

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

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

**Wednesday, October 19, 2022  
4:30 p.m.  
Gannett Outdoor Education Center  
Forest Glen Preserve  
Westville, IL 61883**

President Staske called the October Regular Meeting of the Vermilion County Conservation District Board of Trustees to order.

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

Trustees Present: Michael P. Arbuckle  
Jessica Augustson  
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: Mike Kotcher.

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.

*Trustee Johnson moved to approve the October 19, 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 August 17, 2022, Regular Meeting.

*With no comments or corrections, Trustee Arbuckle moved to approve the August 17, 2022, Regular Meeting Minutes as presented. This was followed by a second from Trustee Augustson. All in favor by acclamation.*

Item number six. Audience Comments. There were none.

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 August 2022 and September 2022.

President Staske inquired about deadbolt repairs at Urbas Classroom and Cabin.

Mike Kotcher, Superintendent, Forest Glen Preserve responded that both building's locks were vandalized. No entry, but both needed repaired.

With no other comments or questions, *Trustee Arbuckle moved to approve the Manual Checks dated August 2022 in the amount of \$158,417.10, which included check #'s 42226 – 42245, and #'s 42265 – 42273, #42274-VOID, #42275 – 42283; September 2022 in the amount of \$248,599.85, which included check #'s 42284 – 42306, #'s 42325 – 42337; Voucher Checks dated September 22, 2022 in the amount of \$18,797.83, which included check #'s 42307 – 42324; October 20, 2022 in the amount of \$14,921.16, which included ck #'s 42358 – 42371; the Budget Report and General Journal Entries through September 30, 2022. This was followed by a second from Trustee Augustson. All in favor, motion carried.*

Agenda item number seven e. Report on Cash and Investments. Director of Administration and Personnel Fox stated that both September and October 2022 reports were included. She reported that, as of October 19, 2022, the NOW checking account balance is \$200,556; Illinois Funds Investment Pool balance is \$196,646; the Illinois Funds Money Market Fund balance is \$240,705. First Farmers Bank Money Market Passbook account balance is \$249,724; Central Illinois Bank Money Market passbook account balance is \$245,924. The Health Reimbursement Account (HRA) balance is \$4,576. First Saving Bank NOW account balance is \$249,006; the NOW account at Catlin Bank balance is \$249,611. The 3 mo. CD [Whittaker Funds] at Iroquois Federal at .05% interest balance is \$57,492; the 3 mo. CD [Wagner Funds] at Iroquois Federal invested at .05% interest balance is \$50,779; 3-month certificate of deposit at Longview Bank at .15% interest remains at \$250,000. The 2-year CD, with 6-month option acquired at Illinois National Bank remains \$250,189.

The grand total of cash and investments for October 19, 2022: \$2,245,208. This compares to \$2,041,189. in October of 2021.

President Staske noted significant increases in the Old National NOW Account and First Savings NOW Accounts.

Associate Director of Administration and Personnel Fox explained that was from Real Estate Tax monies.

No other comments or questions.

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

Item eight a. Update on Lake Vermilion dock grant and Lake Vermilion expenses. Executive Director Pasquale reported the District had reapplied for the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) match grant. The price of the docks had gone up about \$50,000 from the previous application amount. The awards are scheduled to be announced at the end of this month, however the first round was to be announced three months after the grant deadline and was not announced for eleven months.

Executive Director Pasquale reported that the grant administrator stated that any money that was spent prior to a grant award for what was outlined in the grant application, now could be applied toward the match funds. Previously, these expenses did not qualify. There is currently \$50,000 in the budget; it could be in our best interest to expend the money.

President Staske suggested asking Aqua Illinois for a letter of support that could be added to the grant application.

Discussion ensued regarding what could be done with the budgeted amount now. No action was taken.

Executive Director Pasquale continued with Lake Vermilion expenses. The Vermilion County Sheriff's Department is hired for lake patrol for three-hour shifts. This is half of what was previously required over the years, to cut our expenses. The Sheriff was giving us a discount, charging \$25 per hour. Previously they used the VCCD boat and gas, now they are using their boat and gas and have billed us almost \$7,000. for this season. Our budget was \$2500. This invoice does not reflect their recent salary increase.

