1.0 CALL TO ORDER
The Special Call Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the McHenry County Conservation District was called to order at 8:30 a.m. by Vice President Brandt on the morning of Monday, November 18, 2019 at the Brookdale Administrative Offices, 18410 US Highway 14, Woodstock, Illinois 60098.

2.0 INTRODUCTORY ROLL CALL
2.1 Roll Call
Trustees Present: Dave Brandt, Vice President
Carolyn Campbell, Secretary
Bill Cook, Trustee
Linda Thomas, Trustee

Trustees Absent: Vern Scacci, President
John Henning, Treasurer
Patrick Fritz, Trustee

Counsel & Staff Present: Elizabeth S. Kessler, Executive Director
Wendy Kummerer, Director of Marketing & Education
Anne Basten, Executive Assistant
Deb Chapman, Education Services Manager
Caitlyn Martinez-McWhorter, Social Media Specialist
Lora Petrak, Community Relations Specialist (arrived at 9:00 am)
John Kremer, Director of Operations & Public Safety (arrived at 9:30 am)

3.0 PUBLIC COMMENTS
There were no public comments at this time.

4.0 BOARD BUSINESS
4.1 FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION DIVISION
Director of Finance and Administration Dylak was out ill and no presentation was made.

4.3 MARKETING & EDUCATION DIVISION
Director of Marketing and Education Kummerer began her presentation two hours early due to Director of Administration & Finance Dylak being out ill. She began by covering the Communications & Marketing Department which gets the word out to the public about the District and consists of three (3) full-time staff members including herself. The District hosts over 900,000 guests each year and the goal of the department is to leverage those users, keeping people connected, staying relevant,
and engage visitors with the hope they will modify their behavior to protect the open spaces in McHenry County and make a personal connection with the natural world.

Director of Marketing and Education Kummerer then reviewed the Four Key Goals: Increase Visibility and Awareness; Reaching Target Audiences; Increase Public Engagement and Establish Social Media Presence. They are reaching their goals through various print and social media materials which all include expanded branding. They are currently working on a new enhanced website, utilizing Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tools to target market programs and events, increase engagement through surveys and feedback, and building on the social media strategies; Director of Marketing & Education Kummerer then reviewed the social media platforms in use and their most recent numbers.

Director of Marketing and Education Kummerer then explained that Community Relations Specialist Lora Petrak focuses on the traditional print materials and graphic design as well as coordinating the volunteer photographers and the hiring of photographers as needed. She has most recently been working on updating the volunteer marketing materials. Social Media Specialist Caitlynn Martinez-McWhorter has been focused on the social media presence, the Customer Relations database, and survey/feedback efforts.

Volunteers also fall under this division and include 1 ½ full-time equivalent (FTE) employees. Currently there are 579 active volunteers with 381 fully-registered with completed background checks, etc. These volunteers are coordinated by two volunteer coordinators: Jackie Bero coordinates the Natural Resource based volunteers and works with them in the field while Bob Menard works on the administrative functions, recruiting new volunteers and supporting the existing ones for non-natural resource-based capacities.

Director of Marketing and Communications Kummerer then presented the newly realigned Education Services Department which currently has five (5) full-time educators plus one (1) full-time administrative assistant and one (1) full-time manager. She distributed a copy of the Teacher’s Resource guide which is used to get schools out onto the sites, into the facilities or to get programs into the schools. They also offer a wide variety of education programs and outdoor experiences to residents including nature scavenger hunts, canoe clinics, and the Great Outdoors Beer Trail event. Annually they reach over 12,500 students through the school and summer camp programs. Another over 9,000 contacts are reached through other publicly offered programs and events. In addition, they offer self-guided opportunities, exhibits & displays, interpretive signage & brochures, interpretive apps, etc. Since the department implemented program fees, they have exceeded the goal to increase revenues by 10% per year. It was noted that all of the school outreach programs are filled annually. There was discussion about getting information into the hands of the teachers and it was stated that all distribution of information must pass through the Superintendents’ offices and there are some local schools that have not chosen to use the programs offered.

