

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

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

**Wednesday, January 20, 2021
4:30 p.m.
Cellular One Classroom, Environmental Education Center
Kennekuk County Park, Danville, IL**

Vice President Staske called the January Regular Meeting of the Vermilion County Conservation District Board of Trustees to order and opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

Agenda item number three, Roll Call showed the following to be present.

Trustees Present: Michael P. Arbuckle
Michael Gast
Randy A. Johnson
Doug R. Staske

Trustee(s) Absent: Charles B. Schroeder

In attendance were Executive Director Jamie Pasquale, Associate Director of Administration and Personnel Kim Fox, and Recording Secretary Amy Steeples.

Staff member present: Lara Danzl.

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

Vice President Staske asked for amendments to the agenda.

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

Agenda item number five. Approval of the Minutes from the November 18, 2020, Regular Meeting. The December regular meeting was canceled.

With no corrections, Trustee Johnson moved to approve the November 18, 2020, Regular Meeting Minutes as presented. This was followed by a second from Trustee Gast. All in favor by acclamation, motion carried.

Agenda item number five a. Approval of Minutes of the November 18, 2020 Executive Session.

With no corrections, Trustee Johnson moved to approve the November 18, 2020, Executive Session Minutes as presented. This was followed by a second from Trustee Arbuckle.

Vice President Staske requested a roll call vote. The results:

Trustee Johnson	-	yes
Trustee Arbuckle	-	yes
Trustee Gast	-	yes
Vice President Staske-		yes

The vote was 4 – 0 in favor, motion carried.

Item number six. Audience Comments. Vice President Staske stated each person has a maximum of three minutes, total maximum of 30 minutes for all audience comments. No audience present.

Agenda item number seven, the Treasurer’s Report. Vice President Staske asked if there were any questions on items seven a through h. This included the bills, checks and journal entries for November and December 2020.

With no questions or discussion, *Trustee Johnson moved to approve the Current List of Bills dated December 17, 2020 in the amount of \$4,718.85, which included check #'s 41276 – 41284; the Manual Checks dated November 30, 2020 in the amount of \$65,636.83, which included check #'s 41198 – 41213 and 41228 – 41254; and the General Journal Entries for December 31, 2020. This was followed by a second from Trustee Johnson.*

Vice President Staske requested a roll call vote. The results as follows:

Trustee Johnson	-	yes
Trustee Arbuckle	-	yes
Trustee Gast	-	yes
Vice President Staske-		yes

The vote was 4 – 0 in favor, motion carried.

Agenda item number seven i. Report on Cash and Investments. Associate Director of Administration and Personnel Fox included both December 16, 2020 and January 20, 2021 Reports. She reported that as of January 20, 2021, the NOW checking account balance is \$268,509,000; Illinois Funds Investment Pool balance is \$243,901, the Illinois Funds Money Market Fund remains at \$5,400. First Farmers Bank Money Market Passbook account balance is \$249,000; Central Illinois Bank Money Market passbook account balance is \$245,381. The Health Reimbursement Account (HRA) balance is \$5,340. First Saving Bank NOW account balance is \$248,709; the NOW account at Catlin Bank balance is \$249,180. The 3 mo. CD at Central Illinois Bank at .05% interest matured (at a little over \$103,654) and was deposited in the NOW checking account at First Midwest; 3 mo. CD [Whittaker Funds] at Iroquois Federal at .30% interest balance is now \$57,349; the 3 mo. CD [Wagner Funds] at Iroquois Federal invested at .30% interest balance is \$100,584.

The grand total of cash and investments for January 20, 2021: \$1,673,353. This compares to \$1,692,184. in January of 2020.

Executive Director Pasquale reported that the District received \$171,000 from the state as reimbursement for the Kickapoo Rail Trail expenses. Another reimbursement for \$39,000 is expected.

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

Item eight a. Approve 2021 Vermilion County Conservation District Board Meeting Schedule. The schedule was included in the Trustee’s packets. Executive Director Pasquale offered to be flexible with any change the meeting time, and the day of the week that the Trustees meet.

The Trustees were in agreement that the current schedule worked for them.

Trustee Johnson moved to approve the Vermilion County Conservation District Board of Trustees Meeting Schedule for 2021 as presented. This was followed by a second from Trustee Gast.

