

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

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

**Wednesday, December 15, 2021
4:30 p.m.
Cellular One Classroom
Environmental Education Center
Kennekuk County Park, Danville, Illinois**

President Staske called the December 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
Jessica Augustson
Michael H. Gast
Doug R. Staske

Trustee(s) Absent: Randy A. Johnson

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

Staff members present: Cole Craft, Lara Danzl and Gary Tyrl.

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

President Staske asked for amendments to the agenda. There were none.

Trustee Arbuckle moved to approve the December 15, agenda as presented. This was followed by a second from Trustee Gast. All in favor by acclamation, motion to approve the agenda carried.

Agenda item number five. Approval of the Minutes from the November 17, 2021, Regular Meeting.

Trustee Augustson stated that in the next to the last paragraph, last sentence, Dr. Thomas Halloran's name was spelled incorrectly.

With no other comments or corrections, *Trustee Gast moved to approve the November 17, 2021, Regular Meeting Minutes as amended. This was followed by a second from Trustee Augustson. All in favor by acclamation, motion carried.*

Item number six. Audience Comments. President Staske stated each person has a maximum of three minutes, total maximum of 30 minutes for all audience comments.

Vermilion County Conservation Foundation Chairman Rick Strebing introduced himself. He explained there will be a representative from the Vermilion County Conservation Foundation (VCCF) in attendance at future meetings to report and answer any questions the VCCD Board may have. A VCCF Treasurer's Report will be available and given to the Trustees every other month after the VCCF Board Meetings.

Currently the VCCF Board is applying for tax exempt status for several parcels of land. Also, there is a 9-acre parcel of land near Forest Glen the VCCF owns that will be deeded to the VCCD soon. The Foundation is hiring a new attorney. Land management programs are doing well at the Jordan Creek property.

All VCCF Directors currently on the Board have agreed to serve another term. There are three Associate Directors. There will be no Cheeseburgers & Fun event again this year, however they did have a Virtual 5K Cheeseburger & Run instead and will try that again in 2022. The VCCF Board is currently looking for a website management company. The site is too much to manage on their own. They are working on a donor recognition policy and will be trying to accommodate new donor options online.

A second gun raffle was held recently; it was very successful. The money raised will be dedicated to purchasing new playground equipment for Kennekuk and Forest Glen. Equipment for the White Oak Barn area has been purchased for \$15,000 to replace equipment which was removed, considered unsafe and not up to code.

Part of the Kennekuk Education Fund Account will be spent on new entryway doors for the Kennekuk Environmental Education Center. The last meeting of the VCCF on December 10th, was held at the Gannett Outdoor Education Center. The upgrades to the building look good.

He asked for questions. There were none; President Staske thanked the Foundation for their support.

Agenda item number seven, the Treasurer's Report. President Staske asked if there were any questions on items seven a through d. This included the bills, checks and journal entries for December 2021.

Trustee Arbuckle commented regarding the expensive FECON mower teeth replacement.

Executive Director Pasquale stated the company recommends replacement every 300 – 500 hours.

With no other comments or questions, *Trustee Arbuckle moved to approve the 41816 Manual Checks dated November 2021 in the amount of \$66,995.09, which included check #'s 41816 – 41830 and 41840 – 41854; the current list of voucher checks dated December 16, 2021 in the amount of \$7,020.17, which included check #'s 41873 – 41881; the Budget Report and General Journal Entries through November 30, 2021. This was followed by a second from Trustee Gast.*

With no other questions or comments, President Staske requested a roll call vote. The results as follows:

Trustee Arbuckle	-	yes
Trustee Gast	-	yes
Trustee Augustson	-	yes
Trustee Staske	-	yes

The vote was 4 – 0 in favor, motion to approve the bills, checks and journal entries carried.

Agenda item number seven i. Report on Cash and Investments. Associate Director of Administration and Personnel Fox reported that as of December 15, 2021, the NOW checking account balance is \$201,049; Illinois Funds Investment Pool balance is \$190,112, the Illinois Funds Money Market Fund balance remains at \$5,401. First Farmers Bank Money Market Passbook account balance is \$249,113; Central Illinois Bank Money Market passbook account balance is \$245,708. The Health Reimbursement Account (HRA) balance is \$3,675. First Saving Bank NOW account balance is at \$248,750; the NOW account at Catlin Bank balance is \$249,408. The 3 mo. CD [Whittaker Funds] at Iroquois Federal at .05% interest balance is now \$57,471; the 3 mo. CD [Wagner Funds] at Iroquois Federal invested at .05% interest balance is \$50,760. A 3-month certificate of deposit at Longview Bank now at .15% interest now has a balance of \$250,126. The 2-year, with 6-month option acquired at Illinois National Bank has a balance of \$250,000.

