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MCHENRY COUNTY CONSERVATION FOUNDATION
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES OF AUGUST 11, 2020

1.0 CALL TO ORDER

President Semel called the August 11, 2020 meeting of the McHenry County Conservation Foundation to order at 6:34pm. Roll call was taken and a quorum was present.

2.0 INTRODUCTORY ROLL CALL

2.1 Roll Call

Brad Semel, President (Remote)
Kevin Ivers, Vice-President (Remote)
Martie Gorman, Director (Remote)
Dennis Dreher, Director (Remote)
Ray Eisbrener, Secretary (Remote)
Kim Becker, Treasurer (Remote)
Pamela Althoff, Director (Remote)

OTHERS PRESENT:

Shawna Flavell, Development Director/Executive Director of McHenry County Conservation Foundation
Yvonne Semel, Administrator (Remote)
Elizabeth Kessler, Advisor (Remote)
Linda Thomas, Liaison, McHenry County Conservation District (Remote)
Carolyn Campbell (Remote)

DIRECTORS ABSENT:

None

2.2 Remote Participation

President Semel made a motion to allow the Board of Directors to attend remotely through electronic participation. The basis for a meeting via electronic conference call is per the State of Illinois Gubernatorial Disaster Proclamation - Executive Order 2020-07 & 2020-18 suspending requirements that members of the public body must be physically present. Director Althoff seconded the motion. All were in favor.

3.0 PUBLIC COMMENTS

No public comments at this time. Executive Director Flavell was at Lost Valley Visitor Center in case someone from the public showed up for the meeting.

4.0 APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- 4.1 June 9, 2020 - Regular Meeting - After reviewing the minutes of the June 9, 2020 Meeting, President Semel made the motion to accept the minutes, Director Dreher seconded the motion. All were in favor.

5.0 OFFICER'S REPORTS

5.1 President's Report

5.1a Official Welcome to New Director, Pamela Althoff

President Semel was very pleased to welcome Pamela Althoff as a new Foundation Director. He appreciates her willingness to serve on the Foundation Board. The Board of Director Officers list will be sent out to be updated and corrected if needed.

5.1b Marengo Ridge Update

The 15-acre parcel at Marengo Ridge is officially owned by the Conservation Foundation. A volunteer has been very active working on the property to remove fence lines, remove exotic species, and restore the land. Thanks to Val Siler for his expertise in finalizing this purchase. Also, thanks to Roger Stelle for his legal advice and work on the purchase of this property. There was a minor issue with boundaries during the survey of 1 acre, but this was worked out. An environmental assessment and additional survey were also needed to close. The last step is to process the paperwork indicating that the property is owned by a non-profit. President Semel would like to try to meet on the property sometime in the fall and celebrate the purchase. He asked if there were any questions about the purchase. Director Dreher mentioned the industrious volunteer that had cleared much of the property. This property will be transferred to the McHenry County Conservation District in a timely manner, with the hope of possibly leveraging its value as a match requirement or something similar. Advisor Kessler thanked President Semel for his part in pulling this transaction together.

5.1c Coordinating Meeting with District Board of Trustees

President Semel talked about the past plans of having a dinner with the District Trustees. Due to COVID-19, an in-person meeting is not prudent at this time so he asked if any directors would like to meet with some District Trustees in a Zoom meeting or socially distanced outdoor meeting. Director Althoff and Vice-President Ivers said they would be willing to meet. Treasurer Becker said if it was a Zoom meeting she would be willing to meet. Director Althoff suggested posting it as an open meeting so that more members could meet. President Semel agreed and it will be posted as an open meeting. President Semel would like Foundation directors to be able to meet the new District president and get to know the other trustees. District Liaison Linda Thomas was the last person on the District Board. She said there is one position open on the District Board. Advisor Kessler felt that position would be filled sometime in September and that a date to meet should align with that appointment. President Semel will work with Executive Director Flavell to find a time the two boards can meet.

