult to narrow it down to just three programs. She has already booked more than 20 programs. She worked on content for the spring Prairie Islander including the main article which is about the inception of the District 60 years ago. There is a new intern through the Decatur Public Schools InspiRED future program. She is doing well and wants to be a park ranger. The partnership that we have built with Eisenhower has been great. We had a quarterly all-staff meeting and she attended the IRPA conference in Chicago. There were a few programs and events but it was generally quiet as January typically is. She reminded the Board that they are invited to attend the pancake breakfast on February 28<sup>th</sup>.

Director Schneller asked how many hours the intern spends with them. Callison responded that it was many hours as she is here 4 days a week and it's dictated by their availability with their class schedule. This has been nice so that she can get a much bigger and more diverse experience. She gets to go to programs, help with minicamp, prep materials, etc.

**Jerry Culp, Executive Director:**

Executive Director Culp discussed that he attended the joint legislative meeting at the IPRA conference. If anyone wants to learn more about that, he is happy to inform them. It is interesting to learn all the new legislation being discussed. The Ft. Daniel OSLAD grant pavilion is scheduled for February delivery out at Woodbine. The Operations team has done a lot to move that forward. They are hoping to get the wetland and prairie seeded this spring. At the Scovill Bike trail, they are waiting for a surveyor to come. Bidding is scheduled for late spring and construction next summer. He invited the Board to attend the tree planting that is happening on April 18<sup>th</sup>. The Wine in the Wild event is on June 13<sup>th</sup>. The collective bargaining unit is now going through a vote to determine if they want to decertify the union. He also spent a lot of time working on the budget.

**VII. COMMENTS FROM THE TRUSTEES**

Trustee Allen asked how cross-country skiing went. Callison said that since December they have earned about \$500. Some of the struggle is that the snow fell more on weekdays instead of weekends so the timing may be part of why it didn't get used as much as could have. Julius added that it was also very cold this year which may have deterred patrons.

**VIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Trustee Rade MOVED to go into Executive Session at 6:10p.m. for the purpose of:

1. 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 Allen SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Rade, “AYE”; Trustee Allen, “AYE”; Trustee Schneller, “AYE”; Trustee Reed, “AYE”, and Trustee Chapman, “AYE”. Motion carried.

Trustee Rade MOVED to return to the Regular Public Meeting at 6:20 p.m. Trustee Allen SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Rade, “AYE”; Trustee Allen, “AYE”; Trustee Schneller, “AYE”; Trustee Reed, “AYE”, and Trustee Chapman, “AYE”. Motion carried.

Trustee Allen MOVED to approve the Executive Session Minutes of February 18, 2026, as read aloud in closed session. Trustee Rade, SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Rade, “AYE”; Trustee Allen, “AYE”; Trustee Schneller, “AYE”; Trustee Reed, “AYE”, and Trustee Chapman, “AYE”. Motion carried.

**IX. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, Trustee Allen MOVED to adjourn the Public Meeting at 5:58 p.m. Trustee Rade SECONDED the Motion. Trustee Rade, “AYE”; Trustee Allen, “AYE”; Trustee Chapman, “AYE”; Trustee Reed, “AYE”; and Trustee Schneller, “AYE”. Motion carried.

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President

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Secretary