

Note: These minutes are not official until approved by the Forest Preserve District Committee at a subsequent meeting. Please refer to the meeting minutes when these minutes are approved to obtain any changes to these minutes.

DeKalb County Government
Sycamore, Illinois

**Forest Preserve District Committee Minutes
February 28, 2017**

The DeKalb County Forest Preserve District Committee met Tuesday January 24, 2017 at 6:00 pm in the Liberty Room of the Legislative Center. In attendance were committee members: Mr. Brown, Ms. Haji-Sheikh, Ms. Little, Mr. Roman and Superintendent Hannan. Mr. Porterfield and Mr. Bagby arrived after Roll Call.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Brown noted a correction to the January minutes and then called for a motion to approve the corrected minutes of the January 24, 2017 meeting. Ms. Little moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Mr. Roman and the motion passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mr. Brown called for a motion to approve the agenda. Ms. Haji-Sheikh moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Ms. Little and the motion passed unanimously.

CAFETERIA PLAN DOCUMENT AMENDMENT RESOLUTION

Mr. Hannan noted that this is the same plan as on the County agenda, but the amendment refers to a specifically Forest Preserve version. He then read a memo from Mr. Stefan, County Finance Director. The memo noted that the resolution allows dental insurance deductions to be taken pre-tax in a way similar to how medical deductions are treated.

Ms. Haji-Sheikh moved Resolution FP-R2017-03 adopting the DeKalb County cafeteria plan as amended and restated, seconded by Mr. Roman. The motion passed unanimously.

MONTHLY REPORTS

Mr. Hannan noted that every year there is an end of fiscal year Budget Amendment and Transfer process. There needs to be a resolution on this to allow for adjustments to the budget to bring it into a final balance. Mr. Hannan met with Mr. Stefan and noted that there are still a few final numbers to be accounted for, but the resolution would need to be voted on tonight so it could be voted on at the March County Board meeting. The final numbers will be attached to the resolution.

Ms. Little moved to approve the Budget Amendment and Transfer, seconded by Ms. Haji-Sheikh. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Hannan then noted that the monthly activity and usage reports are included in the Committee packets. He commented that Winterfest was a great success despite the lack of Winter weather and pointed out a photo in the packet of the new carved bear at the NREC that has been named Forest Stump.

Mr. Hannan then went on to mention some other projects of late, and specifically the recent brush clearing along sections the Great Western Trail. He noted that the area is difficult to do burn along the trail on due to the proximity to Route 64 and smoke management. Since burning is often not an option, woody plants “invade” and certain sections needed to be cleared for trail safety and to eliminate non-native plant species.

Mr. Bagby arrived.

Mr. Hannan noted that there was also work done on some eroding “berm” areas in the Afton wetland bank. He commented that the staff has started prairie burning and noted that these have never been able to be done during February in previous years. He also noted photos received from the Northwest Suburban Astronomers who often use the Afton and Potawatomi Woods preserves for star gazing.

He then commented on a letter of intent he has prepared as the first part of a grant for the Nelson property. This acquisition would be in addition to the 10 year contract the District has entered into for the Haines property.

Mr. Hannan pointed out to the Committee that many Federal and State grant opportunities have dried up the past few years and most available now are privately funded. He did note that he has been able to be awarded these 50% grants for areas like Prairie Oaks and Swanson Grove in the past from ICECF.

The current grant opportunities are through the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation. They have accepted a grant application for the Nelson acquisition and it is moving forward. The Foundation likes to see projects that build on prior grants on connecting adjacent lands.

Mr. Brown asked how many rounds of grants are possible in a year. Mr. Hannan replied that there are two opportunities through the ICECF per year. He closed by noting that he will keep the Committee informed of the grant progress.

Mr. Hannan then reported that he and Mr. Brown had met recently to discuss goals for the new Committee. Together they have crafted a document for the Committee’s review. County Board Chairman Pietrowski has asked all Committees to create goal documents that can then be fed into overall goals for the County as a whole.

Mr. Brown commented that due to the long-term timelines of some projects the Committee may undertake, the goals may actually extend through several years and Committees.

He went on to note that he was personally interested in ways to expand the marketing presence of the Forest Preserve. Mr. Hannan then passed around a draft of a story that will appear in an upcoming Farm Bureau monthly publication. The article was written by a local resident, Ron Peabody, who is also a U of I Extension Master Gardener and Master Naturalist and was very complimentary to the County's Forest Preserves.

Ms. Haji-Sheikh noted that there are great advantages to being a Farm Bureau member beyond their publications.

Returning to a review of the Committee Goals document, Mr. Brown noted that item 4 related to support and volunteer assistance and many of the Extension gardeners and naturalists are also Forest Preserve Land Stewards. .

He then commented that item 5 of the document relates to collaboration with regional partners. Mr. Roloff, the District's Natural Resource Manager, has been very active in both local and country wide collaborations.

