1.0 CALL TO ORDER
The Committee of the Whole Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the McHenry County Conservation District was called to order at 5:02 p.m. by President Barrett on the evening of Thursday, March 15, 2018 at the Brookdale Administrative Offices, 18410 US Highway 14, Woodstock, Illinois.

2.0 ROLL CALL
2.1 Roll Call
Trustees Present: Steve Barrett, President
Dave Kranz, Vice President
Vern Scacci, Secretary
Dave Brandt, Trustee
Carolyn Campbell, Trustee

Trustee Absent: Pete Merkel, Treasurer
John Henning, Trustee

Council & Staff Present: Robert “Bob” Nowak, County Board Liaison
Elizabeth S. Kessler, Executive Director
John Kremer, Director of Operations & Public Safety
Andy Dylak, Director of Administration & Finance
Ed Collins, Director of Land Preservation & Natural Resources
Wendy Kummerer, Marketing & Communications Manager
Anne Basten, Executive Assistant
John Berg, Facilities Manager
Deb Chapman, Educational Services Manager
Sarah Denham, Wildlife Resource Center Manager
Jeff Diedrick, Police Chief
Jenny Heider, Human Resource Manager
Amy Peters, Planning Manager
Val Siler, Land Preservation Manager
Perry Weborg, Sites & Fleet Manager
Brad Woodson, Natural Resource Manager
Kyle Ames, Mechanic I
Denice Beck, Volunteer Coordinator
Karen Brabec, Administrative Assistant- Sites & Fleet
Paul Bruett, Restoration Ecologist
Bryson Calvin, Ranger
Kim Compton, Education & Visitor Center Services Coordinator
Mary Deja, Ranger
Others:

Matt Eyles, Restoration Ecologist
Jean Gerstbrein, Accounting Supervisor
Jacob Holmes, Assistant Ranger
Kurt Klinger, Ranger
Mary Kozub, Education Outreach Coordinator
Jacob Muench, Assistant Ranger
Jeff Murray, Restoration Ecologist
Ben O’Dea, Sites Supervisor
Dillon Riemann, Assistant Ranger
Sarah Rummel, Landscape Architect
Chad Secor, Ranger
Nick Svoboda, Assistant Ranger
Chris Zeiner, Restoration Ecologist

Epiphany Vasquez

3.0 PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

4.0 PUBLIC COMMENTS

Chad Secor, Ranger Region 3; Bryson Calvin, Ranger Region 2; Kim Compton, Education and Visitor Services Manager; Mary Deja, Ranger Region 6; Jeff Murray, Restoration Ecologist and Jacob Holmes Assistant Ranger spoke about the dedication of the current staff and their commitment to the District and the residents of McHenry County. The shared concerns regarding and expanded workload, past employee wage studies which showed staff wages below market, reduction in workforce and the fact that several field positions remain unfilled. Team members expressed the need to hire more staff in the field and presented research findings on other Districts which showed more staff per mile of trail/ acres, etc. Staff expressed concerns for not wanting to let the public down with continued expectations to do more with less and did not support/understand the need/ rationale for prioritizing the new proposed positions over the filling existing vacant/frozen positions first. Staff acknowledged the Board of Trustees for their voluntary service and stated disappointment in some of the items in the tentative budget including the removal of positions and reallocation of resources.

President Barrett stated that the Board heard everything that staff had shared and will be taking their comments into full consideration and that he personally thinks about the staff every day.

Trustee Brandt stated his disappointment that the content of the full Trustee debate did not reach the staff. He spoke of his support for the full-time Development Director to raise money on behalf of the Foundation needed to replace lost tax dollars and the political pressure to reduce budgets.

Secretary Scacci thanked the staff for attending and letting the board know their feelings and asked them to stay for the full meeting to listen to the discussion items on the agenda.
5.0 STRATEGIC DISCUSSION - KEY ISSUES & TOPICS FOR 2018

5.1 Fox Bluff Conservation Area - Update on Approved Master Plan

Planning Manager Peters brought the board up to date on the progress made on the approved master plan for the northern part of the Fox Bluff Conservation Area. Since approving the master plan in 2015, 2.5 miles of nature trail have been added; Trout Unlimited has done a lot of work on the management of a pond using extra stone from one of the trail crossings; the Illinois Historic American Buildings Survey field work has been completed as well as the review by our staff and we are awaiting the final document which will be filed in the Library of Congress; nine buildings have been removed; and, the roof has been replaced on the Board of Trade Recreation Hall.

