

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
OF THE MACON COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT  
April 15, 2026, 5:30PM**

PURSUANT to written notice given all members of the Board, the above meeting was called to order at 5:31p.m. by President Schneller.

Board members present: President Schneller, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President Reed, Treasurer Allen

Board Members absent: 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President Chapman, Secretary Rade

Trustee Reed MOVED to approve both the Minutes of the Budget Hearing and the Minutes of the Regular meeting on March 25, 2026, as presented. Trustee Allen SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Schneller, "AYE", Trustee Reed, "AYE"; Trustee Allen, "AYE". Motion carried.

Trustee Allen MOVED to approve the Treasurer's Report and Disbursements from February 2026, in the amount of \$533,159.46 as presented. Trustee Reed SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Allen, "AYE"; Trustee Schneller, "AYE", Trustee Reed, "AYE". Motion carried.

**IV. COMMENTS FROM AUDIENCE:**

No comments.

**V. OLD BUSINESS:**

**1. Ft. Daniel OSLAD Change Order Approval**

Last month the Board of Trustees asked Executive Director Culp to have the engineer agree to cover the cost of the increase due to changes. They are still working on the legal agreement but they have agreed to cover the cost.

Trustee Allen MOVED to approve the Change Order pending review and approval of legal counsel as presented. Trustee Reed SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Schneller, "AYE", Trustee Reed, "AYE"; Trustee Allen, "AYE". Motion carried.

**VI. NEW BUSINESS:**

**1. Set Annual Meeting Dates**

Director of Finance and HR Nicky Besser presented the annual meeting dates. All are on the third Wednesday of the month except for March which is always the fourth Wednesday.

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

**2. Annual Depositories Approval**

Director of Finance and HR Nicky Besser presented the annual depositories for approval. Trustee Reed asked that next year we put an asterisk on the depositories that we do business with currently. Besser agreed to do this.

Trustee Reed MOVED to approve Annual Depositories as presented. Trustee Reed SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Reed, “AYE”; Trustee Allen, “AYE”; Trustee Schneller, “AYE”. Motion carried.

### **3. Approval of Adjusting Budgets from Contingency Line**

Director of Finance and Human Resources discussed Per auditors, the contingency line is to be used for unexpected occurrences within the budget. Expenses should not be applied to the Contingency line but rather moved from it to other line items for expenditures that exceeded their budget to adjust the budget total itself.

The following transfers are needed:

- **5260-000 – Office Equipment:** This account had an overage of **\$4,681.15** due to a one-time unanticipated expense of Productive Parks software.
- **6112-070 – Nature Center Utilities:** This account had an overage of **\$5,133.51** due to utility cost and use.
- **6702-100– Utilities Maint. Shop RSC:** This account had an overage of **\$3301.18** due to utility cost and use.
- **Account 9015-000– Property Tax Payments:** This account had an overage of **\$2092.90** due to rise in property tax costs. Several of these properties have now been classified as tax exempt.

There is no financial impact to the District as staff budgeted \$50,000.00 for contingencies. Staff need to only adjust budgeted amounts for the Contingency line proportionally to the other lines, which requires Board approval. The total budgeted expenses for the Corporate Account will remain unchanged.

Trustee Allen MOVED to approve the Adjusting Budgets from Contingency Line as presented. Trustee Reed SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Schneller, “AYE”; Trustee Reed, “AYE”; Trustee Allen, “AYE”. Motion carried.

### **4. Ft. Daniel Pothole Prairie Payout to Brown Seed Company**

Operations Director Phil Julius presented the seeding portion of the Pothole Prairie Restoration and Fort Daniel Conservation Area. After the bidding process, Brown Seed Sales was awarded the seed and seeding contract in November of 2025. This pay request is for the prairie seed and wetland seed. The seed has been delivered. Excavation work has not been completed by another contract; thus, Brown Seed Sales can’t plant the seed at the this time. So, this is a partial payment of the total bid of \$154,205. The prairie seed cost is \$140,000 and the Wetland seed cost is \$7,520. This is a total of \$147,520 that Brown Seed is seeking. This is a capital project funded by an OSLAD grant and will come from account 6810-700. There are sufficient funds for this expense.

Trustee Allen MOVED to approve the Ft. Daniel Pothole Prairie Payout to Brown Seed Company as presented. Trustee Reed SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Allen, “AYE”, Trustee Schneller, “AYE”; Trustee Reed, “AYE”. Motion carried.

### **5. Staff Reports:**

**Phil Julius, Director of Operations**

Operations Director Julius stated that we have most of our seasonal staff onboarded with the exception of a Natural Resources Intern that was interviewed recently. We have been doing a lot of preparation at Woodbine Farm to get ready for the tree planting this weekend. We hope the rain will hold off. Rain or shine they will get planted. The Operations Crew has done a great job to prepare these 30 acres with almost 1,000 trees. With warmer weather we have been able to turn water on at restrooms and drinking fountains at different locations. Natural Resources and operations wrapped up the burn season, and the 1,000-acre goal was exceeded. With it being as dry as it was, the heat was very high and that made it a very successful season. At Friends Creek operations staff have been working on schoolhouse windows including frames. Luckily our staff member Andy Murphy is very talented at woodworking and he has done a great job with these fixes. Most operations staff were able to attend the PDRMA chainsaw training. Since we were a member agency, we were able to host. Three of operations staff were able to attend for free and three for \$100 each. Mitch Lovgren, Natural Resources Manager, was able to get certified as well. All the participants got to cut down a tree and PDRMA provided breakfast and lunch. The Safety Committee met and discussed different training courses that they may want to do in the future to keep staff and the public safe. Mark Allen was curious about the brand of tree tubes that was ordered. Julius said he would let him know after the meeting. Trustee Allen asked if they had bluebird netting and Julius said yes, they did.