Vice President Staske asked for a roll call vote. The results as follows:

Trustee Johnson	-	yes
Trustee Gast	-	yes
Trustee Arbuckle	-	yes
Vice President Staske-		yes

The vote was 4 – 0 in favor, motion carried.

Item eight b. Approve capitalization policy. Executive Director Pasquale clarified this policy was recommended by the auditors to be in compliance. The threshold for capitalization of district assets should be increased. Currently, the amount for capitalization is \$1,000. There are many, many items on the list that may be unaccounted. The auditor stated that a new asset amount of \$2,500 - \$15,000 is acceptable.

Trustee Gast commented that a decision be made as to whether to expense it now, or expense it later. Bookkeeping for such a low amount can be “unbearable”.

Discussion ensued regarding establishing a new threshold.

It was the consensus of the Trustees that the new amount should be \$7,500.

Vice President Staske asked for a motion regarding a new capitalization policy.

Trustee Johnson moved to approve the new Vermilion County Conservation District Capitalization Policy in the amount of \$7,500, as presented. This was followed by a second from Trustee Gast.

Vice President Staske requested a roll call vote. The results as follows:

Trustee Johnson	-	yes
Trustee Gast	-	yes
Trustee Arbuckle	-	yes
Vice President Staske-		yes

The vote was 4 – 0 in favor, motion carried.

Agenda item eight c. Approve minimum fund balance policy. Executive Director Pasquale stated this policy was also recommended as a requirement by the auditors. The policy is intended to provide guidelines during the preparation and execution of the annual budget to ensure that sufficient reserves are maintained, for the unanticipated expenditures or revenue shortfalls among other possible concerns.

Executive Director Pasquale stated that no percentage level was assigned to the General Fund.

Trustee Gast asked if the balance should be two to three months’ worth of operating capital.

Executive Director Pasquale replied that typically the District carries over \$1M in investments and accounts.

Trustee Johnson asked if a threshold should be determined, and stated in the policy.

Associate Director of Administration and Personnel Fox reported the insurance fund level at 20% of the budgeted expenses would be \$43,600; IMRF fund level at 10% would be \$2,500; audit fund at 10% would be \$1,050; FICA fund at 10% would be \$6,500.

Executive Director Pasquale stated the District receives tax installments four times each year. The first two allocations are the largest; the first received in August or September. The other two are minimal.

Discussion ensued regarding the General Fund detail guidelines.

With no more discussion or comments, *Trustee Gast moved to approve the Vermilion County Conservation District Minimum Fund Balance Policy, with the amendment stating the General Fund be maintained at three months budgeted expenses, based on the last three years expenses. This was followed by a second from Trustee Arbuckle.*

Vice President Staske requested a roll call vote. The results as follows:

Trustee Gast	-	yes
Trustee Arbuckle	-	yes
Trustee Johnson	-	yes
Vice President Staske-		yes

The vote was 4 – 0 in favor, motion carried.

Agenda item eight d. Approve legal counsel to pursue lease assignments for Kickapoo Rail Trail. This is regarding the VCCD rights and responsibilities regarding license assignments from CSX railroad. A letter written in 2014 from Gil Saikley Law Offices with a list of seven possible businesses and municipalities to pursue was included in the Trustees packets for review.

Executive Director Pasquale asked for direction regarding the balance of staff time in procurement of lease agreements; and approval of legal counsel to move forward.

Vice President Staske suggested that Associate Director of Administration and Personnel Fox send letters to the businesses regarding these lease agreements to see what response can be obtained.

Discussion of land given to a municipality can be done legally by the District ensued. This should be researched with legal counsel.

The consensus of the board was to attempt a letter and give the businesses or municipality 3-6 months to respond. If no response is received, follow up to see what attorney fees may be to accomplish this.

Executive Director Pasquale stated that the Board will be updated each month on any response or progress made.

There was no action taken to approve legal counsel at this time.

Agenda item eight e. Review Executive Session Minutes from April 18, 2018; May 8, 2018; May 23, 2018; December 5, 2018; May 15, 2019; July 17, 2019; November 18, 2020 for release or hold. Executive Director Pasquale stated that the executive session minutes must be reviewed every six months and approved to hold or release to the public. His recommendation is to hold all minutes, with the exception of November 18, 2020.

Trustee Johnson moved to release November 20, 2020, Executive Session Minutes; retain April 18, 2018; May 8, 2018; May 23, 2018; December 5, 2018; May 15, 2019; and July 17, 2019. This was followed by a second from Trustee Gast.

