

**Vermilion County Conservation District
Headquarters: Kennekuk County Park
Danville, IL**

**RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS
REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING OF THE
BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

**Wednesday, September 19, 2012
4:30 p.m.
Zack Hickman Room
Kennekuk County Park
Danville, IL**

President Little called the September Regular Meeting of the Vermilion County Conservation District Board of Trustees to order at 4:30 p.m. and opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

Roll call showed the following.

Trustees Present: Nikki A. Bogart
Dan L. Danner
Ken E. Green
Brett K. Little

Trustee(s) Absent: B. Dirk Porter

Also in attendance were Ken Konsis, Executive Director; Amy Steeples, Recording Secretary; Rick McPhee, Farnsworth Group; Gordon Thoennes, V.C.C.D.F. Chairman; Russ Hiatt and Mark Pittman, V.C.C.D.F. Directors.

Staff members present included Susan Biggs Warner, Lorna Konsis, Charlie Rhoden, and Gary Wilford.

First order of business, agenda item number four, was the Adoption of, or Amendments to the Agenda.

Trustee Bogart moved to approve the agenda as presented. This was followed by a second from Trustee Green. All in favor by acclamation, motion carried.

Agenda item number five was the Approval of the Minutes from the August 15, 2012, Regular Meeting. President Little asked for any corrections to the minutes.

On page two, paragraphs eight and nine, "Vice President Little" should be changed to "President Little"

Trustee Green moved to approve the August 15, 2012, Regular Meeting Minutes as amended. This was followed by a second from Trustee Bogart. All in favor by acclamation, motion carried.

Agenda item number five a. was the Approval of the Minutes from the August 22, 2012, Special Meeting. President Little asked for any corrections to the minutes.

Trustee Bogart moved to approve the Minutes from the August 22, 2012 Special Meeting as presented. This was followed by a second from Trustee Danner. All in favor by acclamation, motion carried.

Item number six, Audience Comments. There were none.

Agenda item number seven, the Treasurer's Report.

President Little asked if there were any comments or questions on items seven a. – seven d. There were none.

Executive Director Konsis asked if the Trustees wanted both trial balance and expense versus budget reports given to them each month.

Trustee Bogart answered that she would prefer to continue to receive them each month.

Agenda item seven e. President Little asked Executive Director Konsis to give the Report on Cash and Investments.

Executive Director Konsis reported that the current balance in the checking account at First Midwest Bank, Danville is \$51,500.00. Illinois Funds Investment Pool balance remained at \$11,400.00. The Illinois Funds Money Market account remained at \$5,100.00. The Hoopston Money Market balance was refilled to the maximum of \$249,000.00. The Preferred Checking Account (Hegeler account), has a remaining balance of \$2,400.00. The Money Market Passbook account at Central Illinois Bank is \$100,900.00. The Health Insurance Reimbursement Account at First Midwest Bank of Danville has a balance of \$5,380.00.

The Wheeler Foundation Accounts Receivable stands at \$1,500.00.

The grand total of cash and investments as of September 19, 2012, is \$427,180.00, which compares to \$528,580.00, at the same time last year.

The DCEO Grant is listed on the report separately as a NOW account at the First Savings Bank currently earning .25%. The current balance is \$166,521.74.

He asked if there were any questions from the Trustees. There were none.

Trustee Green moved to approve the Current List of Bills from August 2012, in the amount of \$17,150.90 which included check #'s 30800 – 30824; the Manual Checks for August 2012 in the amount of \$521,265.30, which included check #'s 30693 – 30702 and #'s

30733 - 30780; the General Journal Entries for August 31, 2012; the August 2012 Budget Report and the September 19, 2012 Report on Cash and Investments. This was followed by a second from Trustee Danner.

President Little requested a roll call voice vote. The results:

Trustee Green	-	yes
Trustee Danner	-	yes
Trustee Bogart	-	yes
President Little	-	yes

The vote was 4–0. Treasurer’s Report, items seven: a – e were approved. Motion carried.

Agenda item number eight, Specific Items of Business to be Transacted.

