

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
OF THE MACON COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT
March 25, 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, 1st Vice President Reed, 2nd Vice President Chapman, Treasurer Allen, Secretary Rade
Board Members absent: none

Trustee Rade MOVED to approve both the Minutes of the Budget Study Session and the Minutes of the Regular meeting on February 18, 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 Chapman MOVED to approve the Treasurer's Report and Disbursements from February 2026, in the amount of \$206,686.77 as presented. Trustee Allen 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. FY 2026-27 Budget & Appropriation Ordinance Approval

Trustee Reed MOVED to approve the Budget Presentation as presented in the Budget Hearing. Trustee Rade 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. Transfer of funds to Capital Fund and Resolution

Every year the Board is to adopt a resolution recognizing that funds will be transferred from the General Corporate Fund Account to the Capital Fund Account. This process has become a part of the budgeting process. This year the amount of funds to be transferred from the General Corporate Fund to the Capital Fund Account totals \$858,884.14. The board was provided with financials displaying amounts for each capital account.

Trustee Allen MOVED to approve the transfer of funds to the Capital Fund and Resolution as presented. Trustee Rade 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. Ft. Daniel OSLAD Shelter Kit Payout Approval

Executive Director Culp discussed that the Board of Trustees approved the purchase of a pavilion/restroom kit for the Ft. Daniel OSLAD grant from Cedar Forest Products

through the HGACBuy cooperative purchase program for \$120,852.80. The initial order required 25% down in the amount of \$30,213.00 to place the order and the balance was due upon delivery. The Shelter has been delivered and the balance of \$90,639.80 is now currently due. Funds are budgeted in the Capital Fund Account 6810-700 for this Project. There are sufficient funds in the Capital Account 6810-700 for this expense totaling \$90,639.80 and staff recommend approving the amount.

Trustee Rade MOVED to approve the Ft. Daniel OSLAD Shelter Kit Payout Approval as presented. Trustee Chapman SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Rade, "AYE"; Trustee Reed, "AYE"; Trustee Schneller, "AYE", Trustee Chapman, "AYE"; Trustee Allen, "AYE". Motion carried.

4. Ft. Daniel OSLAD Change Order Approval

Executive Director Culp discussed that the Board of Trustees approved a contract with KP Fencing in the amount of \$352,917.86 to complete the wetland restoration portion of the Ft. Daniel OSLAD Pothole Prairie grant. The Project bids were approved in August and the contractor started work in September completing approximately 80% of the excavation and has submitted and paid out. While reviewing field quantities, it was determined that Wetland 3B needed additional excavation to meet the design intent of the wetland. KP Fencing submitted a change order in the amount of \$25,500 to complete the additional work to meet the design intent of wetland 3B. The District has reviewed the change order and has completed the engineering to confirm that the additional amount is correct for wetland 3B and that the amount requested to complete the additional excavation is in line with bid pricing. The District is also required as part of the OSLAD grant to send any change orders over \$10,000 to the IDNR for approval. The IDNR has reviewed and approved the change order and confirmed we can move forward with the additional quantities.

Trustee Reed asked what we could do to prevent this from happening again. Executive Director Culp said that he had the same thought and that it was still within 10% of the cost, which is a typical margin in construction projects. He said that it would have been possible not to make some of the adjustments and cost less money, but it wouldn't hold water the way it was intended, and they felt it was worth doing the project properly. Trustee Reed asked if this was an issue with engineering. Executive Director Culp said that it was, but they built that into the contract spec so that if there were discrepancies in the quantities that the contractor needed to let us know before exhausting the budget. Trustee Reed said that in many cases the engineering firm shares the cost if there is a mistake. Other Board members supported this suggestion and agreed that the engineer should take some responsibility. Trustee Chapman asked if the project would have cost the extra \$25,000 if it had been engineered properly in the first place. Executive Director Culp said yes that it would have. Director Culp said that he moved forward with the change order as an option because the initial engineering would work less efficiently, but the change would work as intended. Another issue is that some of the markers were destroyed by the contractor, so they had to be re-estimated under current conditions to make the new quote. Engineering is aware of this issue. Trustee Rade asked if utilizing clay would work. Executive Director Culp said no, not in this case. The Board recommended going back to the engineering firm to cover extra costs. Executive Director Culp agreed to do so. Trustee Rade asked if we should set any negotiations, and Executive Director Culp did not feel it was necessary.

Trustee Rade MOVED to authorize Jerry Culp to go back to the engineering firm and ask for them to cover the full cost of the change. Trustee Reed SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Reed, "AYE"; Trustee Allen, "AYE",

Trustee Schneller, “AYE”; Trustee Chapman, “AYE”; Trustee Rade, “AYE”. Motion carried.

