

**McHENRY COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE  
MINUTES OF JANUARY 18, 2018**

**1.0 CALL TO ORDER**

The Special Call Committee of the Whole Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the McHenry County Conservation District was called to order at 5:05 p.m. by President Barrett on the evening of Thursday, January 18, 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  
Pete Merkel, Treasurer  
Vern Scacci, Secretary  
Dave Brandt, Trustee  
Carolyn Campbell, Trustee

Trustee Absent: John Henning, Trustee

Counsel & Staff Present: Robert "Bob" Nowak, County Board Liaison (arrived at 6:20 pm)  
James D. Rock (arrived at 5:55 p.m.)  
Elizabeth S. Kessler, Executive Director  
Ed Collins, Director of Land Preservation & Natural Resources  
Wendy Kummerer, Marketing & Communications Manager  
Anne Basten, Executive Assistant  
Deb Chapman, Educational Services Manager  
Sarah Denham, Wildlife Resource Center Manager  
Jeff Diedrick, Police Chief  
Jenny Heider, Human Resource Manager  
Jean Gerstbrein, Accounting Supervisor  
Ben O'Dea, Sites Supervisor  
Val Siler, Land Preservation Manager  
Brad Woodson, Natural Resource Manager

**3.0 PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**4.0 PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were no public comments at this time.

**5.0 STRATEGIC DISCUSSION - KEY ISSUES & TOPICS FOR 2018**

Executive Director Kessler started the discussion with offering to discuss the topics of Public Perception/Support (Education and Outreach/Elected Officials) and Funding as they appeared to come out on top.

The consensus was to start with funding. Trustee Brandt reported that the McHenry County Conservation Foundation met earlier in the week and discussed a variety of items, including the hiring of an Executive Director. Trustee Brandt reviewed that the McHenry County Conservation Foundation was created with funds as part of an agreement with the Lakehead Pipeline. The Executive Director Rebekah Schneider of the Preservation Foundation of the Lake County Forest Preserves attended the meeting and spoke to our Foundation about her staff of five who are employees of the District and their job is to raise funds through the Foundation. Their Foundation board members are influential names in their county and successfully raised \$2.3 million this past year and \$14.9 million since FY 2008. Their return on investment has been 355% from inception (FY 2008) to current (12/31/2017) and includes both private donations and grants. All funds move over from the Foundation to the Forest Preserve at the end of each year. She noted that people give to people with only 4% of their income coming from corporations. He noted that it took them ten years to get to this point. The McHenry County Conservation Foundation has discussed funding part of a development-focused employee for the District. At Lake County, all grants and donations go through the Development office. Their Forest Preserve District is very involved with their foundation and adheres to the OMA and FOIA and the Lake County FPD Executive Director sits on the Board of the Foundation as a voting member as does the President of the FPD Board of Commissioners and another FPD Commissioner.

Executive Director Kessler stated that she had drafted a job description and proposed adding such a position in 2008 at which time the Foundation was not ready to commit to adding the position and spending down reserves. With the renewed interest and support of the Directors of the Foundation, the draft position description was sent along to Human Resource Manager Heider for review and grading in hopes to include the position in the FY 2019 Tentative Budget. The position would report to the Executive Director of the District and the work of the Foundation would be directed by the District working in collaboration with the Board of Directors of the Foundation and Board of Trustees. Executive Director Kessler stated that several changes would need to be made the Foundation's bylaws, policies and procedures and an MOU should be created to clearly communicate expectations between the two organizations.

Treasurer Merkel reminded the Board that as a staff member, they could not be asked to work on referenda. If a referendum was considered in the future, a separate friends group would need to be formed.

Secretary Scacci asked if Ms. Schneider could attend a future District Committee of the Whole meeting.

There was further discussion about grants that are not available to us in McHenry County such as those related to Lake Michigan and that there are some grants available only to foundations.

The consensus was to support staff continuing to work on creating a job description for a development position to be presented for review within the FY 2019 budget process.

The board then moved on to discussing Public Perception and noted that the Facebook numbers are very good. Trustee Campbell stated that she felt it was not that the District had a bad image; it is more they do not know who the District is. Others stated that some know the parks and land are there but don't see everything that that land does and what makes District land different than other parks or some forest preserve lands. Others feel that some residents do not know where this land is.

It was noted that if the numbers are correct, this supports that it is an awareness versus perception issue and efforts should be focused accordingly although we cannot ignore those that use our services regularly.

There was continued discussion about ramping up social media and school outreach as well as continuing to keep our program coverage in the media. Maybe refocus on the drop-in visitors to the sites rather than on programs by trying new ideas and creating new instant opportunities as well as partnerships with larger organizations such as the Northern Regional Groundwater Committee Field Day to be held in McHenry County this year.

Trustee Scacci emphasized the continued need to reach out to the elected officials and that maybe goals should be set to hold each other accountable. The consensus was for the Trustees to write down what they are willing to commit to and place them into two categories; ones that would need to be funded as well as those that have no costs, and these can be reviewed annually by the Board of Trustees. Staff will add these goals to the Strategic Plan where appropriate.

The discussion then turned to maintaining the quality of the District and service level expectations. Is it keeping the vehicles and bathrooms clean, grass cut, etc.? If staff continues to be cut, something will have to give and so which of the services is the first to go. It is less with less not more with less.

Conservation limitations are based on funding so our focus has been on partnerships over the last five years to provide some of the funding such as mitigation projects and grant projects.

The Board was reminded that the FY 2019 Tentative Budget would be before this board in March with the public hearing and final budget to be voted on in April. Executive Director Kessler reported that the proposed budget timeline was forwarded onto Chairman Jack D. Franks and Administrator Peter Austin and that they had agreed upon the process and timeline. The County Chairman and Board will receive a copy of the FY 2019 Tentative Budget in March and FY 2019 Final Budget in April immediately upon adoption by our Board. The Final budget is scheduled to go to the County Board in May.

**6.0 ADJOURN**

*A motion was made by Trustee Campbell, seconded by Treasurer Merkel, to adjourn the meeting. A voice vote resulted in all ayes.*

Motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 6:48 p.m. January 18, 2018.

Respectfully submitted,

*Vern Scacci*

Vern Scacci, Secretary

2/15/18

Date