Item eight a: Act on Low Bid for Environmental Education Center. Executive Director Konsis recapped activity since the last meeting. The lowest bid came in \$800,000 over the budgeted amount so grants and other options have been anxiously explored since the bid opening. Phase I square footage can be reduced by another 1,600 sq. ft. which will drop the price to \$1.6M. He has been meeting with Foundation Directors to discuss financing options. The Foundation Board met this morning and has come up with a proposal they will present to the Board now.

Executive Director Konsis recognized Foundation Chairman, Gordon Thoennes.

Gordon stated that the Foundation has come up with financing options to make up the \$800,000 shortfall in the low bid for the construction of the Kennekuk Education Center. The Foundation owns 188 acres of farmland near Rossville, which could be sold at auction. The sale could bring \$1.4M, of which a portion would be used to pay off the Busby-Meyer Wildlife Area land mortgage, and a sum set aside for preservation of the Jordan Creek Wildlife Sanctuary.

Another option was discussed by the Foundation Directors. The farm ground near Rossville could be opened up to hunters for deer population control purposes. A fee would be charged and income generated.

Gordon stated that the Foundation wants to make clear to the V.C.C.D. Board of Trustees that they are prepared to make up for the budget shortfall. A concrete plan is not yet in place, but the Foundation is promising that the funding will be there if the V.C.C.D. Board will approve the English Brothers bid.

He wants the Trustees to approve the bid now, subject to financing, and the V.C.C.D.F. will put a proposal together at the V.C.C.D.F. meeting on October 12.

Foundation Director Russ Hiatt explained a map of the Jordan Creek Wildlife area handed out to the Trustees. He gave details of the land auction process, and added that the Foundation Directors are exploring other options as well. The land market is very positive

for sellers now. Russ stated the Foundation feels confident that they can finance the environmental education center. He asked for questions. There were none.

Executive Director Konsis explained that the OSLAD grant “loan” of \$400,000 comes due September 30, 2013. There may be a time extension given for the OSLAD grant possible but it has already had an extension. The Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity grant deadline is December 31, 2013.

Discussion ensued.

Gordon stated that the Foundation will be funding this project so that Phase I will get started. He knows that the Foundation can fund the \$800,000 overage as well.

Trustee Bogart asked what commitments the District is making toward their future.

Gordon stated that it was the V.C.C.D. Foundation’s future, not the V.C.C.D. This is what “we”, the Foundation have to preserve.

Trustee Bogart responded that there is \$1,207,000 available. Anything over that the Foundation will be responsible for funding. She is not comfortable with approving the bid unless the amount of money is in place.

Gordon replied that the Foundation is not asking the Trustees to do that, only for them to approve the English Brothers bid, *subject to financing*.

The Trustees asked for more explanation of the land auction process. Russ Hiatt answered all of their questions stating that eight weeks marketing time would be the maximum amount of time needed, also advertising and service fees.

Executive Director Konsis affirmed that tomorrow, September 20, was the 30th day of the bid – or the expiration date.

Rick McPhee interjected that the bid amount had been extended until 60 days, or 30 more days, until October 20.

He also stated that accepting the \$2,199,000 bid would not lock us into that total amount. Change orders could be arranged to meet the funding limitations.

A lengthy discussion ensued.

With no more questions or discussion, *Trustee Danner moved to approve the low bid of \$2,199,000 for the Kennekuk Environmental Education Center from English Brothers, subject to financing. This was followed by a second from Trustee Green.*

President Little requested a roll call voice vote. The results:

Trustee Danner	-	yes
Trustee Green	-	yes

Trustee Bogart	-	yes
President Little	-	yes

The vote was 4–0. Motion carried.

Russ Hiatt and Gordon Thoennes left the meeting at 5:32 p.m.

Item eight b; Open/Award Sealed Bids for Cash Rent Farm Lease. The District received three bids. Executive Director Konsis opened the bids. The results were as follows:

Andrew Blackford	– three tracts	\$21,772.80
	Tract #803	\$12,757.50
JSS Farms	- three tracts	\$26,880.00
	Tract #803	\$15,750.00
Brad Ludwig	- three tracts	\$13,896.00
	Tract #803	\$10,027.00

Executive Director Konsis and Associate Director Pasquale reviewed the bids.