5.2 Treasurer's Report

5.2a Financial Review

Treasurer Becker discussed the July 2020 balance sheet. She pointed out that with the bank accounts, other investments and the endowment fund the total liabilities and equity is around \$900,000. The net income for July was negative \$200,000 due to the land purchase and payment of salaries. Land purchase was a large expense for July. Treasurer Becker asked if there were any questions.

President Semel commented that the land acquisition fees were paid for in full by the donor prior to June. Director Dreher asked how the asset of land ownership fits in to balance sheet. Advisor Kessler said that would be a question for Nancy Gonsiorek. Treasurer Becker agreed that Ms. Gonsiorek would be the person to ask about how the land is included as a financial asset. President Semel said that would be a good question for Ms. Gonsiorek when we have her do our financial assessment.

5.2b Current Account Activity

There were no additional comments made concerning account activity.

6.0 DIRECTOR AND BOARD LIASION REPORTS

- 6.1 McHenry County Conservation District Report: District Liaison Linda Thomas
District Liaison Thomas said new officers were added to the District Board. The District Directors are currently working on their Strategic Plan and on new revenues for the District. There is a position on the District board that is open. They also discussed the 50th Anniversary celebration of the District next year. Executive Director Flavell will be helping to include the Foundation in this celebration.

7.0 BOARD BUSINESS

- 7.1 Authorization to Roll Over or Withdraw Interest Earnings from the Community Foundation for McHenry County Endowments

The Foundation is part of the Community Foundation for McHenry County and contributed \$25,000 into a community endowment. Every September the Foundation is given the option to withdraw the interest from the endowment. There is currently around \$6,700.00 available to use if the Foundation needs it for a project. If the money is not currently needed, those funds can roll over. The Board needs to determine if there is a project the money is needed for or if the money should just be rolled over. Treasurer Becker mentioned that at least 50% of the interest should be taken out in light of the financial climate we are in right now. Director Dreher commented on the low interest being made right now from our bank accounts. President Semel commented that a couple District projects were mentioned at our last meeting. Director Dreher commented that maybe the money should stay in the endowment doing well as an investment and money for projects should be taken from banking accounts that are getting low interest. Director Althoff agreed with this assessment as did President Semel. President Semel said if the Board doesn't make a decision during this time in the year; the money then becomes unavailable until next year. Director Althoff made the motion that for this year the interest is allowed to roll over and not be taken from the endowment fund. Director Dreher seconded the motion. All were in favor.

- 7.2 Consideration to Renew Fox River Ecosystem Partnership (FREP)

President Semel said we have been supporting FREP since they began. The membership cost is \$50 for the year. Vice-President Ivers commented that the membership has been part of the Foundation for many years. He feels that it is a good idea to continue being a part of FREP. Director Dreher does attend some of their events and stays in the loop. He feels that we should continue to be members of FREP. Advisor Kessler said there are a number of people connected to the District who are part of FREP. She feels they are doing good work. President Semel said that FREP and Chicago Wilderness are two groups that we support. Carolyn Campbell commented that she feels FREP is still a very involved organization and she keeps up with projects through their newsletter. Vice-President Ivers felt that being a part of this organization is a good thing. President Semel made the motion to renew our

annual membership to the Fox River Ecosystem Partnership in the amount of \$50.00. Director Gorman seconded the motion. All were in favor.

7.3 Authorization to Contract with Nancy Gonsiorek, CPA, LLC to Prepare FY 2020 Financial Summary & IRS Form 990

President Semel spoke to the letter of engagement for Nancy Gonsiorek , which would allow her to work on the Foundation's fiscal year 2020 financial summary and IRS Form 990. Ms. Gonsiorek has left the accounting firm that she was working for and is again and independent contractor. He pointed out her expertise in the area of non-profits. President Semel encouraged the Board to accept her letter of engagement as she has been a tremendous asset to the Foundation. He asked if there was any other discussion. Director Althoff said she is very familiar with Ms. Gonsiorek's work and agreed with President Semel. President Semel made the motion that the Board signs the letter of engagement for preparation of the FY 2020 Financial Summary & IRS Form 990 annual report. Director Dreher seconded the motion. All were in favor.