President Staske, in regard to dock expenditures, stated that he would leave those to Executive Director Pasquale's discretion.

No other comments or questions. No action taken.

Agenda item eight b. Approve Ordinance #162 Tax Abatement for 2017 bond, for 2022 taxes payable in 2023. Executive Director Pasquale explained that the bond funds received in 2017 automatically levied taxes each year, guaranteeing payment of principal and interest. This is an ordinance abating this tax levy, since the District is fiscally responsible and able to make the payment without any levy. An ordinance has to be approved and filed each year.

There was one grammatical error noted to be corrected on the cover page: *No trustee was **not** permitted to attend the meeting by video or audio conference.* “not” was removed.

With no other comments, *Trustee Gast moved to approve Ordinance #162 tax abatement for taxes levied in 2022 to pay the General Obligation Bonds, series 2017. This was followed by a second from Trustee Johnson.*

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

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

The vote was 5 – 0 in favor. Motion carried.

Agenda item eight c. Discuss/Approve 2023 VCCD Staff Salaries. Executive Director Pasquale sent the Trustees several salary scenarios. The hourly wage with increments of \$1.00 increases for each full-time employee. This was calculated in this way due to wage laws for minimum wage requirements [with regard to VCCD part-time staff]. He offered to rework any proposal the Trustees wished to see.

Executive Director Pasquale announced that Vermilion County Employees received a \$3.00 per hour raise and a one-time bonus of several thousand dollars. The bonus was from federal funds, and the employee had to be employed during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is perceived by the public that the VCCD employees also may have received the same, which is not the case.

The VCCD’s current hourly wage for part-time employees complies with Illinois State Law. By January 1, 2025, the minimum wage will be raised to \$15.00 per hour. The part-time wage needs to be in alignment with the full-time wage. Many of the District’s part-time employees are retirees, with skills and talents the District prefers, who return year after year. Currently these skilled part-time workers are making \$13.00 per hour working for the VCCD, while chain restaurants are offering a starting wage of \$14.00 per hour.

Discussion ensued regarding part-time employee wages and full-time employee salaries. No action was taken.

Trustee Johnson questioned the health care insurance cost paid by the District. He does not want the raise to be taken away by a health insurance increase.

Executive Director Pasquale responded that the VCCD currently pays 100% health insurance cost for the employee; 50% for each dependent. Rates for next year will begin January 1, 2023, and the District should be getting quotes soon.

*Trustee Augustson moved to approve a \$3.00 per hour raise for the employees listed as presented. This was followed by a second from Trustee Johnson.*

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

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

The vote was 5-0 in favor. Motion carried.

Agenda item eight d. Discuss/Approve Ordinance #163 Tax Levy for 2022 taxes payable in 2023. Executive Director Pasquale stated that there is an updated page of grand totals for this levy given to the Trustees now. The only increase over last year he has proposed is for the Audit Fund in the amount of \$3,000 to cover additional audit requirements necessary for the Kickapoo Rail Trail grants.

Trustee Gast questioned the period of time required for the additional audit time to cover the KRT grants.

Associate Director of Administration and Personnel Fox responded as long as any federal money is involved, extensive audits will be necessary.

Discussion followed regarding the assessed valuation and tax levied. No action was taken.

With no other comments or discussion, *Trustee Johnson moved to approve Ordinance #163 Tax Levy for 2022 taxes payable in 2023. This was followed by a second from Trustee Arbuckle.*

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

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

The vote was 5 – 0 in favor. Motion carried.

Agenda item eight e. Review Executive Session Minute from April 18, 2018; May 8, 2018; May 23, 2018; December 5, 2018; May 15, 2019; July 17, 2019 for release or hold.