The grand total of cash and investments for December 2021: \$2,001,573. This compares to \$1,707,774. in November of 2020.

President Staske inquired concerning the reimbursement of expenditures for the Kickapoo Rail Trail.

Executive Director Pasquale answered that the District is caught up and now waiting on the final bill. He plans to bill IDNR for the construction bill, wait until IDNR pays then pay IDOT. He anticipates that the bill will be \$800,000 to \$900,000.

President Staske asked for a motion to approve the Cash & Investment Report. *Trustee Augustson moved to approve the Report on Cash and Investments for December 15, 1021 as presented. This was followed by a second from Trustee Gast.*

With no other questions or comments, President Staske requested a roll call vote. The results as follows:

Trustee Augustson	-	yes
Trustee Gast	-	yes
Trustee Arbuckle	-	yes
Trustee Staske	-	yes

The vote was 4 – 0 in favor, motion to approve the Report on Cash and Investments carried.

Agenda item eight. Specific Items of Business to be Transacted. Item eight a. Approve employee health insurance plan for period January 1, 2022 through December 31, 2022. Executive Director Pasquale had prepared a written summary for the Trustees to help them sift through the policies. Over the years, after employee/trustee committees, the Health Alliance Company was found to be the best for this group. Dimond Bros. Insurance representative Gordon Thoennes has always had the best interest of the staff in mind. He will be retiring in February of 2022.

He explained that the District pays the entire coverage for each employee; employees with dependents now pay 50% of the dependent coverage. The percentage paid by the employee started at 10% and over the past five years raised 10% each year. The policy rate does not have a large increase this year, and the District is in a good cash position to keep the percentage paid by employee at 50%. It is up to the Trustees whether or not to raise 10% this year.

President Staske stated that until six years ago, the District had paid entirely for the employee and any dependent coverage. It was decided by the District Board that due to increasing insurance rates, employees pay for dependents. Starting at 10% and increasing 10% each year until the employee is totally responsible for dependent coverage, to be revisited each year. There is also a Health Reimbursement Account set up for each person.

Discussion ensued regarding insurance policy plan and employee dependent coverage payment.

With no other comments or discussion, *Trustee Arbuckle moved to accept Health Alliance POS 3800 policy and for dependent coverage paid by the employees frozen at 50% for 2022. This was followed by a second from Trustee Gast.*

With no other questions or comments, President Staske requested a roll call vote. The results as follows:

Trustee Arbuckle	-	yes
Trustee Gast	-	yes
Trustee Augustson	-	yes
Trustee Staske	-	yes

The vote was 4 – 0 in favor, motion to approve the employee health insurance coverage and rate for dependent coverage carried.

Agenda item eight. Personnel Policy.

Eight a. part one. Discuss/approve changes to personnel policy sections 3.11 & 3.12 Sick Leave. Executive Director Pasquale stated that employees are allowed to bank unused sick time at the end of each year. There is no stated policy in the personnel manual for use of banked sick time. Therefore, due to a current situation that had come up, the attorney was asked to draw up a policy for use of the use of sick time and banked sick time. The Trustees had been given the current sections and the proposed policy verbiage which included replacing the term “banked sick time” with “earned sick leave credit”. See attached.

President Staske asked that each employee and trustee receive a full copy of the updated Personnel Policy Manual.

With no other questions or discussion, *Trustee Gast moved to approve the amendments to the VCCD Personnel Policy Manual Sections 3.11 and 3.12 as presented. This was followed by a second from Trustee Arbuckle.*

With no other questions or comments, President Staske requested a roll call vote. The results as follows:

Trustee Gast	-	yes
Trustee Arbuckle	-	yes
Trustee Augustson	-	yes
Trustee Staske	-	yes

The vote was 4 – 0 in favor, motion to approve the amendment to the personnel policy sections carried.

Eight b. part two. Discuss/approve changes to personnel policy section 3.21 Residence Requirement. Trustee Gast asked why the requirement for Vermilion County residency was put in place.

Executive Director Pasquale responded that it was for taxing body reasons. He is proposing residency within a 40-mile radius of the Kennekuk Headquarters. There are several options regarding a residency radius.

Trustee Gast advocated extending the residency requirements outside of Vermilion County.

Executive Director Pasquale stated that he does agree with increasing the radius for residency to attract more applicants for job openings such as an educator, but he believes that park supervisors need to be closer to the parks. In case of emergency, they need to be able to respond quickly.

Trustee Augustson stated that the City of Danville also has a residency policy. Management staff need to live within 5-miles of the city limits, non-supervisory personnel may reside within 45-miles of the city limits.

Brief discussion ensued.

The Board was undecided about enforcing residency requirement for management or supervisory personnel. However, with the current environmental educator opening needing to be posted and filled before spring, a decision needed to be made for non-supervisory personnel.