Trustee Bogart asked which account the income from the cropland was recorded.

Executive Director Konsis answered that it was put into the general fund. Currently the rent paid is \$170/ per acre. The high bid from JSS Farms will be \$300/acre.

Associate Director Pasquale remarked that the District owns two other tracts totaling approximately 50 acres that was farm ground that has since returned to its natural state. With some work, it could be made into tillable ground and leased out. This could produce more income for the District. There are 30 acres in Kennekuk, not visible to the public, and 20 acres near Higginsville Bridge.

All Trustees are in agreement to look into turning the aforementioned acres into tillable land for additional income. The question is whether to open up a new bidding process or simply offer these acres to the high bidder for the current farm ground. The Executive Director will consult with Gil Saikley on this.

With no more discussion, Trustee Bogart moved to accept the high bid from JSS Farms for \$26,880.00 on the three tracts plus tract #803 for \$15,750.00, owned by the V.C.C.D. This was followed by a second from Trustee Danner. All in favor by acclamation, motion carried.

Trustee Bogart thanked Associate Director Pasquale for his proposal for additional farm ground to increase revenue.

Item eight c; Discuss/Approve Fiscal Year 2012-2013 Tax Levy. The Trustees were provided with three proposals for tax levy increases within the 5% increase allowable before referendum. Executive Director Konsis stated the amount each proposal would

bring to the District. No increase would levy \$988,000; 3% \$1,017,600; and 5% \$1,037,000.

Trustee Bogart stated that she would not support a tax increase. If the county can do without an increase, then the District can too.

Trustee Green stated that he will not support an increase either.

President Little commented that there are many factors to keep in mind for the long term future of the V.C.C.D. The last increase of any kind was in 2005.

With no more discussion, *Trustee Bogart moved to approve Annual Tax Levy Ordinance No. 126 holding taxes to the same level. This was followed by a second from Trustee Danner.*

President Little requested a roll call voice vote. The results:

Trustee Bogart	-	yes
Trustee Danner	-	yes
Trustee Green	-	yes
President Little	-	yes

The vote was 4–0. Motion carried.

Agenda item number nine was Representative Reports.

Agenda item nine a: Associate Director Pasquale reported that the annual IACD meeting was held in McHenry County on August 24-25. He and Executive Director Konsis attended. The Burton Atwood Award was given to a couple from Boone County Conservation District area who had donated land to their District. Officers were elected for the year, Associate Director Pasquale is this year's IACD President. Next year's annual meeting will be held in Putnam County.

The Trustees congratulated him on his election to president.

This concluded the IACD Report.

Agenda item nine b; V.C.C.D. Foundation report was already covered by Chairman, Gordon Thoennes and Director Russ Hiatt.

The next V.C.C.D. F. meeting is Friday, October 12, 9 a.m., Zack Hickman Room.

This concluded the report regarding the V.C.C.D. Foundation.

Agenda item nine c: Executive Director Konsis gave the IAPD Report. There is a legal symposium offered in Oakbrook, Illinois on October 11, 2012. The cost is \$175/person. He does not recommend attendance.

Agenda item ten: There was no executive session.

Agenda item eleven: There were no amendments to the agenda.

Agenda item twelve a; Report From the Education Supervisor. Gary Wilford reported that Outdoor School was underway and will continue through the first week of November. We have 100% participation from Vermilion County Schools. Day Visits for all grade levels are offered and scheduled at both parks, as well. Civil War School Day is Friday, Sept. 21, in the Bunker Hill Historic Area. Susan Biggs Warner coordinates this program which involves the Civil War Days reenactors and 600+ 5th graders from Vermilion County. This has been done for several years and Susan always does a great job organizing it.

He and staff are preparing the fall issue of the District newsletter, *The Conservationist*. As earlier decided, there will be no printed winter issue. It will be available on the District's website and emailed.