Item 6 relates to support of the Superintendent, Mr., Hannan both in his role as department head and his additional activities such as grant applicant.

Item 7 was initiated by Board Chairman Pietrowski regarding developing renewable energy options that could be utilized in the County. Ms. Haji-Sheikh commented that there were discussions underway regarding the establishment of a solar farm in the County.

Mr. Brown then noted that there is also a section regarding how the Forest preserve Goals play into the County's overall strategic plan. He then asked for discussion of the document.

Ms. Haji-Sheikh commented that that since there is mention in the document of trail expansion, and so many other entities are also currently developing trail plans, there may be opportunities to discuss partnerships. She went on to note that they may want to add the various cities in the County who are engaged in trail expansion activities, such as DeKalb, Sycamore and Somonauk.

Mr. Brown asked where the responsibilities overlap between trails that are developed in city areas. Mr. Hannan responded that many trails (like the Kiwanis Trail) have shared responsibilities for upkeep and maintenance.

Mr. Bagby commented that we have had recent examples of interaction and cooperation between the DeKalb, Sycamore and the Forest preserve District.

2nd DRAFT

DeKalb County Forest Preserve Committee

Goals for 2017 through 2018

- 1) Continue development of the Greenways and Trails Plan - a system connecting all cities, towns and villages in DeKalb County:
 - a) Great Western to Sycamore Forest Preserve Trail
 - b) Genoa to Russell Woods Forest Preserve to Kingston Trail
 - c) Somonauk to Sannauk Forest Preserve Trail
 - d) Cortland to Peace Road Trail
 - e) Shabbona Pathway Trail including Shabbona Forest Preserve
 - f) Other sections needed to complete the system?

- 2) Continue acquisition of suitable and qualified open spaces as planned and rank high in the Forest Preserve Land Acquisition Evaluation process:
 - a) Afton South Prairie Wetland Bank
 - b) Sycamore Forest Preserve
 - c) Haines Creek Conservation Corridor:
 - Sparks parcel – Prairie Oaks Forest Preserve
 - Conro parcel – Swanson Grove
 - Nelson parcel – opens in 2019
 - Haines parcel – opens in 2026
 - Stay aware of future “right of refusal” opportunities

- 3) Increase utilization by marketing the Forest Preserve District through a quarterly seasonal mailer to all county residents.

(Current marketing vehicles include: website, Facebook, brochures and news releases.) (Any advertising via newspapers, magazines, radio, television, etc?)

- 4) Support and help increase participation in the DeKalb County Land Stewards and other volunteer opportunities.

(Current volunteers include: tree planters, seed harvesters, scouts, 4-H members, Adventure Works, Master Naturalists, and students of all ages.)

- 5) Support and encourage collaboration with regional partners, including: Kishwaukee and Fox River Ecosystem Partnerships, Illinois Association of Conservation and Forest Preserve Districts, Chicago Wilderness, DeKalb County Community Gardens, and area school districts, community colleges and universities.

- 6) Continue to support the Superintendent in obtaining grants and donations for acquisition and restoration, as well as wetland bank contributions.

- 7) Research and promote renewable energy “Best Practices” in Forest Preserve District and along County Trails System. (Proposed by Chairman Mark Pietrowski.)

2nd DRAFT

DeKalb County Forest Preserve District’s

Contribution To

DeKalb County Strategic Plan

- I. Enhancement of educational, recreational, health and wellness opportunities as well as overall quality of life experienced by DeKalb County citizens.
- II. Conservation of DeKalb County’s natural resources and open space for future generations.
- III. Attractive community asset for recruitment and retention of businesses, jobs, residents and tourists.

COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS

Mr. Porterfield arrived.

Mr. Brown noted that he had brought some articles for the Committee regarding an trail underpass being developed in DeKalb that would run under Lincoln Highway. He also brought an article about the new Dean of the NIU College of Law and his naturalist background. He commented that there might be an opening there for some partnerships between the Preserves and the College of Law.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. Brown then asked for a motion to enter Executive Session. Mr. Porterfield moved to take the Committee into Executive Session, seconded by Mr. Bagby. A roll call vote was held with 6 Committee members voting in the affirmative, none in the negative.

Following the Executive Session, Mr. Porterfield moved to return the Committee to public session, seconded by Mr. Bagby. A roll call vote was held with 6 Committee members voting in the affirmative, none in the negative.

After the return to Public Session, Ms. Haji-Sheikh moved to accept the donated easement offered by the owners of Stone Prairie Rental Community to allow for a connection between the new Sycamore Forest preserve and the Great Western Trail, seconded by Mr. Roman. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Brown closed by noting that though the new Committee has been in existence less than 100 days, he is very pleased with how busy and productive they have been.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Porterfield moved to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Haji-Sheikh. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bob Brown".

Bob Brown, Chairperson
Forest Preserve District Committee
BB:kjr