The FY 2018-19 tentative budget includes updating the existing amenities at the north end to reduce vandalism and to meet ADA compliance; complete more demolition; remove un-usable infrastructure; and, ensure the structural integrity of the recreation hall.

Staff has been assisting with the due diligence phase of the proposed campground on the south end that would need to be completed whether or not the proposed partnership reaches the final stage and includes working with McHenry County Divisions of Planning and Transportation as well as having a civil engineer validate earlier cost estimates for utilities, road infrastructure, water service and upgrades for the recreation hall that will be needed even if the proposed partnership with Modcamp, LLC does not proceed.

Secretary Scacci voiced his confusion on who was paying for which parts of the due diligence and proposed the establishment of an escrow fund for the project. Executive Director Kessler explained that the financing for the project from Modcamp, LLC would kick in once the due-diligence phase has been completed and would occur prior to any improvements to the site and improvements to the site would take effect once funds had been received as previously discussed with the Board of Trustees. She reported that Modcamp, LLC had contributed $15,000 thus far for the due diligence work currently underway and as stipulated in the executed agreement between the District and Modcamp, LLC.

5.2 MOU with MCCF - One Million Dollar Endowment

Trustee Brandt explained that the Directors of the Foundation met with staff and District Trustees to create a long list of items that needed to be addressed for the creation of a formal agreement.

Executive Director Kessler acknowledged the great partnership with the McHenry County Conservation Foundation and their past successes and challenges for growing and raising significant funds. She summarized that the District has not been effective in having the Foundation reach its full potential as a 501(c)3 non-profit, primarily due to not having a dedicated professional with expertise in philanthropy to drive the process. She explained that the proposed Development Director position would be funded by the District because the Foundation does not have the capacity to do so in addition to not having the experience in managing personnel. The model is based off of many non-profit 501(c)3 foundations that support public agencies, such as the Preservation Foundation of Lake County Forest Preserves. One of the
initial goals of the position will be to create an endowment so that the investment dividends can be used as income for the District operations. Secretary Scacci stated his support for the position.

5.3 Review of Congressional Conversations - 2018 Conservation Congress
Trustee Brandt was excited about some of the ideas that came out of the event including expansion on the “This X preserved for you”. He noted that the social media push was supported by the attendees as it was noted that residents still don’t know who we are and what we do and we need them to stand up for us. It was noted that the lack of knowledge of what we are already doing in the realm of private/public partnerships was obvious through some of the comments made during the discussion sessions.

5.4 Solar Farms
Director of Land Preservation and Natural Resources Collins explained that the staff/board task force has been gathering information and are in need of guidance or clarification if having a solar farm on District property is within the mission of the District. He noted that typically these leases are 20-30 years and provide a higher rate of income than a standard agricultural lease.

Trustee Brandt shared that he had attended a recent Soil and Water Conservation District meeting where a proposal was made by a company to place a solar farm on a 90-acre agricultural field with a 2% slope (b slope) that sloped toward the Pioneer Fen and what impact that much concentration of rain fall might have on erosion and surface runoff.

Executive Director Kessler noted that the application deadline to be included in the program is July and that legal counsel had not yet been consulted. She also stated that public information sessions would be a good idea.

County Board Liaison Nowak was not in favor of the farms as they detract from the beauty of the area although there might be areas or ways to fit them into some landscapes and Trustee Campbell suggested they could be naturally buffered in some way.

The consensus of the board was to move forward with further research and identification if the idea is within the mission.

5.5 Updates to Strategic Plan - Year 4 & 5
Executive Director Kessler presented tactic changes recommended by the Executive Leadership Team in consultation with the Leadership Team for the balance of the plan for various reasons. There were no immediate rejections of the changes by the Board. The changes will be incorporated into the appropriate documents.

5.6 Visioning for the Future - Next Strategic Plan (FY 2021-FY 2015)
There was discussion about the timing of a meeting to discuss the next strategic plan with the consensus that a full day meeting be scheduled in September/October of 2018 and should include the new Board member and hopefully the Development Director.
6.0 ADJOURN

A motion was made by Secretary Scacci, seconded by Vice President Kranz, to adjourn the meeting. A voice vote resulted in all ayes.
Motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 6:36 p.m. March 15, 2018.

Respectfully submitted,

Vern Scacci, Secretary

Date