Residency requirements for supervisor and management positions will be revisited at the next meeting.

With no further discussion, *Trustee Arbuckle moved to approve a new residency policy allowing non-supervisory employees to reside within a 40-mile radius of the Kennekuk Visitor Center, the headquarters for the District.*

Brief discussion regarding extending the distance.

Trustee Arbuckle amended his previous motion to approve a new residency policy to be included in the VCCD Personnel Policy Manual allowing non-supervisory employees to reside within a 45-mile radius of the Kennekuk Visitor Center, the headquarters for the District. This was followed by a second from Trustee Gast.

With no other questions or comments, President Staske requested a roll call vote. The results as follows:

Trustee Arbuckle	-	yes
Trustee Gast	-	yes
Trustee Augustson	-	yes
Trustee Staske	-	yes

The vote was 4 – 0 in favor, motion to approve the amendment to the personnel policy section carried.

Agenda item eight c. Discuss/approve employee holiday bonus. Executive Director Pasquale reported that Trustee Johnson contacted him to make sure that employee bonus was on the agenda for this month. Originally, the bonus idea was suggested by past Trustee, Shelley McLain, three or four years ago. It is up to the Board to grant holiday bonuses. Last year \$200 was granted to full time employees and \$75 to part time employees.

With no other comments or questions, *Trustee Augustson moved to approve 2021 bonuses for full time employees in the amount of \$200; \$75 for part-time employees currently on the payroll. This was followed by a second from Trustee Arbuckle.*

With no other questions or comments, President Staske requested a roll call vote. The results as follows:

Trustee Augustson	-	yes
Trustee Arbuckle	-	yes
Trustee Gast	-	yes
Trustee Staske	-	yes

The vote was 4 – 0 in favor, motion to approve 2021 Holiday Bonuses carried.

There was no executive session.

Agenda item nine. Report from the Executive Director. Executive Director Pasquale updated the Board on the Kickapoo Rail Trail Project. The Vermilion County Conservation Foundation is holding \$75,000 designated for the trail and the Vermilion County Conservation District has approximately \$25,000. Funding from ITEP Match is 20% for the District. There is some interest from the City of Danville to assist and the Julius Hegeler Foundation may be interested in funding the actual construction. New quotes from the engineers to continue from Oakwood to Fithian or Fithian to Muncie should be obtained first. Potentially this year, District expenses were down 5% and income increased by 10%.

Trustee Arbuckle queried the cost of the current section that was completed.

Executive Director Pasquale reported that section is 1.8 miles and approximate cost was \$1M. The VCCD paid \$200,000. This was for construction engineering.

The section from Oakwood to Muncie is estimated to be 3.8 miles. The section from Muncie to Fithian is approximately 1.0 miles. Funding will most likely be a deciding factor.

President Staske commented that providing a hiking path by clearing trees and brush until construction could begin may be something to consider.

Executive Director Pasquale responded that could use too much money, and the District would have to raise extra to do the engineering and construction. There is also insurance liability to think about.

The Brooks Family Christmas Lights are on every night 5-8 p.m. until Jan. 2. Everything works except the three arches in the middle. It is still not synced with the music, but everything looks good. So far, donations collected are about \$500. Visitors seem to enjoy it.

During the Denmark Road construction our water line was severed, Aqua Illinois was unaware that there was a line in that area; the phone line was severed and AT & T did not want to fix it. AT & T is abandoning that line entirely. The City of Danville also agreed to pay for a sewer line that was cut. The estimate to repair this was \$40,000. After talking with the Vermilion County Health Department, Executive Director Pasquale decided to obtain a variance to put in a private septic tank and leech field. This should only cost the City about \$5,000. A contractor will put in a line; the District will do the labor. The phone will need to be replaced with good cell service.

Two new trucks have been ordered. The budgeted amount is \$55,000. A larger truck was needed to pull the new trailer for the excavator. The State of Illinois held vehicle contracts, and once the contracts were released the cut-off dates to order had passed. He ordered two - ½ ton pickups; they aren't expected in until June or July, the next budget year. This may cause an accounting situation, but was the best option.

Trustee Gast questioned the 2022 Calendar of Events given to each Trustee. It is not finalized at this time, and Trustees were asked not to share with the public. It is only a draft of events and programs planned; it will depend on the COVID-19 virus pandemic.

Executive Director Pasquale has decided that the Maple Syrup Open House will depend on the State regulations and mask mandates for COVID-19.

There were no more questions. This concluded the Report from the Executive Director.

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

President Staske had no comment.

Trustee Gast had no comment.

Trustee Johnson had no comment.

Trustee Augustson had no comment.

This concluded President & Trustee Comments.

With no further discussion and all business transacted, the meeting was adjourned at 5:31 p.m.

Michael H. Gast
Secretary
VCCD Board of Trustees