

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

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

**Wednesday, March 16, 2022  
4:30 p.m.  
Gannett Outdoor Education Center  
Forest Glen Preserve  
Westville, IL 61883**

President Staske called the March 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:     Jessica Augustson  
                              Michael P. Arbuckle  
                              Michael H. Gast  
                              Randy A. Johnson  
                              Doug R. Staske

Trustee(s) Absent:    none

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

Staff members present: Lara Danzl, Mike Kotcher and Gary Tyril.

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 Johnson moved to approve the February 16, 2022, agenda as presented. This was followed by a second from Trustee Arbuckle. All in favor by acclamation, motion to approve the agenda carried.*

Agenda item number five. Approval of the Minutes from the February 16, 2022, Regular Meeting.

With no comments or corrections, *Trustee Johnson moved to approve the February 16, 2022, Regular Meeting Minutes as presented.*

Trustee Augustson noted a typo on page five, third paragraph, "IDNR owns the property, previously owned by Dynegy which borders Kennekuk County Park, and the club wants to build *the* more miles of trails on that property". "The" should be deleted.

*Trustee Johnson's amended motion with the preceding revision, 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. Lara Danzl, Education Supervisor introduced Brenna Karcher, newly hired Environmental Educator. Brenna will be assigned to Forest Glen Preserve to teach

Outdoor School, present programs, and. perform trail maintenance. Brenna brings environmental, educational and biological experience.

Brenna stated that she and Lara have been doing heavy trail work today and organizing the Gannet Center backroom.

The VCCD Trustees welcomed Brenna. Lara is very impressed with her, as are Executive Director Pasquale and Associate Director of Administration and Personnel Fox.

Agenda item number seven, the Treasurer's Report. President Staske asked if there were any questions on items seven a through h. This included bills, checks and journal entries for February 2022.

Trustee Arbuckle inquired about check #41966 on page five of the Manual Checks, Heidrick Septic Service, Inc. for \$250.

Executive Director Pasquale responded that residence is owned by the VCCD; there is a problem with the septic service there and eventually will need updated.

With no other comments or questions, *Trustee Johnson moved to approve the Manual Checks dated February 2022 in the amount of \$156,962.74, which included check #'s 41941 – 41951 and 41960 – 41978; the current list of voucher checks dated March 17, 2022 in the amount of \$6,201.16, which included check #'s 41999 – 42005; the Budget Report and General Journal Entries through February 28, 2022. This was followed by a second from Trustee Arbuckle.*

Agenda item number seven i. Report on Cash and Investments. Director of Administration and Personnel Fox reported that as of March 16, 2022, the NOW checking account balance is \$143,356; Illinois Funds Investment Pool balance is \$181,754; the Illinois Funds Money Market Fund balance is \$5,402. First Farmers Bank Money Market Passbook account balance is \$149,144; Central Illinois Bank Money Market passbook account balance is \$245,770. The Health Reimbursement Account (HRA) balance is \$6,707. First Saving Bank NOW account balance is \$123,762; the NOW account at Catlin Bank balance is \$249,465. The 3 mo. CD [Whittaker Funds] at Iroquois Federal at .05% interest balance is \$57,478; the 3 mo. CD [Wagner Funds] at Iroquois Federal invested at .05% interest balance is \$50,767. A 3-month certificate of deposit at Longview Bank now at .15% interest has a balance of \$250,095. The 2-year CD, with 6-month option acquired at Illinois National Bank remains at \$250,000.

The grand total of cash and investments for March 16, 2022: \$1,713,700. This compares to \$1,440,177. in March of 2021.

*All in favor of approving agenda items seven a. through seven d, signify by saying "aye". All in favor by acclamation.*

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

Item eight a. Approve Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Tentative Budget. Executive Director Pasquale explained the budget process. He then highlighted the accounts and line items.

The estimated cash balance will be adjusted, prior to approval of the final budget, to reflect the current balance as of April 1, 2022. The revenue accounts budget was increased by 7.2%. Expenses were increased by 18.2%. Last year, revenue increased over budget projections due mainly to an increase in Personal Property Replacement Tax (PPRT) received. Salaries were lower than projected due to one employee leaving and one retiring in 2021; both positions are filled but not until recently.

He reported that he has been purchasing some equipment on the current budget to decrease the cash balance. A truck has been purchased from Marrow Brothers; these were pre-ordered by Marrow Brothers, on the state contract. Also, there were other items that have been purchased that were not previously budgeted.

The budgeted total projected revenue is \$2,579,450; estimated expenditures are \$2,702,075. Therefore, the VCCD will be working with an unbalanced budget. Director of Administration and Personnel Fox stated that last year at this time the PPRT payment came in at \$13,900 and last month's PPRT payment was \$97,000. This is something that just cannot be budgeted.

Salary and individual park expenses were detailed on the following five pages. Executive Director Pasquale commented the Statement of Estimated Expenditures is tied into the tax levy; this budget section cannot not be less than what is levied for taxes.

Dedicated Funds is the largest expense and includes donations from Middle Fork Audubon Society, Pheasants Forever, Revolutionary War Reenactment, Kickapoo Rail Trail Leases, Arboretum, Illinois Public Risk Grant, and other unknowns. Some dedicated funds are from previous years.

The largest expense for Kennekuk and Forest Glen will be motor fuel; other accounts are about the same as last year.

Executive Director Pasquale stated that nearly \$600,000 was budgeted for capital improvement projects this fiscal year.

