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DeKalb County Government
Sycamore, Illinois

**Forest Preserve District Committee Minutes
August 22, 2017**

The DeKalb County Forest Preserve District Committee met Tuesday August 22, 2017 at 6:00 pm at the Hoppe Heritage Farm/1835 Miller Ellwood Cabin and South Branch Prairie. In attendance were committee members: Mr. Brown, Ms. Little, Mr. Roman, Ms. Haji-Sheikh, Mr. Bagby, Superintendent Hannan and District Naturalist Al Roloff. Mr. Hughes was absent and Mr. Porterfield arrived after adjournment. Guests included District Naturalist Al Roloff, County Board member Steve Reid and guest Mary Kay Knudsen and Annie.... the dog in her official forest preserve uniform.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Brown called for a motion to approve the July 25, 2017 minutes. Mr. Porterfield moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Mr. Bagby and the motion passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mr. Brown noted the Executive Session would be removed from tonight's meeting and the Cabin and South Branch prairie tour would occur after adjournment. He then called for a motion to approve the amended agenda. Ms. Haji-Sheikh moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Mr. Roman and the motion passed unanimously.

MONTHLY REPORTS

Mr. Hannan began with the monthly reports. He noted the recent press release on the grants awarded by the Illinois Clean Energy Commission. He also noted photos taken at the Haines Creek Conservation corridor as well as photos of limestone landscape boulders along trail, road and parking areas at Russell Woods, Afton and Sycamore Forest Preserve. He noted that the reports also contained photos from Mr. Haji-Sheikh of the Afton Prairie tour at the July meeting. Another photo in the report was of Kenny McGirr and his grandchildren with Kenny's arrowhead and WW 2 P.O.W. uniform button collections from Afton. Mr. Hannan commented that they have also re-secured the knowledge of the location of the McGirr 1940 whiskey bottle still hidden in walls of the old dairy barn.

Mr. Hannan noted that Sycamore Forest Preserve is ready to open, however we are still waiting for final grant close out and sign off from FEMA/ IEMA.

Photos were also shown of the July storms and Al Roloff mentioned that Summer rains that occurred from March 1st through May 10th and noted that they dropped double the

normal amount of rain expected in that time. Rainfall did diminish in June, but July totals came in at just under 14 inches. The flooding from these rains did cause some need for repairs at Prairie Oaks / Swanson Grove and Afton. These were caused mostly by heavy overnight rains that washed away culverts trails and roads.

However, August has produced less than 1 inch to this point. Al noted that the only reason the grass is not browning yet is the large amount of moisture still in the soil. Mr. Hannan then noted a photo of the prairie blooms in the new Sycamore Preserve that were planted approximately 1 year ago. Mr. Roloff commented that 50 to 70 species should bloom this year. He added that the newly planted Sycamore trees and other trees and shrubs are doing well there.

Mr. Bagby asked if the rains caused a need for additional maintenance on the trails. Mr. Hannan responded that the Great Western Trail is in good shape, but there were trail washouts at Prairie Oaks.

Mr. Hannan then showed a photo of the 3 wild turkeys that had recently been roaming the Sycamore city area. This photo showed them trying to enter the County Administration building. He speculated they were trying to reach the "Gobble-torium".

Mr. Hannan then noted the Maintenance and Projects report and commented that the Northwestern Astronomers society would be holding their next public star party at Afton preserve on 9-2-17. He commented that the District was also still participating in the birds of prey relocation program from Midway and O'Hare Airports and expect Biologists to be bringing more Kestrels (Sparrow Hawks) to Afton this year. 2 years ago Red Tailed Hawks were relocated to DeKalb County from O'Hare and Midway airports.

Mr. Hannan then noted Mr. Roloff's monthly natural resource management report and showed photos of staff and volunteer land management activities the gravel trail that was washed out at Swanson Grove.

Mr. Hannan and Mr. Roloff commented that the stream bank stabilization on the Kishwaukee River at the South Branch Prairie is doing very well to address the highly eroded banks. They have placed large stones and angled the bank back and added vegetation to help move the water away from the area. If the bank achieves the correct angle and the vegetation is right the water will eventually recede after flooding leaving the vegetation in place. They have used 4 separate species of sedge on the newest banks. The NRCS and Illinois Smallmouth Bass Alliance (grant contributors) is extremely pleased with the success of this project and plan to use it as an example for future projects elsewhere.

Mr. Hannan then showed a photo of retired NIU professor Carl Von Ende, Al Roloff and NIU students during a recent mussel study. There is also a photo of volunteers performing prairie and wetland seed collection duties.

Mr. Hannan concluded by noting the visitor use and shelter rental /camping reports.

Mr. Brown asked about the Summer Intern experiences. Mr. Hannan noted that the District held a lunch last Friday as a thank you to the interns. Al noted that one student intern Taylor and she just graduated from the University of Illinois and a young man from NIU (Damon) has changed his major to Restoration Ecology after his summer experience.