As a conservation district, we receive many wildlife calls from the public. Some are simple questions; others pertain to nuisance animals, etc. Gary recently responded to a call about a bird of prey that was living under a resident's shed, in a burrow. The resident was unsure what species of bird it was, and so was Gary. Upon his arrival, it turned out to be a nest of turkey vultures. They prefer hollow logs, but this one had taken up residence underground and had one, possibly two chicks. The young actually "growled" at him when he came close to the burrow. Gary tried to convince the resident to be patient and they would leave on their own, but caller wanted the family removed, and Gary set a trap. Currently, he has not caught any of the birds, and guesses he probably will not; nevertheless it was quite a learning experience. [In the end nature ran its course and the vulture family did leave on their own.]

This concluded the Education Supervisor's Report.

Agenda item thirteen a; Report from the Associate Director. Associate Director Pasquale attended the Lake Vermilion Water Quality Coalition Workshop. It was a very informative meeting. Mike Garthaus gave a presentation on the health of Lake Vermilion and the Associate Director took them on a pontoon boat tour of the lake.

Clean up maintenance has been done at Dolores Pond, Kennekuk.

He is proud to report that the concrete work on the Wheeler Foundation Nature Trail is complete. Larry Gilliland did 99% of the preparation for the construction of this trail, and it is a very nice addition to Kennekuk Park.

Preparation of the hunting areas at Kennekuk has begun. Squirrel season has begun, Deer season begins October 1. Kennekuk has signed up 124 hunters to date. The annual duck hunting draw for Lake Vermilion and Lake Mingo is scheduled for Thursday, September 27, 7:00 p.m., at the White Oak Nature Center. The Lake Vermilion concession stand is closed for the season. Maintenance staff is still present to sell gasoline there. Gas sales have been slow; to date we have sold about 250 gallons.

President Little asked the capacity of the tank.

Associate Director Pasquale answered that it was 500 gallons.

President Little suggested adding a stabilizer to the gas tank for the winter, instead of selling "old gas" in the spring.

Associate Director Pasquale continued, stating that staff is working on tree removal at the Lake Mingo Dam and Spillway. This was recommended by the inspection report done earlier this year.

He has completed and passed the required Open Meeting Act training. He asked for questions from the Trustees.

Trustee Green asked about the length of the Wheeler Foundation Nature Trail.

Associate Director Pasquale stated that it is one-third of a mile, with areas that have benches.

Trustee Bogart clarified that with hunting season opening, hunters are aware of the areas they are restricted to hunt.

Associate Director Pasquale explained that they are given instructions, and a packet of information that includes a map of the areas where hunting is allowed.

This concluded the Associate Director's Report.

Agenda item fourteen; Report of Executive Director. Executive Director Konsis reported that the education staff had compiled a "wish list" of classroom materials and equipment for the Rotary Club. This will give the club a goal for their offer to fundraise for the new education center.

The Farm City Event held in Kennekuk County Park was a success with about 120 in attendance. The V.C.C.D. Foundation catered the event and proceeds of \$620 will benefit the education center. Rick Leiding donated the main course of brats and wieners.

The Haunted Happenings event will take place at Kennekuk on Saturday, October 20. Gates open at 6:00 p.m. Staff is in the planning stages and area preparation has begun.

The next meeting is Wednesday, October 24, 2012, 4:30 p.m. in the Gannett Outdoor Education Center, Forest Glen Preserve. This will be the fourth Wednesday of the month, due to the major event of Haunted Happenings.

Agenda item fifteen: President's and Trustee's Comments.

Trustee Bogart commented that she attended the Farm City Event was very pleased to see that Gary Wilford was the recipient of the Educator of the Year Award. The Trustees congratulated Gary.

Trustee Green remarked that he has noticed the recent reports of attempted child abduction in the Champaign area. Everyone and District Education staff should take opportunities to help teach children how to catch these individuals by remembering license plate numbers.

Trustee Danner had no comment.

President Little stated that it was a beautiful day, the Kennekuk entrance looks great!

With no further discussion, and all business transacted, *Trustee Green moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:15 p.m. This was followed by a second from Trustee Danner. Meeting adjourned.*

Nikki A. Bogart
Secretary/Treasurer
V.C.C.D. Board of Trustees