Among major expenditures for capital improvements planned are: road repair and resurfacing, Willow Creek Pond Spillway repair, fiber optic phone line for Kennekuk, replacement docks at Lake Vermilion, four trucks, tractor for mowing trails, tractor with trade-in for Forest Glen, and park signage upgrades for Forest Glen, Heron, and Lake Vermilion. Replacement of hardware on the Observation Tower at Forest Glen is necessary as per recommendations from the inspection engineer, and may be a multi-year project. Lower level repairs can be accomplished by VCCD Staff; upper level may need to be hired out.

The County has ARPA funds to be distributed and the VCCD is considering application for fiber optic lines to upgrade phones and communication.

Director of Administration and Personnel Fox reported that the DCEO grant, 50% match, for the replacement of the docks at Lake Vermilion has still not been announced yet. The project is much needed, so this will have to be in the budget eventually.

He is trying to plan purchases of equipment at good prices which are available now that may not be later. He expanded explanation of the items under General at the end of the estimated expenditures. Executive Director Pasquale reported that two trucks are on order, in the next order he would like to have one hybrid truck. The Board fully supported his choice of an electric hybrid truck. He plans to get rid of five of the older trucks in the fleet.

Division II. Insurance and Compensation. Difficult to predict due to the flexibility of the Health Reimbursement Account.

Division III. Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund. There is not much change. A new rate is announced each December.

Division IV. Audit Fund. Executive Director Pasquale stated that the tax levy was increased here. Last year's audit was high due to extra work on the Kickapoo Rail Trail and COVID Funding; this may stay high due to the KRT.

Division VI. Debt Service Fund. Executive Director Pasquale explained that this is the bond payment statement. This fiscal year's principle is \$100,000 and interest of \$24,750 for a total payment of \$124,750. Making an extra payment was discussed. It will be researched. There is a zero cash balance. No tax revenue is collected from the bond unless the District would default on a payment. The ten-year bond was issued in 2017.

Discussion ensued regarding aspects of the budget. Executive Director Pasquale praised Director of Administration and Personnel Fox for her financial expertise.

Trustee Johnson asked about the District's dump truck status.

Executive Director Pasquale responded that there are two, 2008 F550 and 2017 F550; both are in good shape.

When approved, this tentative budget will be available for public review for at least thirty-three days, through April 20, 2022. The final budget will be presented for approval in May.

With no more comments or questions, *Trustee Arbuckle moved to approve the Vermilion County Conservation District Tentative Budget for fiscal year 2022-2023, Ordinance No. 161 to be on public display as presented. This was followed by a second from Trustee Gast.*

With no other questions, President Staske asked for a roll call vote. The results as follows:

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

The vote was 5 – 0 in favor, motion carried.

There was no executive session.

Agenda item nine. Report from the Executive Director. Executive Director Pasquale reported that maple syrup season will end this week. The sap is getting cloudy and sugar content is falling. Approximately 5,000 gallons of sap was collected and 100+ gallons of syrup have been made.

Forest Glen Superintendent Mike Kotcher, in the audience, stated that it requires 42-44 gallons of sap to make one gallon of syrup.

The Maple Syrup Open House is cancelled for 2022, and the syrup production has been good this year. Syrup was sold at local Farmer's Market in 2020. It may be practical to utilize outside venues to sell syrup. A new evaporator is on order. The current one is made for wood burning, and was converted to fuel. The new one will be made for burning fuel.

Executive Director Pasquale reported that there had been a drowning yesterday at the Lake Vermilion Boat Ramp. It was an unfortunate accident. The insurance company will be notified.

An email concerning \$11M in State Funding was sent to the Trustees, regarding funds to be shared through grants. A meeting was attended recently with Champaign County Forest Preserve (CCFP) and the Urbana Park District. This is progressing and will be administered through CCFP, but will take 6-9 months to approve. Executive Director Pasquale still has a lot of questions, but it sounds promising.

Trustee Arbuckle questioned the length of trail still needed to complete.

Executive Director Pasquale responded it is 8.2 miles from Oakwood to the county line. CCFP just received an ITEP grant calculating \$629,000/mi. for construction and \$118,000/mi. for engineering. This cost was based on completion of a one-mile section. The VCCD side has 11 miles of trail total.

Regarding Nick Jeurissen's report, Trustee Gast queried about meeting with U of I Engineering Students about the East Campground along the River Ridge Backpack Trail at Forest Glen. Will the pit toilet be replaced?

Executive Director Pasquale responded that there are plans for the pit toilet there to be replaced with another toilet. This will be done in-house.

Trustee Arbuckle asked about the progress on the Pullman Train Car.

Executive Director Pasquale stated that the crew works 3-4 hours/day. They are making progress, and are working toward a manageable size to move the structure out.

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

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

Trustee Johnson stated that the parks look good, noticing the removal of dead trees.

Trustee Gast commented that the road segment to the Gannett Center was rough and in need of repair.

Executive Director Pasquale explained that section of the park road system was designed with "red dog shale" as the base. Shale holds moisture and needs to be redone with a better base.

Trustee Arbuckle asked what total donations were received for the Brooks Family Christmas display.

Executive Director Pasquale responded that approximately \$2,000 was collected and donated.

Trustee Johnson exclaimed that his grandkids "loved it"! He went on to ask if the District had ever been approached to place solar panels on the properties.

Executive Director Pasquale responded that they have not.

President Staske added that there may be some federal grants for solar panels.

This concluded President & Trustee Comments.

With no further discussion and all business transacted, the meeting was adjourned at 6:01 p.m.

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Michael H. Gast  
Secretary  
VCCD Board of Trustees