5. Staff Reports:

Phil Julius, Director of Operations

Operations Director Julius stated that they have been busy burning and are well on their way to surpassing 1,000 acres. They have also been assisting the city with about 400 acres of burning. The burns have been very hot due to dry conditions, so it has been a very successful burn season. He attended the Prairie State Land Coalition which is mostly about purchasing land but there were other interesting topics. The work is continuing to move forward at Woodbine Farm including installing the septic and water. We had a contractor doing hedge row removal at Ft. Daniel and that was completed, which was one of the capital expenses. He met with a salesperson about external lights, mainly for old lights at Fort Daniel. We are looking to move to a solar light that is more efficient. We are also looking for parking lot lighting at Woodbine. We also looked at the lights installed at the Rock Springs Parking lot installed 4 years ago, but they seem to be in good shape. There is continued work on invasive removal. They are working on forestry mowing at Sand Creek, north of the main trail and Friends Creek, west of the maintenance shop. Natural Resources sourced and ordered the plants for the indoor-outdoor classroom. We co-hosted the IACD conference in conjunction with Boone County and we had 5 staff members that presented. It went well and they had a lot of fun.

Trustee Allen commented they did a great job at the IACD Conference, and it was well run.

Ashton Dukeman, Marketing Specialist

Marketing Specialist Ashton Dukeman discussed that she went to the Mud Puppy festival in Monticello. There were 200+ visitors, and about 170 unique visitors. She also went to the Hope Academy career fair. The kids had bingo cards to ask the agencies which made it fun. Some came to ask extra questions outside of the bingo cards, which showed genuine interest. She attended the Argenta Ice Festival and it's great to make the connection that we are Friend's Creek. It is one of her favorite events. She attended the IACD conference and it went well, although she was sick. She has already agreed to help with the planning committee next year. She attended Great Lakes Park Training Institute which is great for networking. She also attended the Prairie State Land Coalition meeting. She and Executive Director Culp met with the Food Truck Frenzy planners, and she attended her Convention and Visitor's Bureau Board Meeting. She and the community are excited about the tree planting event.

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 and finalizing the Budget Book and other materials. She also assisted the Macon County Conservation Foundation with their budget, and it was passed last week at their meeting. She had IPRF come and do their annual payroll audit. She was preparing for upcoming hires. She assisted at the pancake breakfast. She reviewed and analyzed possible HR firms. She is also doing ongoing prep for the upcoming audit.

Trustee Reed asked if we were sure to respond to the recommendations from the previous audit. Besser responded that yes, some items included the Vehicle Use policy, which was passed, reviewing job descriptions which the HR firm was scheduled to do, and making sure the accounting manual was comprehensive, which Besser was working on. Another suggestion was to have a financial professional serve on the Board, which was fulfilled when Kevin Chapman joined. Trustee Reed said it was important that they know we are working to respond to their recommendations.

Alysia Callison, Director of Program Services

Director of Program Services Alysia Callison discussed that February is a bit slower, but they did have a Valentine's terrarium event, and it was very successful. They also had the 60th anniversary pancake breakfast and it was very successful with about 189 people attending. The biggest success for her was the conversations and comradery that was had with so many people attending and visiting. She also attended several programs. One was at Ellsworth Dansby called the Amazing Shake where they teach kids real job skills like shaking hands, networking, etc. She really enjoyed it. She also attended the IACD conference and she presented, which was her first time presenting at a conference. It was a great experience and a full room of people attended, so that was a great experience. Program Services has been doing a lot of prep including for summer camp with registration going live April 1st. Festival of Spring is in April as well and the team is preparing for that. Callison has been doing policies and procedures and posting seasonal positions. They have also been working to close out the fiscal year. Trustee Reed said the breakfast was really well organized and the volunteers were so enthusiastic, which was great to see. Trustee Allen liked that people had to come in through the Nature Center and go downstairs to attend. He thought it encouraged people to discover everything the center has to offer. Callison had to shout out Beth Lane as she was an expert on this type of event and really helped with the organization and execution of the event.

Jerry Culp, Executive Director:

Executive Director Culp discussed that he also attended conferences including the Prairie State Land Coalition and it helped show how others are conserving land and even touched on some conservation efforts from other states. At Fort Daniel, he has been doing a lot of coordinating with the Pothole Prairie Wetland. We had to rebid the shelter, and the archeological work was behind, so the IDNR did extend the date to June 30th, and we are on track for that date. The shelter has been delivered, and the contractor will start on assembling it most likely next week. The delay has been hard on the seeding as it's better to do it in winter, but it will still get done. For the Rock Springs / Scovill Park West bike trail grant we are waiting on working with engineering before moving forward with the bid this summer. The charging station grant is waiting to hire a coordinator for the project before contacting us. The Foundation has their Woodbine Farm Wine in the Wild event on June 13th and they have already started meeting about it. It will be a larger event, and they are increasing the ticket/attendee number to 125. Trustee Allen asked when the tickets will go live. Marketing Specialist Ashton Dukeman said the goal is May 1st. Executive Director Culp shared that they have a song written about the event by his friend who is a professional musician and it is an interesting addition to the event. For the tree planting event on April 18th, there are about 1,000 trees and we have sold almost 200. For collective bargaining, we are still waiting for the labor board to give us a list of arbitrators. Trustee Reed asked what the vote to decertify the union result was. Culp responded that 11 voted for certification, 6 voted to decertify, and 6 did not vote.

VII. COMMENTS FROM THE TRUSTEES

No comments.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Trustee Allen MOVED to adjourn the Public Meeting at 6:11 p.m. Trustee Chapman SECONDED the Motion. Trustee Rade, "AYE"; Trustee Allen, "AYE"; Trustee Chapman, "AYE"; Trustee Reed, "AYE"; and Trustee Schneller, "AYE". Motion carried.

President

Secretary