

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

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

**Wednesday, March 15, 2023  
4:30 p.m.  
Kennekuk Environmental Education Center  
Cellular One Classroom  
Danville, IL 61834**

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

Agenda item number three, Roll Call indicated the following:

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

Trustee(s) Absent: none

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

Staff members present: Cole Craft, Lara Danzl, Brenna Karcher, Mike Kotcher, 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.

*Trustee Johnson moved to approve the March 15, 2023 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 February 15, 2023, Regular Meeting.

*With no comments or corrections, Trustee Johnson moved to approve the February 15, 2023, Regular Meeting Minutes as presented. This was followed by a second from Trustee Arbuckle. All in favor by acclamation, motion to approve the minutes carried.*

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 c. This included bills, checks and journal entries for March 2023.

Trustee Johnson noted the First Aid/CPR Training, asking if defibrillator training was included and does the District own defibrillators.

Executive Director Pasquale responded the training was included and the District has three defibrillator units.

Trustee Gast inquired about the cost of the interpretive signs for the Wheeler Trail, Kennekuk.

Lara Danzl agreed, adding that they were expensive. Similar signs are placed along Beech Grove Trail, Forest Glen. She is adding permanent interpretive signs in several places in the parks so that the public can get an educational experience, even when an educator is not present. The next purchase planned will be signs for the Doris Westfall Prairie, Forest Glen.

President Staske remarked that the Heron Park signage was very helpful. Unfortunately, those original signs did not last.

With no other comments or questions, *Trustee Johnson moved to approve the Voucher Checks dated March 16, 2023 in the amount of \$1,423.43, which included check #'s 42571 – 42573 and check #'s 42575 - 42581; Manual Checks dated February 2023 in the amount of \$41,987.76, which included check #'s 42518 – 42528, and 42539 – 42557. This was followed by a second from Trustee Gast.*

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

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

The vote was 5 – 0. Motion to approve Treasurer’s Report carried.

Agenda item number seven e. Report on Cash and Investments. Executive Director Pasquale reported, in the absence of Director of Administration and Personnel Fox, as of March 15, 2023, the NOW checking account balance is \$210,139; Illinois Funds Investment Pool balance is \$280,433.; the Illinois Funds Money Market Fund balance is \$93,729. First Farmers Bank Money Market Passbook account balance is \$249,061.; Central Illinois Bank Money Market passbook account balance is \$246,169. The Health Reimbursement Account (HRA) balance is \$7,137. First Saving Bank NOW account balance is \$49,01.8; the NOW account at Catlin Bank balance is \$146,709. The 3 mo. CD [Whittaker Funds] at Iroquois Federal at .05% interest balance is \$20,562.; the 3 mo. CD [Wagner Funds] at Iroquois Federal invested at .05% interest balance .00; 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 at \$250,189.

The grand total of cash and investments for March 15, 2023: \$1,799,147. This compares to \$1,713,700. in March of 2022.

Executive Director Pasquale noted that the Gary Whittaker Funds beginning balance was a little over \$100,000. and was a restricted donation for Kennekuk. A portion was used for the addition to White Oak Barn, the rest will be expensed for the new wood shop. The Wagner Account Funds have been periodically expensed for the Gannett Outdoor Education Project, Forest Glen Preserve, along with money from the VCCF.

President Staske suggested adding a brief detail description of each account on the Report of Cash and Investments. Therefore, the report would not need to be given verbally. Highlights could be given, however; for new Trustees full explanation could be reiterated periodically.

It was the consensus of the Board to follow that procedure going forward.

President Staske stated that Agenda Item Seven d. was omitted in error in the motion approving the Treasurer’s Report. He then asked for a motion to approve items seven a through d.

With no comments or questions, *Trustee Johnson moved to approve the Voucher Checks dated March 16, 2023 in the amount of \$1,423.43, which included check #'s 42571 – 42573 and check #'s 42575 - 42581; Manual Checks dated February 2023 in the amount of \$41,987.76, which included check #'s 42518 – 42528, and 42539 – 42557; the Budget Report and General Journal Entries through February 28, 2023. This was followed by a second from Trustee Gast.*

President Staske called 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. Motion to approve Treasurer’s Report carried.

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

Item eight a. Approval of Proposed Budget and Appropriations Ordinance #163 for Fiscal Year 2023 – 2024 for public display. Executive Director Pasquale reported that he met with Supervisors to get their input for each park. The Trustees were given a report regarding the Corporate Personal Property Tax numbers for the last 4 years. It was noted that in fiscal year 2020-2021, the allocation was \$222,541.60; fiscal year 2021-2022, the allocation increased to \$497,518.09; fiscal year 2022-2023, the allocation was \$751,247.44. He is concerned with the March payment received during 2022-2023 dropping nearly 50%. The budget may need to be amended in the future, regarding the decrease.