They also had an intern Kylie at the Natural Resource Education Center to help with Summer Camps and maintenance and a young student named Andrew who is a graduate of Kishwaukee College headed to Steven's Point to complete his degree in Wildlife Management.

Mr. Hannan then reported that at the west end of the Great Western Trail they have begun tearing down the building that had been for sale there. The Sycamore Park District acquired the land and plan to add a very attractive new welcoming sign. Mr. Hannan will do the landscape design. The hope is that this will be a very nice visible entrance to the city of Sycamore.

Ms. Haji-Sheikh asked if there would be any water sources or rest rooms at that location for bikers on the Great Western Trail. Mr. Hannan responded that all amenities would be at the Sycamore Forest Preserve as the intention is that will be the new trailhead.

Mr. Hannan then reported that the Sycamore Park District has applied for an 80% ITEP Grant (Federal motor fuel tax money) to bring a trail connection between the Sycamore Forest Preserve and Old Mill Park. The Forest Preserve will be partnering with them on this grant.

He noted that the Sycamore High School Track teams will be having their annual Invitational Cross Country Dual meets and conference meet at Afton Preserve in August and September.

FY2018 BUDGET

Mr. Hannan handed out the 2018 budget books for the Committee review. He noted that the budget must be placed on file at the 9-20-18 County Board / Forest Preserve Commissioners meeting.

He then pointed out to the Committee that the budget contains essentially the same total tax dollars as the past 9 years budgets. He noted that he would go over the budget in detail and answer questions prior to the final resolution in November. The Committee will review the Budget and Levy.

He then did a brief page by page overview highlighting information on the tax rates, future plans, and where exactly the money is spent. He pointed out the tax rate of what a typical \$200,000.00 home pays each year (about \$45 per year) for the Forest Preserve taxes. The Forest Preserve tax is 7/10's of 1% of the total taxes collected in DeKalb County.

He commented on the on-going projects and what upcoming costs are associated with those in the coming fiscal year.

He noted that the Forest preserve Mission Statement as well as reports of the activities and volunteer work done were included in the document as well.

Mr. Bagby asked about the area near the Haines Conservation Corridor (Nelson acquisition) and where the right of refusal was on that. He noted there is a 5 acre parcel that was purchased by a private party to build a house, the area around the new home 41 acres is in future right of first refusal. Mr. Porterfield then asked about another nearby parcel. Mr. Hannan said the owners of these parcels were not interested at this time.

Mr. Brown asked what exactly is “placed on file”. Mr. Hannan responded that the annual Appropriation Ordinance is placed on file for review by the public.

Ms. Haji-Sheikh complimented Mr. Hannan on doing another great balanced budget. Mr. Hannan commented that they have very good Committee and Commissioners, land acquisition grant partnerships as well as a very committed and talented maintenance and land management staff along with many volunteers and donors.

Mr. Porterfield moved the Resolution and Ordinance to place the FY 2018 Forest Preserve Budget on file, seconded by Ms. Haji-Sheikh and the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Porterfield then asked if a Forest preserve Budget had ever been challenged. Mr. Hannan responded that there was a group last year who had questions about the Land Acquisition reserves which are all documented for future right of first refusal opportunities and future land preservations.

COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS

Ms. Haji-Sheikh thanked Mr. Hannan for arranging for the great weather today for their 1835 Miller Ellwood cabin and prairie tours led by Al Roloff.

Mr. Brown thanked Mr. Reid for attending and his future time period donation to the cabin and advice.

Mr. Hannan noted that he had received a FOIA request regarding the mist netting study being done at Wilkinson Marsh to study bat and bird populations there. He then spoke to the concerned citizen and noted that the project had been discussed at Forest Preserve and Planning and Zoning meetings and has been permitted.

Ms. Haji-Sheikh then recounted what the FOIA process is for the Committee members and how it is supposed to work. She noted that usually after 5 days, if no further contact is made, the issue is considered resolved and the request is closed.

Mr. Porterfield added that the FOIA does not require a full disclosure of their issues.

Mr. Brown asked if that project had been completed. Mr. Hannan responded that he was not aware of it being completed but he would check. He commented that it would be interesting to see the study results.

Mr. Hannan then noted that Steve Reid helped with his knowledge and advice on the 1835 Miller Ellwood cabin and offered to donate furniture and accessories for it when it is completed. Mr. Hannan commented that Rex Nelson had recently given an interview to Resource Magazine on the farmhouse he and his family lived in while the cabin was inside the farmhouse walls. Mr. Hannan noted that he and Forest Preserve District staff, Mr. Rex Nelson and cabin relocation and restoration volunteers had met recently with Resource Magazine for a story on the cabin...story and photos should be out in late September .

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Brown called for any public comments. Hearing none he moved to adjournment.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Porterfield moved to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Roman. 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