With no comments or questions, *Trustee Johnson moved to hold the Executive Session Minute from April 18, 2018; May 8, 2018; May 23, 2018; December 5, 2018; May 15, 2019 and July 17, 2019 from release to the public. This was followed by a second from Trustee Gast.*

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

Trustee Johnson	-	yes
Trustee Gast	-	yes
Trustee Arbuckle	-	yes
Trustee Augustson	-	yes
President 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 the back classroom at the Gannett Outdoor Education Center has been demolished; ground was broken and concrete poured today for footings. Also doing the same thing at Kennekuk for a new maintenance facility. Almost all work on the Gannett and new Kennekuk Maintenance will be done in-house.

The Kennekuk Maintenance project is a 30' by 90' addition and will be paid by funds donated by Gary Whittaker. The current maintenance facility will eventually be torn down, saving the concrete floor for a cold storage area.

The Gannett Outdoor Education Center is getting a new roof, siding and soffit done by Moreman Construction. The addition will be 45' by 60', larger than before. It will be for a classroom and storage area. Internet service is available now at the Gannett Center; the current phone system is now tied to the Gannett Center as well. Brenna Karcher, VCCD Educator, currently has an office at the Ranger Station and will be moving to the Gannett Outdoor Education Center. Amy Steeples and Carol Pearson, currently at the Lorna J. Konsis Visitor Center will be moving to offices at the Ranger Station.

Next step will be a new phone system for the District. A lease agreement has been signed; the total bill will be approximately \$600 per month for twenty-three internet phones.

Executive Director Pasquale reiterated that the Gannett Outdoor Education Center project expense has been paid by the Wagner Funds (\$50,000 dedicated to education) and a pledge for \$75,000 from the Vermilion County Conservation Foundation.

Trustee Arbuckle inquired about the VCCF event, "Cheeseburgers and Run".

Amy Steeples reported that it was held on October 8, 11 a.m. at Kennekuk. There were almost 20 participants for the live run; 17 signed up for a virtual 5K course. They estimate a profit of \$1,100., with really very little work involved.

Executive Director Pasquale continued, updating the vehicle orders. Three F150 Lightning [the electric version of Ford's F150], one Ford Escape plug-in hybrid and two gas-powered F150 are all still on order. The F150 Lightning models were 2022 models. Production was balanced and the F150 Lightnings will now be 2023 models at 2023 prices. These are not discounted, due to high demand and the State no longer offers anything on "State Bidding Contracts".

Therefore, there are six vehicles on order, and no one knows when they will be delivered. The new procedure used now is called, "Build Slot" through the fleet program. On the last two gas powered trucks the District received a Build Slot, two weeks later they inform you of what the price will be. At that time, we can accept or decline our order in the Build Slot. He wishes to proceed, but budgeting for these and any future orders is a nightmare.

Executive Director Pasquale stated that money was budgeted to install a park gate operator at Kennekuk. Hunting seasons require the park to open at 5:00 a.m.; three staff members are on a rotation shift to open each morning. He has a quote of \$30,000 for both gates. He asked for the Board's input.

Trustee Arbuckle asked if one gate could be upgraded for an operator, and used for both entrance and exit during early morning hours.

Executive Director Pasquale stated that could be done. He will look into doing only one side and the logistics, price quote and all details for a gate operation system.

Trustee Gast inquired if the balance of the Whittaker Funds would be used for the Kennekuk Maintenance project and had a safety concern regarding remaining hardware from removal of a bench on Lookout Point Trail, Kennekuk.

Executive Director Pasquale responded that he is sure the all the Whittaker Funds will be used. He will look into the removal of the hardware.

A Scout from Champaign installed a "Bike Fix Station" on the Kickapoo Rail Trail as his Eagle Scout Project.

Trustee Arbuckle asked about the “River to Rail Ride” fundraising event for the Kickapoo Rail Trail.

Executive Director Pasquale reported that the event had gone well, he is not certain of the financials at this time.

Staff Reports were included with the Trustee’s packets.

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

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

Trustee Johnson had no comment.

Trustee Arbuckle had no other comments.

Trustee Augustson had no comment.

President Staske 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.

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Michael H. Gast  
Secretary  
VCCD Board of Trustees