Education Services Manager Chapman will be retiring at the end of January 2020 and Outreach Coordinator Kozub announced her retirement at the end of this year. Education Program Coordinator Shaw was due back from FMLA leave the following week. There was discussion about ratios and it was calculated that one program coordinator serves approximately 4,275 students with 55 days of school programs, plus the public programs and events. When one position is left open in this department, it has a major impact on services provided. This department was reduced by two educators when the Living Land Program/West Side education center
projects were removed from the short-term plans. All of the Educators now go into
the schools at some point during the winter months as the number of field trips are
reduced to the Community Education Centers. Prairieview Education Center had a
higher school field trip use than Lost Valley Visitor Center last month and the
educational boxes from the District and IDNR get checked out regularly from
Prairieview.
There was discussion about raising the price for day camps to bring them
closer to the cost of the competition; however, our hours cannot be lengthened due
to current staffing.
Trustee Thomas spoke to the value of the education programs and is in favor
of filling the vacancies sooner rather than later.

4.2 OPERATIONS & PUBLIC SAFETY DIVISION
Director of Operations and Public Safety Kremer began at about 9:48 a.m.
with his presentation. The Operations and Public Safety Division’s five (5) core
functions are: Presentation, Support, Create, Interface, and Protect.
Presentation of the sites to make sure they are safe and enjoyable to use.
Support the use of the sites and buildings of the District through safe structures,
connections, and facilities for the staff and site users. Create experiences by
providing a sense of place and beauty. Interface with the members of our community
as the first contact a user may have with a site. Protect the natural resources, the
site users, and the District assets.
Director of Operations and Public Safety Kremer then shared pictures of the
supervisory staff and the number of staff members in each of the four (4)
departments: seventeen (17) full-time employees in Sites & Fleet; four (4) full-time
and three (3) part-time employees in Facilities Maintenance; two (2) full-time
employees in Planning and twelve (12) full-time employees in the Police Division
including supervisors and administrative staff. He noted that Facilities Maintenance
and Planning Departments are currently stretched the thinnest.
The Planning Department is responsible for the analysis, design, construction,
and maintenance of the sites and facilities for the betterment of the public and staff
and constantly has multiple projects in the works at various stages of the process. A
project in this department can start as an idea/concept and in most cases takes
multiple years to conduct the analysis, design, and implement the final project.
Weather can impact the final construction or repair delaying the process even
further.
The Facilities Maintenance Department is down 1.5 full-time equivalents (FTE)
since past years and have been reorganized with the hiring of replacement staff and
the reduction of hours and the semi-retirement of the staff electrician.
Director of Operations and Public Safety Kremer then covered the 34 sites
open to the public, 58 miles of trail and five (5) campgrounds, 66 vehicles, 24 UTVs,
35 mowers/tractors, 35 trailers and various pieces of heavy equipment maintained by
staff. They also cover the long-term repair/replacement of parking lots/roads and
trails. The Sites and Fleet staff will continue to identify the needs of the sites and
present them to the Board of Trustees to make the decision on what to spend the
limited funds on.
He noted that this staff interacts with most of the almost one million visitors
in our sites and facilities each year as well as the 4,500 neighbors adjacent to our
properties while supporting all of the branches of the District.
The District currently utilizes 168 structures throughout the District and has evaluated all 168 plus those that are not in use by the District and has created a demolition list for those structures not in use to be removed as funds allow.

Director of Operations and Public Safety Kremer spoke about the District’s Police Department being under attack for over fifteen years. He reiterated that our proactive policing strategy encourages the good behavior and positive site uses and keeps poor behavior at bay by using peer pressure to keep it that way by encouraging the calling in of those choosing poor behavior and which are reacted to immediately.

Trustee Cook asked what the one thing that Director of Operations & Public Safety Kremer would need on his budget wish list to which he replied an Administrative Assistant, especially with the documentation and board summaries needed to get the work done. He is hopeful that as the new Police Records Clerk gets fully trained and organized on the needs of the Police Department that he will be able to use some of her time to assist him. There was further discussion about the number of meetings in a month and the volume of detailed information being requested and supplied to the Board of Trustees.

Additional discussion was on limited funding available and the inability to complete plans and cover inflation, etc. It was noted that it is no one person’s intention to keep us under these budgetary constraints but politics are in control at the county and state level and the District has little experience in playing the game and will need to contend with it until alternatives become available. All board members need to be fully involved because the Conservation District Board is smaller in size than that of the County Board.

5.0 ADJOURN

A motion was made by Trustee Thomas, Seconded by Trustee Cook, to adjourn the meeting. The next meeting is scheduled to start at 2:00 p.m. and lunch will be available at 1:00 p.m. at Lost Valley Visitor Center. A voice vote resulted in all ayes.

Motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 11:12 a.m. November 18, 2019.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Campbell, Secretary

Date 12-19-19