Vice President Staske requested a roll call vote. The results as follows:

Trustee Johnson	-	yes
Trustee Gast	-	yes
Trustee Arbuckle	-	yes
Vice President Staske	-	yes

The vote was 4 – 0 in favor, motion carried.

There was no executive session.

Agenda item nine a. Report from the Executive Director. Executive Director Pasquale reported that due to the coronavirus pandemic and Illinois State Mitigation Policy, the decision was made to postpone the 2021 Maple Syrup Open House. The District's insurance policy states, if the rules are not followed they will not cover the District. The trees will be tapped and syrup will be made if possible. Plans are being made for 250 maple syrup season baskets to offer the public. The baskets will have Forest Glen Syrup in a glass container, pancake mix, sassafras tea, District coffee cups or tumbler, and more. Sales of regular pints and quarts of syrup are planned as well. The District currently has about 20 gallons of syrup from 2020 production, which is typically held back for the dinner. One hundred fifty-nine gallons were made in 2020 which was a record year. Previously 350 taps were placed, last year 500 taps were placed. The sap collection process has been reworked to be more efficient and faster. Basket orders will be taken in advance with payment required. Refunds will be given if unable to fill.

Trustee Johnson asked when the turtle sniffing dogs are scheduled to visit the parks. This was unknown.

Dead tree work continues at Kennekuk, removing about 20 trees each day. About 60 trees have been cut to date. District insurance allows for the collection and removal of downed trees by the public, but Executive Director Pasquale made the decision to burn them due to possible issues. Firewood is sold at Forest Glen for campers, the decision was made to continue purchasing split firewood to be delivered as it is currently more cost efficient with regard to labor. This cost is passed along to the buyer.

Now that the White Oak Barn remodel, Kennekuk is completed, the next project will be the Gannett Outdoor Education Center at Forest Glen. The first phase will be an entire bathroom remodel. Showers rooms will be removed, as they are not used, stalls and toilets will be made ADA accessible. The next phase will include relocation of heat and cooling sources, and storage room, installation of new flooring. Next an addition will be constructed on the east side, after completion the back classroom will be torn down and a new area constructed. The bulk of the work will be done in-house and there is no timeline.

Trustee Johnson asked what the long-term plan was for the old education center building located to the east of the current education center. He has taken a look at the building and is concerned about risk to the public.

Executive Director Pasquale responded that it needed to be demolished.

Trustee Johnson stated that the block "garage" attached to the building seemed to be solid, perhaps a possible rental building.

Executive Director Pasquale replied that water damage and mold issues now prevent that from happening.

Executive Director Pasquale stated that it has been on the demolition agenda for almost two years, but the cost of disposal had prevented us from doing so. He has never gotten a quote, and estimates that it would be \$15,000 - \$20,000.

Trustee Gast questioned if there were any other structures that needed demolition.

Executive Director Pasquale responded the old nature center was the only one.

There were no more questions or comments.

The next VCCD Board of Trustees Meeting will be Wednesday, March 17, 4:30 p.m., Forest Glen Preserve, Gannett Center.

Agenda item thirteen. President's and Trustee's Comments.

Vice President Staske commented that Halverson Construction is working on the Kickapoo Rail Trail trestle bridge area.

Lara Danzl stated that the bridge is now done; they are working on the approach. June 1, 2021 is the anticipated finish date. Plans are to begin work on the parking lot soon so that will be finished by June 1, also.

Executive Director Pasquale reported that the planned terminus is the Vermilion County Fairgrounds road. However, the road to Kickapoo State Park from the end of the fairgrounds road has been paved. This may mean the trail will extend into Kickapoo State Park. He noted that the Verhoeven family living near the bridge has people parking on or near their residence and this has caused problems. They have contacted the VCCD with several complaints regarding this problem. This will probably continue until the State of Illinois parking lot is completed.

Trustee Gast thanked Executive Director Pasquale for the tour he gave him.

Executive Director Pasquale noted the White Oak Barn addition is now complete; the rental of the building has increased as well.

Trustee Johnson had no comment.

Trustee Arbuckle had no comment.

With no further discussion and all business transacted, *the meeting was adjourned at 5:22 p.m. All in favor by acclamation.*

Michael Gast
Secretary
VCCD Board of Trustees