8.0 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

8.1 Strategic Plan Implementation

8.1a FY 2019 and FY 2020 Fundraising Comparison

President Semel turned over the meeting to Executive Director Flavell. She discussed the summary of this past fiscal year. She discussed her financial documents comparing this year and last year. The documents are from QuickBooks. Executive Director Flavell is focusing on individual donations and fundraising progress. In an overview, last fiscal year \$312,000 was brought in. A large portion of that funding was restricted for land acquisition. Executive Director Flavell asked if there were any questions. Advisor Kessler made a comment that membership dues have decreased significantly. Executive Director Flavell explained that we don't have a true membership right now, so the gifts are designated as individual contributions vs memberships. For FY 2019 - the bulk of donations were Pedal/Paddle/Saddle registrants' dollars and event sponsorship dollars. This FY 2020 - almost the same amount of gifts brought in were from donors. Due to the loss of the Pedal/Paddle/Saddle there was a loss in unrestricted funds, but the amount was not incredibly significant. Most of the restricted gifts were for the Marengo Ridge acquisition and Illinois Clean Energy. The overall donor base grew. Executive Director Flavell informed Director Dreher that the average unrestricted donation is around \$200.00. Monthly recurring gifts are growing. These gifts are not large, but they are consistent. Vice-President Ivers asked if there was any way monthly giving could be more encouraged. Executive Director Flavell pointed out some of the areas that she has encouraged monthly giving. She asked if there were any other suggestions of ways to encourage monthly giving. Carolyn Campbell mentioned that there might be a way to mention donating at the end of District videos. Executive Director Flavell is working with Wendy Kummerer right now to improve this information about donating at the end of videos and in District marketing. Advisor Kessler mentioned that there has been improvement with the District and Foundation to work together as a team. Executive Director Flavell asked if there were any other questions about FY 2019 and FY 2020 financial comparisons.

Executive Director Flavell asked if anyone had any questions on the Strategic Plan Progress Review. Director Dreher commented on the addition of Director Althoff to the Board as one of the attained goals.

8.1b FY 2021 Fundraising Progress

President Semel asked if the website brought in any more interest. Executive Director Flavell said she would get that information for President Semel. She said that some

new donations have come from the website. Executive Director Flavell will check the Google Analytics. Advisor Kessler said there has been increased interest through social media. Director Althoff wondered what the District videos are about. Executive Director Flavell said they are created by the District and they are conservation and education-related videos. One example is "Tom Talks" - Tom Simpson is the research field station ecologist and these videos are a way to share his knowledge and insight widely. Director Althoff asked if there can be a promotion to "save" something discussed in the video, please donate here. Executive Director Flavell mentioned that we want to be cautious about restricted gifts so that a donation isn't made to something and not enough money is donated to complete a project. Director Dreher asked if a video can be put together about a project that the Foundation is funding. This would draw attention to a specific project to fund. Executive Director Flavell said that Wendy Kummerer is putting together a thank you video for those who contributed to the Clean Energy project. Director Althoff asked if MCC has classes or intern programs that someone could be contacted to work on a video. Director Dreher suggested a private firm that might donate their services and create a video. President Semel suggested Secretary Eisbrener since he did a good video promoting the Pedal/Paddle/Saddle. Director Althoff suggested contacting the McHenry County Economic Corporation that have been promoting tourism in McHenry County. Executive Director Flavell said she would do some research on videography.

8.1c Overall Progress Review

This was covered in the above comments and wasn't elaborated on further.