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

Marketing Specialist Ashton Dukeman discussed that she went to Kidfest and did Star Lab programs there with Brock Rowland. She estimates 300+ did the Star Lab and 600+ visited the table. She and Alysia Callison did an interview about the trivia night and tree event. She completed her event specialist interviews and she hired Rachel Funk. She is doing well and is very eager to learn. Dukeman has done a lot of demos of recreation software. She has been meeting about Wine in the Wild. There have been a lot of room rentals and tours. As of today, there are only 98 trees left to be sponsored and we have 96 volunteers. Wine in the Wild planning is underway. The ticket page is up and running as of today. There are 2 songs written by an old classmate of Jerry Culp's and everyone is excited. They have decided to do the Prairie Islander in-house, so she is about to release her first edition. Alysia Callison, Director of Program Services, commented that it looks great and Dukeman did a great job.

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

Director of Finance & HR Nicky Besser discussed that she finalized and submitted the Budget and Appropriation as well as the Statements of Economic Interest. She attended multiple software demos for reservation and donor software. She participated in Kaiser Permanente's annual salary and benefits survey to get the comprehensive report they put out. She began classes to become a Certified Government Financial Manager. She is still doing audit preparation and end of year financial closings. There were several large grant payouts and a few large sources of revenues including a PARC grant reimbursement and the MCCF transfer that occurs each year for completed project and other line items. For HR she onboarded several seasonals and assisted with HR consultation including providing materials.

#### **Alysia Callison, Director of Program Services**

Director of Program Services Alysia Callison discussed that March can be hit or miss, but this March was busy. We launched a few weekend programs which both engage weekend staff and gives the public something to do on weekends which are less structured. They started Saturday Strolls, which is a very informal hike, and both were well attended. Sunday Story Time for toddlers was also well attended so that shows that there really is a need for this age group. There were 40 people that attended a history

program about a relative of Abraham Lincoln that Historic Sites Supervisor Brent Wielt presented. There was also a trivia night, and it was well attended and everyone had a lot of fun. March was the first month that the Star Lab was out on the road. About 1,100 students experienced the Star Lab in March. This is getting wonderful feedback from teachers and students. There were a lot of visiting programs during March which is unusual, so word must be getting out that we travel. She did several seasonal interviews. She attended the Environmental Education Association of Illinois conference and was elected to their board for a second term. She loves working with them and meeting such dedicated people throughout the state. The Summer Concert Series is set, and the sponsor, Stifel, is very excited about the lineup this year. Program Services is working on Festival of Spring Planning which is a week away. There are a lot of community services, and the only worry is they will run out of tables as so many people want to participate. Trustee Schneller asked how long it had been going on. Callison responded it is 45 years old, which may or may not be a coincidence with the institution of the Macon County Conservation Foundation.

**Jerry Culp, Executive Director:**

Executive Director Culp discussed that it has been very busy, and the public is becoming increasingly aware of what we do and what we can offer. Everywhere he goes he hears about programs including the Star Lab. He and Phil Julius have been working on the Pothole Prairie grant, and things are moving forward quickly. The pavilion is about to be up and then the seeding will be done. We have been working on some policies and procedures. We are working with an HR consultant to work from the ground up and we are currently working on job descriptions to make sure that our job descriptions accurately reflect the work being done. They will also assist with the employee handbook. He is still doing some presentations, and he did one for the National Association for Retired Federal Employees. They were a good group and asked a lot of questions. As soon as the OSLAD grant finalizes, attention will turn to the Stevens Creek and Scovill Park trail projects. The Electric Charging Station is still on the docket. Wine in the Wild is moving forward quickly, and we are starting to line up sponsors. A lot of last year's participants were excited to attend, so we anticipate this year will be even more fun. The tree event is very exciting, and Operations staff have done a great job with the almost 1,000 trees. It will be very exciting to reestablish an Oak Savannah, although it will be 50 years in the making. It is a unique experience. There has not been movement in collective bargaining, but we will communicate once we hear anything. We are waiting on the labor board to provide a list of arbitrators.

Trustee Reed asked if we were planning on giving non-bargaining unit employees their raises. He responded that yes, any employees that are not in the union will go through the regular process as they are not bound by the same restrictions. It is hard to go this long with the employees missing their raises, so the board and staff hope it will be resolved soon.

**VII. COMMENTS FROM THE TRUSTEES**

Trustee Reed said that she appreciates all the hard work. It is obvious, and people know about the Conservation District a lot more than they used to. She said Jerry Culp did a great job on the radio and she enjoys seeing everyone on the news and posts online.

**VIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Trustee Allen MOVED to go into Executive Session at 6:07p.m. for the purpose of:

1. Discussion of minutes of meetings lawfully closed under this Act, whether for purposes of approval by the body of the minutes or semi-annual review of the minutes as mandated by Section 2.06.

Trustee Reed SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Allen, "AYE"; Trustee Reed, "AYE", and Trustee Schneller, "AYE".

Trustee Allen MOVED to return to the Regular Public Meeting at 6:09 p.m. Trustee Reed SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Allen, "AYE"; Trustee Reed, "AYE", and Trustee Schneller, "AYE".

Trustee Reed MOVED to approve the Executive Session Minutes of April 15, 2026 as read aloud in closed session. Trustee Allen SECONDED the Motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Trustee Schneller, "AYE"; Trustee Allen, "AYE"; Trustee Reed, "AYE". Motion carried.

**IX. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, Trustee Reed MOVED to adjourn the Public Meeting at 6:10 p.m. Trustee Allen SECONDED the Motion. Trustee Reed, "AYE"; Trustee Schneller, "AYE"; and Trustee Allen, "AYE". Motion carried.

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President

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Secretary