Executive Director Pasquale continued, stating that the rest of the revenue is pretty stable. Forest Glen Camping increased considerably last year, and highlighting detail revenue accounts. Dedicated Fund Revenue includes the reimbursement from Illinois Department of Natural Resources for the expenditures billed by Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT). The VCCD has not received that IDOT invoice.

The estimated cash balance on April 1, 2023, is \$1,025,000; March 31, 2024, balance is \$861,625. This represents a deficit budget. There is approximately \$220,000. In vehicle purchases, on order, not received.

Trustee Gast noted that the public display period indicated on the title sheet needed to be corrected, from Tuesday, April 21, to *Friday*, April 21.

President Staske also noted that the budget narrative title should be amended to 2023-2024.

On the proposed budget presented to the Trustees, any changes from the tentative budget were indicated beside the amount and also emphasized by Executive Director Pasquale. Additionally, Forest Glen, Kennekuk, and Lake Vermilion expenses. There were large increases that were directly related to electricity costs. The current costs are double what the VCCD was paying. A cost analysis from Utility Management Consultants, LLC, given to the Trustees, disclosed annual usage and cost. The District has now changed suppliers from AEP Energy to NRG Direct.

President Staske suggested consideration of solar panels in the future.

Executive Director Pasquale presented the remainder of the budget, the Trustees commented and asked various questions. The narrative followed, a summarization of the budget process.

Amy Steeples stated that the ordinance number listed on the previously approved agenda was incorrect. The current ordinance presented is Ordinance #164; listed on the agenda as Ordinance #163.

President Staske then asked for a motion to amend the Agenda for March 15, 2023, changing Item Eight a. to read: Approval of Proposed Budget and Appropriations Ordinance #164 for Fiscal Year 2023-2024.

With no comments or questions, *Trustee Augustson moved to amend the March 15, 2023, agenda, item eight a. to Approval of Proposed Budget and Appropriations Ordinance #164 for Fiscal Year 2023-2024. This was followed by a second from Trustee Gast.*

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

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

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

President Staske asked for a motion to approve Ordinance #164.

With no further comments or questions, *Trustee Arbuckle moved to approve Budget and Appropriations Ordinance #164, with public display date and budget narrative title fiscal year date amendments as discussed. This was followed by a second from Trustee Johnson.*

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

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

The vote was 5 – 0 in favor, motion to approve Ordinance #164 carried.

There was no executive session.

Agenda item nine. Report from the Executive Director. The Gannett Education Center remodel has been put on hold. The addition has been “dried in”; the roof is on with a little bit of work left on soffit and fascia. Work will continue on the interior on rainy days. He will give the Trustees a tour after the meeting. Layout was outlined: display area [nature center], storage room with two office areas, and a second classroom. There has been no timeline set, but he hopes to have the building ready for Outdoor School, 2023 fall session.

The Maple Syrup Fest is Sunday, March 19<sup>th</sup>; 75.25 gallons of syrup was made this year. Brand new event with french toast sticks instead of pancakes, adding guided hikes every 30 minutes, nature center children’s craft activity, tapping and try it yourself demonstration. The Pioneer Homestead Cabin open with an interpreter as in previous years. There will be limited seating for about 75 people (due to the remodel). Planning for 900 persons. The forecast is for sunny and a high of 37 degrees. The VCCF Sportsman’s Banquet will be Saturday, March 18<sup>th</sup>, doors open at 5 p.m. It is sold out.

Employee Reports: Trustee Gast asked for more information about the mapping of Forest Glen. Will they be topographic?

Lara Danzl responded that this is a project that Brenna Karcher was assigned. All the trail and park maps are hand drawings from the ‘80’s. She is not sure how detailed we can be. The goal will be to update all park maps for continuity.

President Staske recommended working with the City of Danville and Vermilion County for assistance with mapping.

Brief discussion ensued regarding issues with Google Maps and obtaining 911 addresses for park properties. No action taken.

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

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

President Staske expressed appreciation for the District Staff and all the work that is completed in-house.

Trustee Johnson asked about the controlled burn areas he noticed in Forest Glen Preserve.

Executive Director Pasquale reported that controlled burns were done at Busby-Meyer, Savannah, and Westfall Prairie at Forest Glen. Some areas were also burned at Kennekuk. After the burn, mowing is done to help control invasives.

President Staske commented about the ash tree die-out, as well as other large trees that have fallen.

Executive Director Pasquale responded that many are removed, such as along trails and public areas. There are some locations that are state preserves that are managed and trees cannot be taken out. Over a period of two years, the staff has removed 100 – 150 trees.

Trustee Arbuckle commented about the mole trails.

Executive Director Pasquale agreed that they are bad at Forest Glen.

Trustee Augustson had no comment.

Trustee Gast had no comment.

This concluded President & Trustee Comments.

With no further discussion and all business transacted, *Trustee Johnson moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:20 p.m. This was followed by a second from Trustee Augustson. All in favor by acclamation, meeting adjourned.*

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Michael H. Gast  
Secretary  
VCCD Board of Trustee