8.1d ICECF May Parcel Update

Executive Director Flavell reminded everyone that the Board voted to support the District in the purchase of the May Parcel. It is currently in probate for the estate of Luella May. In January, when this parcel was approved, the family had to put the project on hold. This summer they have revisited the project. The property value has been reappraised and the value is the same. When this was discussed in January the plan was to use a restricted donation from last year as a match. However, that particular gift giver is not interested in using their donation as a match for the May property. This means that the Foundation would need to find other sources or pull funds out of reserve to meet the amount needed to purchase the May parcel. The total cost for the Foundation would be around \$23,000. President Semel said the Foundation has to be prepared to provide \$84,000.00 towards this land acquisition to make it happen. Executive Director Flavell said the property sits along the flood plain of the Nippersink, so it would be eligible for an Advancing Wetlands Conservation grant. President Semel wondered if that land could be rented out as it is being farmed right now. He wondered if there were restrictions by the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation in farming wetland property. Leasing that land out could recoup some of the costs of purchasing the land. Executive Director Flavell will look in to this. August 27 is the deadline for the proposed grant. Secretary Eisbrener felt this opportunity for land acquisition should be moved forward on. There may need to be a Zoom Special Call meeting to discuss the funding of this project before August 27th.

8.2 Project Updates

The conversation moved to the *Join the Journey* Donor Wall Project.

9.0 ADDITIONAL BOARD BUSINESS

9.1 *Join the Journey* Donor Wall Discussion

Executive Director Flavell pulled together a plan for the donor wall. President Semel gave a brief review of the history of the *Join the Journey* Donor wall for Director Althoff. The original plan was to raise a million-dollar endowment and people would donate towards that endowment. This approach changed a little bit and the focus will now be on major donor acknowledgement. President Semel mentioned that the two largest donors to the Foundation are both adamant that they remain anonymous. Executive Director Flavell said there are people in the CRM that would fit the criteria - Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation could be included on the wall depending on the guidelines for who could be donors. Executive Director Flavell put together a chart of who could be considered. Executive Director Flavell suggested that in order to be placed on the wall the donation would need to be a minimal gift of \$5,000. The multi-media aspect could recognize donors who donate less than that amount. Director Althoff asked if that is over a period of time or one-time gifts. Executive Director Flavell felt we should also consider pledge amounts over a period of time and when that pledge is met then they would be placed on the donor wall. There was some discussion about the graphics and the number of names that could be fit on each one. Because of the graphics of the donor wall there is a limit on names that can be included. Executive Director Flavell recommended that every donor get their own recognition plaque. Director Dreher agreed. Advisor Kessler said if the Foundation wants to change how the donor wall is used that is up to the Foundation. The Foundation's consensus was that each person should get their own plaque.

Executive Director Flavell suggested going back 5 years to start the project. She opened that question up to President Semel and the rest of the Board asking if there are others that should be included. President Semel felt this was more of a new plan and individual donors from the past could be considered. He felt we didn't need to go back much more than 2 years. Director Dreher felt going back five years would be okay so that the wall could start being populated. He felt that adding contributions would encourage others to donate. Executive Director Flavell asked if donors should include who have given directly to the District versus the Foundation. The District would need to be contacted for this information. Director Althoff asked why donors who gave directly to the District would be included. She felt that a distinction needs to be made between who is included on the donation wall - District donations or Foundation donations. Advisor Kessler agreed with Director Althoff. The donor wall should recognize those who give to the Foundation only. Advisor Kessler said that many of the District donors have already been recognized. Executive Director Flavell said that sponsors aren't being recognized on the donor wall. She wondered if land donors should be included on the wall or does it need to be a cash donation. Director Althoff felt that land donation should be included on the donor wall. President Semel wondered how many people we are talking about here before deciding on who should and shouldn't be on the donor wall. Executive Director Flavell asked if the Board would like to have an unveiling event next year during the 50-year anniversary which would be some time in 2021. Everyone agreed that this would be a good idea. An artist in the county who is a major donor would like to present their art at the 50-year anniversary - this is still being worked out. Director Althoff wasn't really supportive of having an event to showcase someone's artwork or projects. There will be more discussion about the boundaries around this at a later date.

9.2 *Passport to Lost Valley* Visitor Center Installation Update

There is a proposed October date for the installation of *Passport to Lost Valley*. There will be an unveiling planned at a later date.

10.0 ADJOURNMENT

President Semel asked if there was any other business. There being none, President Semel made the motion to adjourn the meeting. Vice-President Ivers seconded the motion. All were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 pm.

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 13, 2020 at Lost Valley Visitor Center at 6:30pm.
(if needed)

Respectfully submitted,



Ray Eisbrener, Secretary